

**UNPROTECTED PRACTICE:
Including Process as Compositional
Material**

3.6 PhD Commentary

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of Birmingham City University for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

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The Faculty of Arts, Design and Media, Birmingham City
University
(Birmingham Conservatoire)

<http://www.paulnormanmusic.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Dangerous-Music.pdf>⁰

⁰ Paul Norman, *Dangerous Music: 20,000 words that require serious discussion* (2017) <<http://www.paulnormanmusic.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Dangerous-Music.pdf>> [accessed 23 September 2017]

This visual work was redacted from the PhD commentary and replaced with a link to facilitate the production of a more acceptable similarity score on the BCU approved plagiarism detection service Turnitin. I have actively chosen not to remove the image entirely but instead to find a compositional solution to this issue. By not hiding the process of removing the image, I am able to share this specific element of the composition process. This satisfies the research questions and aims of this practice-based PhD, places yet more emphasis on the notion of an Unprotected Practice and supports the production of this PhD commentary as a composed artistic work.

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Image: *Dangerous Music: 20,000 words that require serious discussion*

(3) The minimum length is 6000 words (including everything in the Commentary) but a more functional length is 12K - 15K words. Note that if you are up to 20K you are almost certainly using your Commentary for a purpose for which it is not intended and serious discussion is needed with your supervisors.

¹

¹ Joe Cutler and Peter Johnson, *Birmingham Conservatoire: The PhD with Musical Composition: Guidelines for Commentary to Accompany the Portfolio* (Birmingham: Birmingham Conservatoire, 2013), p. 1. [available in appendix]

The guidance notes form the structure and format of this PhD commentary as a composition. More detailed information is given in section 1.8.

ii**Abstract;**²

Composition as an art form often struggles with effectively communicating the initial idea that triggered the creation of the work via performance. The works included in this PhD submission and the reflection of my approach to composition included in this commentary, outline the various ways that I have attempted to address this issue by engaging with the main research question: How can the concept and composition process of the artistic work be communicated to the audience and what creative compositional opportunities does this offer?

This PhD contains 13 works that share an expanded view of composition that considers not only sound but also visual and performative elements, where the whole process from initial idea to the performance forms the artistic work. This suggests a more holistic approach to composition where the audience members are given access to the whole artistic work via the performance.

The works produced are extremely diverse, due to the direct relation of the whole composition process to a concept. By considering how I make decisions and what those decisions communicate, I have found that when all decisions in the composition process are informed by the concept, the concept becomes embodied in the performance and thus communicates the idea that triggered the creation of the work to the audience.

Communicating the idea thus becomes a compositional concern and forms additional material for the work. Composing the communication of the idea and making it inherent in the performance offers huge artistic potential. It need not be restricted by traditional formats, such as programme notes or pre-concert talks, but can be much more playful, directly relevant and integrated within the artistic work.

² Cutler and Johnson, p. 1.

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21	1.5	This section may be used to identify changes in your own thinking over the duration of the programme.
21	1.6	Then tell us the main idea behind your project and give a brief description of the Main Work by way of introduction;
23	1.7	a brief account of your compositional objectives.
24	1.8	Plot the route of the rest of the Commentary.
27	2	Chapter 2: Supporting Works: briefly introduce each supporting work (typically 4 or 5),

³ Cutler and Johnson, p. 1.

27	2.1.	the background to its composition,
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31	2.1.2.2	<i>I _____ the hard way</i>
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36	3	Chapter 3 (4, 5?) The Main Work
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41	3.3	<i>maneuvers / groove space</i>
51	3.4	<i>YBRIDE</i>
59	3.5	<i>Pointing at Things: It started when you read this</i>
63	4	Chapter N: Conclusion: this should not repeat material previously given but draw the whole thing together.
63	4.1	It should include some informed critique of your own work
64	4.2	– what has worked really well,
65	4.3	what bits you might have done differently in hindsight.
66	4.4	Don't be too apologetic, but tell us what you've learned from the project, and what others might useful derive from it.
66	4.5	It should point towards future work: how you see yourself developing as a composer from here on,
66	4.6	or how others might usefully engage with the compositional questions you have set yourself.
68	viii	Appendices (= mainly lists, lyrics/poems used, or other concise material that sensibly stands outstand the main text, e.g. because it is referred to in several places).
68	viii.i	Guide lines for Commentary to accompany the Portfolio
71	viii.ii	<i>Biography and Pushing a Piano</i>
72	viii.iii	<i>Learning to Play the Piano</i>
73	viii.iv	<i>Four Folk Dances</i>
74	ix	Full list of your own compositions, at least since start of project.
75	x	List of Works discussed (by composer, with publishers, dates and recordings if relevant, in standard format)
76	xi	Bibliography
79	xii	Discography [as appropriate].

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Contents of folio, each work listed in normal catalogue style, with date of composition, instrumentation, number of movements, and location of any submitted recording; the principle work should be here be clearly identified and differentiated from supporting works.

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Due to the interdisciplinary nature of my work, the works are presented/documentated in different ways that best communicate the various outcomes.

Main Works

- 3.1** *Grieg* (2015), YouTube Video.
 - 3.1.1** Full Video Performance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yml5tIXKmMI>

- 3.2** *Adrian Boult Hall ist Kaputt: By Brass* (2016), Performer, Trumpet Choir, French Horn Choir, Trombone Choir and Euphonium/Tuba Choir.
 - 3.2.1** Documentation: <https://tinyurl.com/scores-and-documentation>
 - 3.2.2** Video Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/159489856>
 - 3.2.3** Time Lapse Video: <https://vimeo.com/159532051>
 - 3.2.4** Full Length Performance Video: <https://vimeo.com/230520944/5c52fe3e66>

- 3.3** *maneuvers / groove space* (2014), Dance, Performance Artist, Guitar, Voice and Live Electronics.
 - 3.3.1** Score 1: *Comfortable Music*, <https://tinyurl.com/scores-and-documentation>
 - 3.3.2** Score 2: *SBB Telsearch OLS Maps Postfinance*, <https://tinyurl.com/scores-and-documentation>
 - 3.3.3** Score 3: *Definition Song: Comfort*, <https://tinyurl.com/scores-and-documentation>
 - 3.3.4** Video Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/113153219>
 - 3.3.5** Documentary Video of Performance at Tinguely Museum, Basel, Switzerland: <https://vimeo.com/122974012>
 - 3.3.6** Full Length Performance Video: <https://vimeo.com/115045011> [password: zurich14]

- 3.4** *YBRIDE* (2015), Dance, Piano and Metronome.
 - 3.4.1** Full Score: <https://tinyurl.com/scores-and-documentation>
 - 3.4.2** Video Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/174802697>
 - 3.4.3** Full Length Performance Video: <https://vimeo.com/230350040/71fc0a3f5a>

⁴ Cutler and Johnson. p. 1.

3.5 *Pointing at things: It started when your read this* (2016), Performer, Postcard Scores, Masking Tape, Recorder and Recorded Tape.

3.5.1 Documentation: <https://tinyurl.com/scores-and-documentation>

3.5.2 Video Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/186328516>

3.5.3 Full Length Performance Video: <https://vimeo.com/187347191>

3.6 *PhD Commentary* (2017), Text Composition.

Supporting Works

2.1.1 *Definition Songs: Comfort, Health, And, Safety, Television, Lecture, Inlet, Water, Commentary, Definition* (2014 – 17), Instrument(s) and Voice(s).

2.1.1.1 Full Score: <https://tinyurl.com/scores-and-documentation>

2.1.1.2 Excerpt from Documentation Video for *maneuvers / groove space* Basel, Switzerland: *Comfort*, <https://vimeo.com/122974012#t=425s>

2.1.1.3 Audio Recording: *And*, <http://www.paulnormanmusic.com/definitions>

2.1.1.4 Video Pitch/Application for proposed television show *You Could Have Done This: Television*, <https://vimeo.com/167134666/dbbca7f8fd>

2.1.1.5 Full Length Performance Video: *Lecture*, <https://vimeo.com/209238097>

2.1.2 Text Works

2.1.2.1 *Artistic Biography Model* (2015), Business Card/Score.

2.1.2.1.1 Documentation 1: Business Card, <https://tinyurl.com/scores-and-documentation>

2.1.2.1.2 Documentation 2: Photocopy of artist biographies in the programme for *Four Folk Dances*, <https://tinyurl.com/scores-and-documentation>

2.1.2.2 *I _____ the hard way* (2015), Visual Work/Score.

2.1.2.2.1 Online Journal: http://upload.birmingham.imperiumuk.com/res_pageturner_flick.php?pt=122

2.1.2.2.2 Documentation: Photocopy of Journal Entry, <https://tinyurl.com/scores-and-documentation>

2.1.2.3 *Swing Music* (2016), Badge/Score.

2.1.2.3.1 Documentation: <https://tinyurl.com/scores-and-documentation>

2.1.2.3.2 Video Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/175375336>

Appendix

viii.ii *Biography and Pushing a Piano* (2016), 4 Performers, Piano and Metronome.

viii.ii.i Video Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/216013505>

viii.iii *Learning to Play the Piano* (2016), Untrained Musician, Piano and iPad.

viii.iii.i Score: <https://tinyurl.com/scores-and-documentation>

viii.iii.ii Full Length Performance Video: <https://vimeo.com/209234667>

viii.iv *Four Folk Dances* (2017), Orchestra and Organ.

viii.iv.i Score: <https://tinyurl.com/scores-and-documentation>

viii.iv.ii Full Length Performance Video: <https://vimeo.com/209083730>

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Contents of any submitted CD or DVD with track listings; ⁵

All videos, scores and documentation are included on the enclosed memory stick. The files are titled with the codes used above.

⁵ Cutler and Johnson. p. 1.

vi**Acknowledgements (including an identification of your supervisors);**⁶

To my parents, Roger Gordon Norman and Sheila Norman, for their unending support and trust from the earliest age, from taking me to my first keyboard and guitar lesson to their open engagement with performative works that often challenge their own perceptions of what constitutes music and art. Their warmth and willingness to engage and never be afraid to ask questions and allow me the space to share my ideas with them has been more than I could ever ask for.

To my wife Mira, who is my best friend, my first and most important mentor, expert dramaturge, fierce critic and artist in her own right. From my first research proposal to this PhD submission, she has been unwaveringly supportive, critical, constructive and positive.

To my **Director of Studies**, Michael Wolters, who throughout this PhD has become a good friend, my severest critic, my councillor, artistic collaborator and mentor. Together we have celebrated my biggest successes and investigated and moved on from my most emotionally damaging failures. Without his support I couldn't have made it through the first tough year where I would surely have come to the conclusion that PhD study was not for me. His support has not only helped me to completion, but to the sensation that I deserve my place in academia, that I have something to offer and that my own expertise is grounded in terms that are unique to me and no more or less valuable than that of any student of any subject. His dedication to his students and to Birmingham Conservatoire is a source of constant inspiration and I only hope that in the future I will be as strong a force for good with my own students.

I would also like to thank my **Second Supervisor**, Howard Skempton, for his careful thought and critique of my artistic work, and for his personal and engaging stories that have provided such a rich context to this PhD study.

To my **Academic Supervisor**, Ron Woodley, for his strong criticism and for pushing me to carve my place in academia, learning to develop a language by which I can express my ideas in the format of academic writing and to defend my work to panels of experts.

⁶ Cutler and Johnson, p. 1.

In addition I would like to mention Chris Dingle, for his tireless support for practice-based researchers to be represented within the university.

I would like to give an extra thank you to dramaturge Marcus Dross. His support for my work over the last three years has been exceptionally warming, from the moment of helping me with my first research proposal to using his free time to be dramaturge on my work *Pointing at Things: It started when you read this*. I am very grateful for all the exceptionally useful talks we have had. On so many occasions he has found the words to give me the confidence and ability to persevere with an idea, and to trust that the right decisions will be made when I need them to be.

I would like to give a special mention to my colleague and friend Andy Ingamells. We have been through this PhD journey together and we have both complained, worried and celebrated together throughout. It truly wouldn't have been the same without him.

To all my collaborators and performers, for all the challenges that we were forced to overcome. For good or bad, they have progressed my thinking in a way I couldn't have done alone.

Lastly I would like to thank all my friends who are spread all over the world. Their supportive words over the last three years have kept me going.

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Main text in Chapters, sections and subsections identified by conventionally styles; ⁷

1

Chapter 1: Background and Context: ⁸

who you are ⁹

My name is Paul Norman and I am a composer, researcher and performer.

1.1

composer; and your background as ¹⁰

My path to composing the way that I do currently has been an organic one, based largely on reflecting on my own practice. Ultimately I was seduced by a conceptual approach. I attribute this to two crises. The first, at an early age, was the dilemma that if I removed tonality as a primary consideration then how do I decide which note to choose? This led me to an interest in applying parameters to limit the available options. I did this in a playful way, treating it almost like a game, for example only using three notes or one chord or only crotchets. The other crisis came a little later, in questioning why do I write a piece of music at all? These game structures were fun for me but I was always unsure why I was making them and what it could ever mean to anyone else. I also realised that I delighted more in telling people about the parameters than I did in performing the work. It was then that I started to find reasons to compose, mostly non-musical things that could be translated into music. These “reasons to compose”, or, more correctly, ‘ideas’, I began to use to create the parameters of limitation that I would apply. These steps were made in ignorance of the other composers who were working this way; composition for me was entirely personal and a break from instrumental study. At around this time (ca. 2006), I was exposed to the world of conceptual art and music and felt a meaningful connection to this work in a more profound way than I had ever felt with any music, even the music that I would still describe as my top ten favourite pieces. It became clear to me that ultimately I cared much more about ideas than about sound. Ideas and concepts allowed me absolute freedom, and a

⁷ Cutler and Johnson, p. 1.

⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

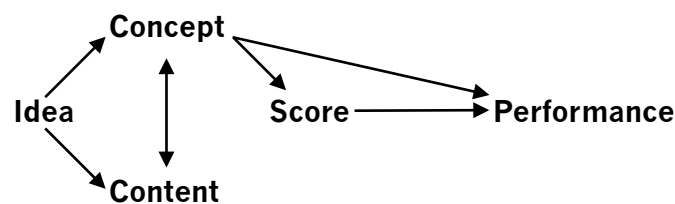
voice to communicate my view of the world. It doesn't always come easy but I feel so very at home composing this way and continue to take absolute joy in the composition process and in continuing to explore with this as a basis.

1.2

some discussion of what musical composition is for you,¹¹

I see myself as someone who composes performances as opposed to works that will be performed, although composed pieces often become material components of the performance.¹² By considering this model of composition, composing becomes not only about organising and structuring sound but rather takes an expanded view of composition that considers visual and performative elements.

Figure 1. Compositional Approach Diagram



My composition process begins with an idea (see Figure 1) that informs the creation of the concept, which defines the structural framework and methodology needed to create the work. The idea also informs the search for the content of the work (sound, text, physical materials, movement, etc.). The development of these two concerns happens simultaneously and thereby specific elements of the content become integral to the concept. The score is then the realised version of the concept, where the structure and methodology is applied to the content. Score in this sense can be anything from a conventional musical score to a collection of text instructions to an overview of the specific performance parameters and structure. The performance is then realised by following the score, and any additional decisions that are required will still be referenced against the concept. By performing the score, the concept is embodied and can thus be communicated to the audience.

¹¹ Cutler and Johnson, p. 2.

¹² Throughout this commentary the word “work” is used to describe the whole artistic realisation and the word “piece” is used to refer to smaller complete elements of the work.

In my work, I consider the whole process as part of the art. Therefore, it is essential that the concept is communicated, as this allows the audience access to the complete work of art and not just to its outcome. Because the notion of communicating the concept is a fundamental consideration of my work, it must be viewed in order to be complete.

I often take this one step further, inviting the audience to become an integral part of the performance and composition process by interacting with instruction scores that encourage them to make their own composition and performance decisions as part of the work. The composed framework of instruction scores allows the audience's decision-making to be within the concept of the work, thus they can directly experience my composition practice and further embody it.

This reinforces the importance of concepts as an essential part of the composition process. Concepts allow me to keep a direct relationship between the idea and realisation by acting as an intelligible filter from one to the other. Ultimately, this means that the various decisions towards making the realisation can be retraced, leading me to suggest that to compose this way is to have an Unprotected Practice.

1.3

recent major composers who are important for you.

by reference to

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My work has been influenced by the following visual and performance artists and choreographers as well as composers, because of the importance of visual and performative elements in my practice. A conceptual approach to making art is grounded in interdisciplinary concerns and many of the artists mentioned below have drawn from each other's practices:

- George Brecht, a composer and key figure of the *Fluxus* movement,
- Sol LeWitt, a conceptual artist who wrote one of the most important manifestos for conceptual art that is often referred to by composers,
- Johannes Kreidler, a composer who coined the term "New Conceptualism" in Germany and whose lectures (including one based on LeWitt's manifesto) and works have marked the resurgence in conceptual approaches to composition,
- John Cage, a composer whose works and writings have laid much of the groundwork for composers to work conceptually,

¹³ Cutler and Johnson, p. 2.

- Choreographer Jonathan Burrows and composer Matteo Fargion, who are key figures in the use of a compositional approach to structure in dance,
- Lucy Harvey, a conceptual artist whose work fully embodies the conceptual approach and has progressed the use of concept in visual art,
- Andy Ingamells, a composer whose work epitomises one of the many and varied approaches to conceptual music that is currently being explored.

1.4

Briefly discuss key works, not in the abstract but in relation to what you have absorbed from them.

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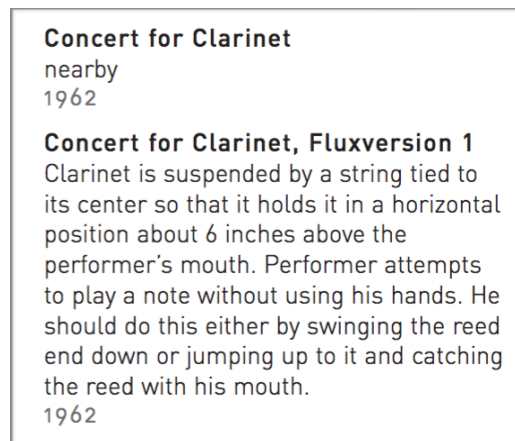
The biggest influence on my composition practice is not the composers listed above or the work discussed in the following section but rather those people included in the acknowledgements section. These are the people with whom I discuss my own work and theirs, with whom I see and critique other performances and often share opinions on what makes a work successful, exciting and influential. My Director of Studies, Dr Michael Wolters, is such a central reference. We share a very similar position towards the creation of new works and his influence on my work is holistic rather than focused on particular works that he has produced. For this reason I have chosen not to include a specific piece from Wolters in section 1.5.

For me, it is important that there is no disconnect between the idea and the realisation in a work, that the idea/concept is likewise communicated to the audience, that the performances are intentionally framed with a use of structure that supports the content and the appropriate use of well considered visual and performative elements.

To perform the score that this commentary is working to,¹⁵ I will now discuss several works by the artists referred to above, which I have found particularly engaging and influential.

¹⁴ Cutler and Johnson, p. 2.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 1-3.

1.4.1Figure 2: George Brecht: *Concert for Clarinet* and *Concert for Clarinet, Fluxversion 1*.¹⁶

Concert for Clarinet (Figure 2) is a short text piece by composer George Brecht. *Concert for Clarinet, Fluxversion 1* (Figure 2) is a more detailed instruction for how to perform the piece¹⁷, originally produced by George Maciunas for a Flux-Chamber Concert. The simple instruction of “nearby” in *Concert for Clarinet* gives me a huge amount of information and the possibility for practically endless interpretations of the piece. All the essential information is there. I can understand that the concept of the piece is simply that the clarinet or the concert or indeed something must be nearby to someone or something else. However, I find this piece the most interesting when it is viewed in combination with *Concert for Clarinet, Fluxversion 1* (Figure 2). Here we see a much more detailed score that suggests a much more precise way for the original score to be realised. What I find the most fascinating about this work is the way in which the *Fluxversion 1* can be interpreted as a performance of *Concert for Clarinet*. This work is able to use a second text score to perform an existing text score, creating a performance that not only takes the concept but also the format of the original presentation of the work into consideration. I find this exceptionally satisfying as it creates such a strong and direct link between the score and performance.

¹⁶ George Brecht, ‘Concert for Clarinet: Concert for Clarinet, Fluxversion 1’ in *The Fluxus Performance Workbook* ed. Ken Friedman, Owen Smith and Lauren Sawchyn ([n.p.]: Performance Research e-Publications, 2002), p. 25.

¹⁷ Ken Friedman, *The Fluxus Performance Workbook* (Verona: Editions Conz, 1990)

1.4.2Figure 3: Sol LeWitt: *Wall Drawing #20*¹⁸

Wall Drawing #20 (1969)
Lines in four directions, each with a different color, superimposed on a wall.

Wall drawing #20 was the first work by Sol LeWitt that I became aware of, and since then I have been fascinated by LeWitt's art work and writing. The idea of producing instructions explaining how to create a drawing, rather than producing the drawing directly, places an importance on the score and concept in a way that could not be achieved by only presenting the realised art work. This said, the importance that LeWitt places on actually realising the drawings is also what makes this work so influential for me. By realising the work and showing the instructions required to make it, the precise structure of the work is also made transparent. The two elements together communicate the idea and the relationship between the score and the realisation very clearly. I also find it intriguing that this method of producing art fits closely with the relationship between a musical score and its performance.

¹⁸ Remko Scha, *Radical Art: An Analytical Anthology of Anti-Art and Meta-Art: Sol LeWitt: Visual Concepts* (Amsterdam: Institute of Artificial Art, 2001–2005) <<http://radicalart.info/concept/LeWitt/>> [accessed 7 July 2017] (image 2 of 50).

1.4.3Figure 4: Johannes Kreidler: *Fremdarbeit*¹⁹

Fremdarbeit by Johannes Kreidler is one of those works that I wish I had written, and its presentation as a video documentary (Figure 4) is a perfect choice of format for it. In this work, Kreidler employed a composer from China and a programmer from India at a very cheap rate to construct new works based on a sample of his old works (there is some doubt as to whether in reality Kreidler actually outsourced the compositional work or merely claimed to have done so)²⁰. Both the concept of this work and the way it is communicated to the audience by Kreidler acting as a host or a “moderator”, as he describes it during the performance (see Figure 4), create an extremely critical, political and witty performance. Kreidler uses the familiar concert presentation format of an ensemble on stage with an introduction by the composer as the aesthetic framework, giving the work an inherent familiarity. He then uses this frame of reference to critique the traditional understanding of music, but also more widely the effects of globalisation and the exploitation of the workers in countries of the developing world. I have been particularly impressed by the way in which Kreidler uses this frame to interrupt the performance and to give increasing amounts of information to the audience, slowly allowing access to more context of the concept as the performance goes on. This allows a changing interaction with the material that is being presented. What I find most intriguing about the performance is the way in which the extra-musical element of hosting the performance is essential to interpreting the work. There is no attempt to hide behind the systems of composition; instead they are exposed, making the concept, and not just the musical realisation, open to criticism.

¹⁹ Johannes Kreidler, *Fremdarbeit - by Johannes Kreidler Doku* (2009), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L72d_0zIT0c> [accessed 7 July 2017]

²⁰ Martin Iddon, ‘OUTSOURCING PROGRESS: ON CONCEPTUAL MUSIC’, *Tempo*, 70, (2016), 36-49 (p. 36).

1.4.4

Figure 5: John Cage: *Lecture on Nothing*²¹

That forty minutes	has been divided into	five	large parts,	and
each unit	is divided	likewise.	Subdivision	in-
volving	a square root	is the only	possible subdivision which	
permits	this micro-macrocosmic	rhythmic structure	,	
which I find so	acceptable	and accepting	.	
As you see,	I can say anything	.		
It makes very little	difference	what I say	or even how I say it.	
At	this par-ticular moment,	we are passing through	the fourth	
part	of a unit which is the	second unit in the second large		
part of this talk	.	It is a little bit	like passing through Kansas	
.	This, now, is the	end	of that second unit	
.				
Now begins the	third unit	of the second part	.	
second part of that	third unit	.	Now the	
	Now its third part	.		
part			Now its fourth	
length	as the third part)	(which, by the way,	is just the same	
		.		
	Now the fifth	and last part	.	

When I first heard about *Lecture on Nothing* I couldn't wait to hear/read it. I'm not sure what I expected 'nothing' to look or sound like, but what I found was certainly not it. This performance, which takes the form of a lecture, is full of 'somethings' that ultimately lead us nowhere. As Cage states in the work, "what silence requires is that I go on talking"²² – silence is highlighted by speaking in the same way as 'nothing' is highlighted by 'somethings'. What is most striking for me is how exceptionally moving I find *Lecture on Nothing*. I don't enjoy all art in this way. I find pieces interesting for many reasons, but I rarely find such a strong emotional connection to a work. I admire many elements of *Lecture on Nothing* and will discuss them further below, but it is this emotional connection, like finding a kindred spirit, that makes this work stand out for me. I find most exciting the way in which this work is a text, but composed like a piece of music intended to be spoken. Its musicality comes from elements other than sound, although there is sound and rhythm when it is spoken, but rather it is music to me in the way that it is structured and presented as a score that needs to be carefully delivered to the audience. I am particularly satisfied by the elements of the work that talk about their own structure (see Figure 5) whilst

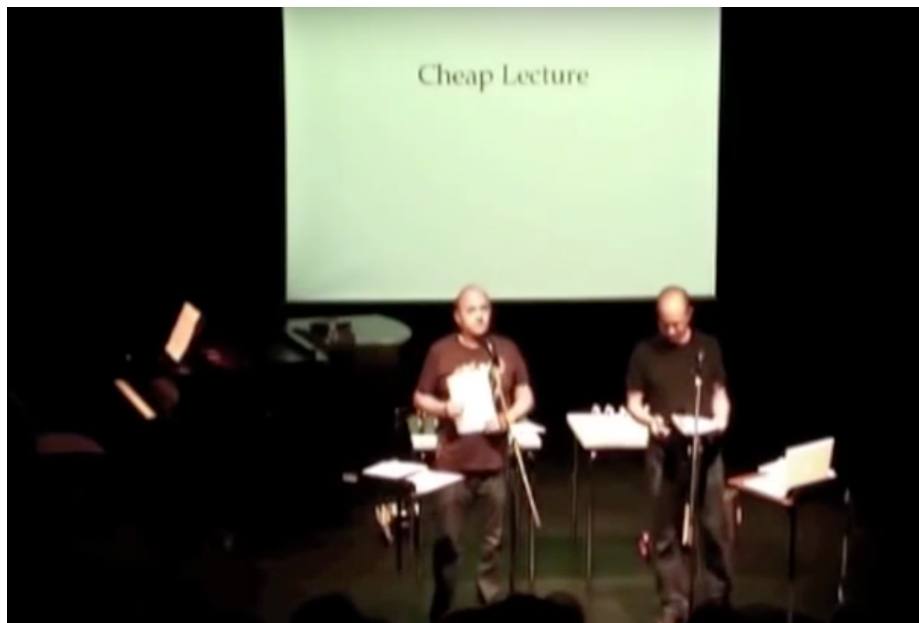
²¹ John Cage, *Silence: 50th Anniversary Edition* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), p. 112.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 109.

simultaneously following the structure they describe. In these moments I enjoy the way that the structure and the content become inseparable and reliant on each other. The structure of the work and particularly its use of repetition gently remind the listener that the lecture is trying to achieve nothing and get nowhere. Cage uses repetition in passages that satisfy the structure but also to talk about irritation, and again it is this inseparable nature of the structure and the content, and how each one places importance on the other, that I find so fascinating.

1.4.5

Figure 6: Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion: *Cheap lecture*²³



This work appropriates the structure of John Cage's *Lecture on Nothing*, replacing the words and parameters of performance with their own material in order to create a new work. Like *Lecture on Nothing* this work is self-referential and I enjoy very much how the structure of the spoken score informs the choice of content and simultaneously the spoken content exposes the structure. However, the spoken text here does not only reference the score but also the performance itself: the performers, the audience, the music and the setting (see Figure 6), and comments on these elements of the performance as we watch them. In this way, the work is able to communicate its own concept through performance. Furthermore, this work comments and shares the concept of *Lecture on Nothing* by appropriating its structure and referring to this appropriation during the performance.

²³ Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion, *Cheap Lecture – Burrows Fargion (Part 1)* (2009), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FVMb2m9sjQ>> [accessed 7 July 2017]

We see the performers “dancing” on the music. The text here is not freely spoken like in Cage’s work but is strictly and rhythmically composed. Everything that is happening is described, but not always clearly, letting the work play with clarity and confusion. The work unpicks what it is to compose and to choreograph and uses descriptions of this process as the most present material.

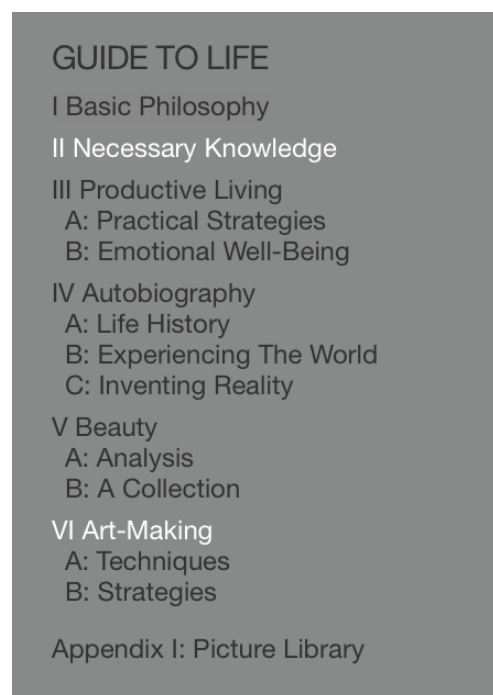
It excites me how a work that deals predominantly with giving information (that essentially explains the work we are witnessing) manages to not feel didactic by nature but inherently musical, artistic and performative.

The overall structure is communicated to the audience through the performers’ focus on the reading of the ever-diminishing score in their hands. There is no theatre magic or surprise in this work, elements are clear and expected but yet never feel flat. The reading reinforces the importance of the structure, and this is again described in the performance.

Burrows and Fargion have found a fascinating way to escape the usual unemotional/blank performance attitude, presenting the work very warmly and with character in their voices and bodies, but never stepping into the territory of acting.

1.4.6

Figure 7: Lucy Harvey: *Guide to Life*²⁴



²⁴ Lucy Harvey, *Guide to Life* (1997 –) <http://www.lucyharvey.com/II_NK.html> [accessed 7 July 2017]

Lucy Harvey's use of concept is strikingly clear and I find this clarity both wonderfully poignant and full of humour. Harvey often places an artistic lens on everyday things, from reorganising furniture to cleaning the cooker top, allowing the focus to move to the structure and the concept over the content, as the subject is so familiar that it disappears. Every work by Lucy Harvey is placed within the larger structure of "Guide to life" (see Figure 7) and revolves around the Core Concepts: "Art is important, Fascism is bad, God does not exist."²⁵ The ability to categorise and be confident and selective of works according to an additional overarching conceptual framework I find both totally mystifying and at the same time relatable to a point that it feels almost feasible to do myself; I just haven't discovered the right concept yet.

The work *What are Black Holes?*²⁶, a part of *Necessary Knowledge*, is particularly engaging for me. It celebrates failure and uses this failure to create a new work that references its own artistic process as material for the work. The work takes the form of a handout, which describes a planned lecture titled *What are Black Holes?* and the reasons why Harvey had abandoned her plans to give that lecture.

There is a distinct openness in the way the working process is shared in this work. Although Harvey states that she is "the only audience that can and should be considered"²⁷ as *Guide to Life* is addressed to herself and doesn't need to be relevant to others²⁸, she also shows a sensitivity and careful consideration for the audience and a desire not to provide false knowledge when it is not clear whether the knowledge is false or not and when the lack of clarity is also not contained in the concept: "I had to avoid risking that some members of the audience could become confused or get a false picture"²⁹. As described in the piece, Harvey abandons her original idea, as the content of the lecture, which was conceptually designed to be about a lecture as a performance, became important. I admire this decision greatly as it shows an awareness of the importance of her concept and that decisions and realisations made along the way can often be seductive, but ultimately pull one away from the concept. I feel that this sensitivity to keeping the concept so clearly framed is essential to producing a successful work and Harvey makes these considerations sublimely clear.

²⁵ Lucy Harvey, *Guide to Life: I: Basic Philosophy: 1: Core Concepts* (1997 -) <<http://www.lucyharvey.com/core.html>> [accessed 7 July 2017]

²⁶ Lucy Harvey, *Guide to Life: II: Necessary Knowledge: 5: What are Black Holes?* (2004) <<http://www.lucyharvey.com/bholes1.html>> [accessed 7 July 2017]

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

1.4.7Figure 8: Andy Ingamells: *He that plays the English Gentleman shall be welcome*³⁰³¹

Andy Ingamells is a close friend and colleague whose work has been extremely inspiring and influential for me. His work *He that plays the English Gentleman shall be welcome* is highly successful in the way in which the concept is embodied through the performance. Fundamentally, this work deals with delivering a text to an audience. The text provides the compositional context in which the performance can be interpreted in full. In the performance, Ingamells uses a violin like a cricket bat to hit tomatoes thrown at him by the audience. The letters stuck inside the tomatoes get released in the process and form a text which needs to be assembled by the audience as seen in the picture above (Figure 8), by which the piece can be understood as a solo work for violin (in the broadest sense). The way in which the audience members are required to engage with the work, to be ultimately rewarded with the acknowledgement that the composer is placing the composition and activation of the work in the hands of the composer, performer and the audience together, is particularly transparent and effective. Ultimately, it is this importance placed on the role of the audience as participants in the realisation of the work that I find so influential.

³⁰ Complete text from image: *Dieser Satz wurde von uns allen komponiert und durch unser Zusammenspiel aktiviert.*
Translation: This sentence was composed by all of us and was activated through our playing together.

³¹ Andy Ingamells, *He that Plays the English Gentleman Shall be Welcome* (Birmingham: [n.pub.], 2016)

1.5

This section may be used to identify changes in your own thinking over the duration of the programme.

32

Throughout the PhD programme my approach to composition has developed, by reflecting on previous works and applying the findings to the creation of new works.

In the early works I embodied the concept in the material. I would then introduce additional material that was not directly related to the concept in an attempt to communicate it to the audience.

The addition of explanatory material was necessary because performative elements over which I had no control created the possibility of obscuring the concept from the audience.

However, this approach was not successful because the performative elements were too strong, adding material describing the concept was never truly effective, and each new decision about sharing information itself also begged to be shared, creating an endless feedback loop that had no natural or logical ending.

In order to overcome this, in subsequent works I began to embody the concept in both the material and the performance. As all decisions I made (both material and performance related) followed the concept, additional explanatory material was unnecessary. Consequently, the artistic decisions exposed the concept in the performance.

In the final submitted work the embodiment of the concept in the whole performance is expanded, whereby the audience perform and thus discover the concept. Thereby the concept is embodied in the entire artistic process, from conception to performance.

1.6

Then tell us the main idea behind your project and give a brief description of the Main Work by way of introduction;

33

The compositions included in this Portfolio have all been guided by the main research question:

³² Cutler and Johnson, p. 2.

³³ Ibid., p. 2.

How can the concept and composition process of the artistic work be communicated to the audience and what compositional opportunities does this offer?

By engaging with this research question I arrive at my title *Unprotected Practice: Including Process as Compositional Material*. “Unprotected” here means to not attempt to hide elements of the composition process that are usually hidden and instead to actively share this information in a performance. “Unprotected” also refers to my practice of not being protective over the assumed relationship between composer and sound. Ultimately, it is about the pursuit of making the process and the concept as open and tangible as possible, in order that by exposing the process and using it as compositional material it is possible to communicate the idea.

Many conceptually driven compositions do not allow access to the idea or concept via the performance. I find this frustrating, since only by reading programme notes or talking to the composer do I feel that I can fully appreciate the work. I set out to find compositional solutions to address these issues, trying to communicate the concept as an integral part of the performance. I accepted that it would be impossible to communicate most ideas and concepts, which themselves are usually non-sonic elements, only by using sound. Instead, I chose to also compose other elements, which make communication possible and are aesthetically closer to the idea.

I compose all elements of a performance, defining composition as an approach to art-making grounded in organisational concerns. I want to expand John Cage’s famous definition of music as “the organisation of sound”³⁴ to be ‘the organisation of things,’ reflecting on the origin of the word composition as coming from the Latin *componere* meaning to “put together.”³⁵ Not only sound, but all elements of a performance should be organised, put together or composed. By using all these elements it becomes possible to communicate the concept.

The aim and ultimately the outcome of this PhD is to demonstrate through practice how the idea and concept can be communicated to the audience during the performance. Further, it shows how conceptually driven music can leave behind the established separation of ‘musical’ and ‘extra-musical’ elements, since all performed material is valued equally and no element is by nature any more or less composed than another. Thus, by definition, there is no dominance of the traditional musical sonic elements over any other element. This

³⁴ Cage, p. 3.

³⁵ Oxford Dictionary Online, *Composition* ([n.d.]) <<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/composition>> [accessed 8 July 2017]

approach attempts to make the composition process transparent, to communicate the idea, concept and composition process, to begin to dissolve the dominance of sound in performances and to challenge the inherent hierarchical structures between composer, performer and audience.

The main work of this submission is the culmination of the works discussed above. The final work embodies the concept through the use of instructions as compositional material and direct interaction with the audience within the compositional framework. The audience is then invited to also make compositional and performative decisions during a performance that equally becomes the material of that performance.

1.7

a brief account of your compositional objectives. ³⁶

The main compositional objectives for this practice-based PhD research are as follows:

1. To create work that allows the audience access to the idea that triggered the work.
2. To create a body of work with an expanded view of composition that includes visual and performative elements.
3. To create work with a direct relationship between an idea and a realisation of it.
4. To minimise decisions based on personal taste where inappropriate in the composition process (and to discover where it is inappropriate).
5. To create work that declares the whole composition process (from idea to performance) as the artistic work and not just one realised element.
6. To include the conventions of producing art e.g. advertising, programme notes, biographies, printed programmes, technical set up, health and safety, licensing etc. as supportive artistic material.

³⁶ Cutler and Johnson, p. 2.

1.8

the route of the rest of the Commentary.

Plot

37

This section is intentionally in a different font, chosen to visually separate it from the rest of the commentary. This section does not follow the same rules as the rest of the commentary but communicates the concept of this commentary as a composition.

At the end of *Sentences on Conceptual Art*, Sol LeWitt states: "These sentences comment on art but are not art."³⁸ In the same work he also remarks, "If words are used and they proceed from ideas about art, then they are art and not literature, numbers are not mathematics,"³⁹ thus creating a paradigm. Is writing about artistic ideas art or not? As LeWitt observes in his *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art*, "while writing these ideas there seemed to be obvious inconsistencies,"⁴⁰ we can be confident that LeWitt was well aware of the existing contradictions. In his writing LeWitt states that the perception of the artwork lies with the viewer and that "one usually understands the art of the past by applying the convention of the present, thus misunderstanding the art of the past."⁴¹ Looking at *Sentences on Conceptual Art* with our 21st-century gaze, I clearly see it as a work of art. The artistic practice which LeWitt describes and manifests in this text is stronger than any contradictory statements that he includes in it.

Following this understanding of writing that proceeds "from ideas about art"⁴², this PhD commentary, within the context of my portfolio and that of a wider understanding of conceptual art is, undeniably, a composition. Therefore, the only option for me was to compose it as an artistic work that is subject to the same research questions and aims as all other artistic work in this submission.

The score for this commentary is the guidance notes that are made available by Birmingham Conservatoire⁴³ which provides the structure and defines the content.

³⁷ Cutler and Johnson, p. 2.

³⁸ Sol LeWitt, 'Sentences on Conceptual Art' in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 1999) pp. 106-08 (p. 108).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁴⁰ Sol LeWitt, 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art' in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 1999) pp. 12-17 (p. 16).

⁴¹ LeWitt, 'Sentences', p. 107.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁴³ Cutler and Johnson, pp. 1-3.

Here, I am adding extra compositional material to the commentary with the intention to share the concept and context of this commentary as a composition. I would have liked to share this information at the very beginning of the commentary; instead this additional material is placed logically within the conceptual structure of the guidance notes, where the opportunity to “plot the route of the rest of the Commentary”⁴⁴ is hijacked to share the composition process and concept of the commentary.

The structure of the guidance notes has provided me with the necessary knowledge to inform all artistic decisions about what material is chosen, how it is framed and where it is placed. For example, the supporting works are listed fundamentally because the score required them. The score had to be followed precisely, as it is this precision that allows the idea to be communicated, or as LeWitt states: “When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art.”⁴⁵ In every section of this commentary that follows, the compositional material is the description of my own composition process, reflecting quite literally the subtitle of the PhD: *including process as compositional material*.

The structure is highlighted by the yellow text boxes throughout. Each box contains a single phrase of the guidance notes that this commentary is following as a structure. If put together, the yellow boxes could be read fluently, forming complete paragraphs as they are written in the original document.

The work *Dangerous Music: 20,000 words that require serious discussion (i)* is also material added to expose an element of the concept. It highlights my own anxiety about the perceived danger of being over the word limit, and of producing a composed commentary. This work also provides a practical example of the feedback loop described in section 1.5. *Dangerous Music*, as a complete work of art, should rightly be discussed in full in the commentary. However, since it was included as additional material to communicate the concept, writing a section that discusses it would also be additional material that communicates the concept and so would need to be described, which again would add more material, which again would need describing... ad infinitum. Thus from this point no further explanation of *Dangerous Music* will be given.

⁴⁴ Cutler and Johnson, p. 2.

⁴⁵ LeWitt, ‘Paragraphs’, p. 12.

Through the act of engaging with this commentary and PhD submission as a composition, you as the reader are required to make additional structural and compositional decisions in terms of how you will navigate the submitted material, and by doing so are performing this composition. I claim your decisions as additional material of this composition, facilitating multiple valid performances of this work.

The route of the rest of this commentary will introduce and discuss the supporting works and main work, followed by a conclusion. It will include appendices, a full list of composition works, a list of other works discussed, a bibliography and a discography.

2

Chapter 2: Supporting Works: ⁴⁶

5), ⁴⁷ briefly introduce each supporting work (typically 4 or

The supporting work for my portfolio is divided into two sections.

- *Definition Songs:*
 - *Comfort, Health, And, Safety, Television, Lecture, Inlet, Water, Commentary and Definition* (2.1.1),
- *Text Works:*
 - *Artistic Biography Model* (2.1.2.1),
 - *I _____ the Hard Way* (2.1.2.2),
 - *TEXT* (2.1.2.3)
 - *Swing Music* (2.1.2.4).

2.1

the background to its composition, ⁴⁸

I have produced *Definition Songs* and *Text Works* throughout the PhD programme and they have developed alongside my changes in thinking as outlined in section 1.5.

2.1.1**Definition Songs**

Definition Songs are a collection of songs which use the Google definition of particular words as lyrics and any simple melody and accompaniment that should be chosen by the performer. I have performed the majority of the songs myself in various combinations of my own voice and guitar but also including other voices, recorders and synthesiser. Following the first song *Curious* in 2014, which was a stand-alone work, the remaining songs have been used to support the wider artistic concept within another larger work or in a concert, where a specific definition supported the communication of the concept, context

⁴⁶ Cutler and Johnson, p. 2.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 2.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

or a specific element of the composition process. Regardless of the context in which the song is used, the whole definition text is sung completely with all uses of the word.

I began making definition songs after googling the definition of 'curious' to check the spelling. I was immediately amused by the bizarre example sentences for the use of the word 'curious', for example "I began to be curious about the whereabouts of the bride and groom." I realised that these definitions had creative potential: The way the definitions are written on the page look very similar to song structures with numbered sections and a clear verse – chorus structure. It is also delightfully often that these examples coincidentally reference the specific situation that the definition is used in, for example in *Lecture* we find the line "He was lecturing at the University of Birmingham"⁴⁹ or in *Water*, which was part of a concert that included works by Hillary Springfield, it reads "The smell of frying bacon made Hillary's mouth water."⁵⁰ These surprising moments are precisely what has maintained my interest in this process over the last three years. They are also testament to the potential for surprise in the composition process that comes out of a conceptual engagement with found text. Certain elements of the definition fit so precisely the specific situation but in a way I would never design or choose by taste.

The first song to be used in a supportive context was *Comfort*. This song was created for the work *maneuvers / groove space*, where the music concept was based on the notion of comfort and its use in surprising contexts. In order to share this conceptual key point, the song was sung at the end, hinting at the creative process by giving the various definitions of comfort to the audience.

Health, And and *Safety*, were all written for the performance *£108 - Art Never Lies*. In this case they allowed our group to subtly comment on the difficulties and restrictions created by health and safety considerations when we were preparing for this performance. Here the definition gave clues to the nature of some staging and performance decisions, communicating a specific, usually hidden, element of producing a performance.

Television was used as background music for a pitch for a new art-based television show. *Lecture* was similarly used to introduce a lecture performance. *Inlet* was composed for a concert series called Inlet that took place in Miami and *Water* was written for a performance in Giessen, Germany (as the translation of *gießen* into English is "to water"). *Commentary* is supportive of this commentary when viewing it as an art-work and *Definition* supports the

⁴⁹ Paul Norman, *Definition Songs: Lecture* (Birmingham: [n.pub.], 2016)

⁵⁰ Paul Norman, *Definition Songs: Water* (Birmingham: [n.pub.], 2017)

notion that all of the *Definition Songs* can also be understood as one extended work with multiple realisations.

The use of the *Definition Songs* has become a useful supporting element for certain works in my portfolio. The definitions produce a reliable structure by which to create sonic musical material where the content of the definition can give a surprisingly rich context to a work. What has become interesting about the *Definition Songs* is the way that the composition process has become a technique. When required, definitions can quickly be turned into new compositions and imported into larger artistic contexts.

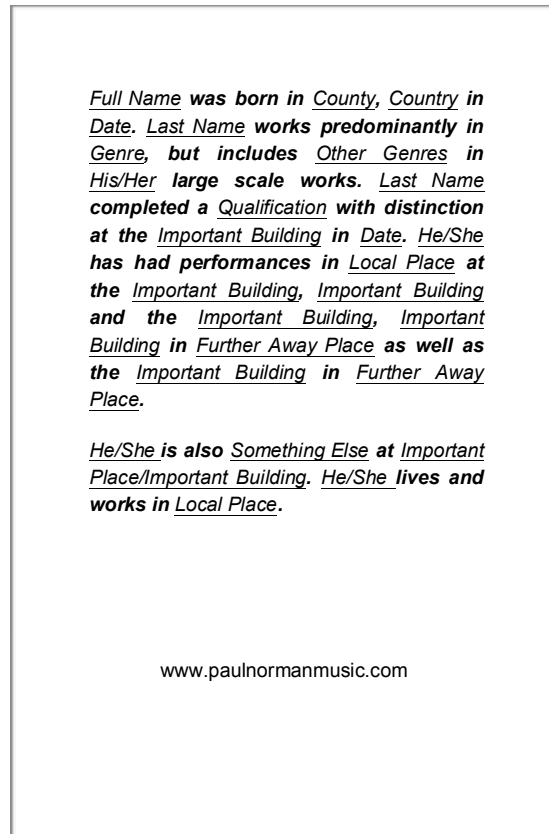
2.1.2

Text Works

The *Text Works* are a collection of works that use written text, which is not spoken or communicated in any way other than being read by the audience, as the primary realisation of the concept.

When I first started making *Text Works* I was attracted to this form because of the speed and clarity in which I could get from my initial idea to a final realisation. However, as I was making scores, I recognised that the final realisation was not complete when the score was printed. I began to compose ways of presenting these *Text Works* to an audience, designing situations to deliver the texts in the form of performances. This performative aspect and the delivery of texts became increasingly important in my approach to composition. The *Text Works* that I produced required the act of reading to be complete as works of art and as this became clear I realised that I was composing performance and interaction with the audience with the same considerations as in my main works, only not within a fixed temporal structure.

The awareness that for me the works could not finish with the production of the score but only when read was essential in confirming my artistic interest in performance. For me no work, regardless of its material content, can finish with the score. Rather it can only be understood as complete through the composed delivery of the score as a performance.

2.1.2.1**Text Works: Artistic Biography Model**Figure 9: *Business Card: Front*

Artistic Biography Model has taken several forms. It is on the home page of my website, it is my business card (see Figure 9), and it has been used in various programme notes as my biography. The work follows the advice of what should appear in an artist's biography found online⁵¹. I used this guidance to create a template that uses general placeholders instead of actual information.

This work was triggered as I began to work on the project *YBRIDE* (3.4). The shared starting point for that collaboration was the theme of 'biography'. When I was researching 'biography', I came to the conclusion that an artist's biography is something quite different to the use of the word 'biography' in other places. When looking further into artists' biographies, I noticed that there are many 'how-to's for writing an artist's biography. These 'how-to's provide suggestions for what information should be in the artist's biography and give examples. Looking at artists' biographies that I found in concert programmes, I

⁵¹ Brendan Copestake, *Artist Biography: Artright* ([n.d.]) <<http://www.artright.co.za/handbook/building-career/self-promotion-guide/artist-biography/>> [accessed 10 September 2015]

realised that, whether long or short, most biographies somehow follow the same rules and share the same information.

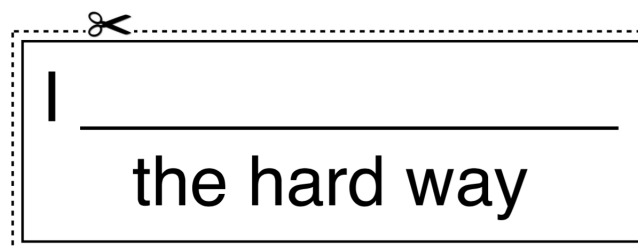
I decided to produce a biography template in order for it to become possible to present the structure of a biography but without the personal information. This work highlights the similarities between other biographies and equally exposes their structures and the tools used to create such texts. I am using placeholders to highlight the fact that information is missing. This work also offers the audience the opportunity to make the biography about themselves, thus referencing the audience as an integral part of a performance.

A conventional biography provides little insight into the art work but by replacing it by a composition like the *Artistic Biography Template*, it is possible to communicate the kind of structural concerns that are present in the performance.

2.1.2.2

Text Works: I _____ the hard way

Figure 10: *I _____ the hard way*: Cut-out



I _____ the hard way is a text/visual score that begins with two diagrams showing the example: I moved the coffee table closer to the sofa the hard way. Following this, there is a cut-out section (see Figure 10) that indirectly asks the viewer to do things “the hard way”. The cut-out would likely never be used as the work is only shown framed behind glass or in an academic journal.

This work began when I was living and working in Freiburg, Germany, for two months. I had been thinking about the collection of badges I had when I was a child, particularly about one badge that I always liked which claimed: “I climbed Snowdon the hard way”. I never did in fact climb Snowdon the hard way (the badge was a present from my brother). However, the intent to do something the hard way on purpose and the way this places emphasis on the journey and not the destination, kept fascinating me.

I spent a lot of time in my rented apartment in Freiburg, and somehow I could never settle on where the coffee table should be placed. I was dwelling on this thought when I stumbled upon the observation that instead of moving the coffee table, I could move the rug that it stood on. I knew that would be more difficult but somehow the notion of moving the floor to move the object was an intriguing thought. This notion suddenly aligned in my head with my thinking of the badge claiming to do something “the hard way”. It places importance on the journey rather than just the destination. Honouring what you do just as much as how you do it is exactly my approach to composition: the process is as important as the realisation. I therefore wanted to create a work that could highlight this thought. By following the score and thus by thinking about one’s actions and then trying a new approach (either physically or conceptually), the audience is composing their own actions, and then declaring them in the artistic context framed by my composition.

The unusable cut-out section highlights the form in which the work is shown. By thinking about cutting up a journal or removing a work from a frame in order to access the cut-out, the audience is confronted by the inappropriate presentation of the work. Thus the audience is encouraged to view the choice of presentation as an artistic decision.

This work laid the groundwork for the concept of *Pointing at things: It started when you read this* (3.5) and *Swing Music* (2.1.2.4), as both works highlight everyday actions within a composed artistic frame where the compositional and performative decisions the audiences make become material in the work.

2.1.2.3

Text Works: Swing Music

Figure 11: *Swing Music*



Swing Music is a short text score printed on a badge (see Figure 11). The first time I distributed *Swing Music*, the badges were handed out to participants of the *Research Matter(s): Conversations about research in Arts, Design and Media* conference at Birmingham City University⁵². While I personally handed the badges out, a film that showed the preparation of the badges and the sound that this made was screened behind me. The badges themselves were contained in an envelope, which included a suggestion of how to wear the badge and hinted at the blurring of the roles of audience, performer and composer that the work aimed to highlight.

The idea for *Swing Music* began with an observation. In this case it was the fact that as people walk, they swing their arms to quite different degrees, depending on many factors from speed of walking to posture to the size and shape of things being carried. I noticed the inherent rhythm and musicality of this situation-specific performance that people are unknowingly giving every day. It was exactly this realisation of 'arm swinging as a

⁵² PGR Studio, *Research Matter(s): Conversations about research in Arts, Design and Media* (Birmingham: Birmingham City University, 2016) <<http://pgr-studio.co.uk/event/research-matters-conversations-about-research-in-arts-design-and-media/>> [accessed 21 July 2017]

performance' that inspired me to create the work. The aim of *Swing Music* was to provide a compositional frame, in which an everyday action can be viewed as a performance and to communicate it so it could be seen as such by everybody.

Presenting the score as a badge meant that the score would be worn by those who chose to participate. By wearing the badge the score has the possibility to become part of the wearer's everyday life and travel out into the world for much longer than would be possible with a traditionally printed score. The badge being worn also connects the score directly to a person and the wearing of the badge itself becomes inherently performative. Through the combination of the score itself and the performative action of wearing it, several questions come to the fore: What is performance in this case? Who initiates the performance? Who is the performer? Who is the audience? I realised that in order for there to be an audience of this work, the score must be read, but by reading the score, each new audience member also becomes a performer. So what is the role of the person wearing the badge? In one sense, wearing the badge is another version of a performance but rather than performing the action, it is about performing the delivery of the text. Communicating the text to others in order to allow them to perform the action also places the wearer close to the role of a composer, since they initiate a performance. The work gains an inherent multiplicity as the various inherited roles become changeable, transitory and reliant on the perception of each individual.

I include the audience's decisions as part of my composition. When the badge is handed over, the audience members need to decide how and if they will perform the work. This process is fundamentally organisational and by referring to my continuation of Cage's thinking⁵³ (see section 1.6), they are responsible for the organisation of things, making their decisions inherently compositional.

⁵³ Cage, p. 3.

2.2

why it is in the folio and how it relates to the main work and to the points you develop in Chap. 1.

54

These works have been chosen as part of the portfolio as they provide insight into the various ways I have engaged with my research questions through practice.

The *Definition Songs* are listed as supporting works as they have been used quite literally to support larger works. They highlight my use of found structures and demonstrate several ways in which the concept or other specific elements of the composition process that are usually hidden can be communicated to the audience in a performance. They also show how conceptually driven compositions can have multiple valid realisations.

The *Text Works* are included as supportive works because several of the works have created direct reference points and informed the decision process of later works. These works also stand apart from the main work because they deal with structure and temporality in a very different way to the other performed works. Due to the nature of how the *Text Works* are delivered to the audience I have no control over how and when they are viewed; and, further, I am unable to witness the majority of public interactions with the works.

The *Text Works* have influenced the development of many aspects of my work:

- They demonstrate how the delivery of text can be composed as a performance and how performance forms an important aspect of my artistic output,
- They have helped me establish a consistent style for visual elements of my work,
- They highlight the various ways in which the audience can engage with text during a performance of my work,
- They place emphasis on the audience as part of both the performance and the composition process,
- They show my appropriation of the systems of art production in my own artistic output,
- They begin to blur the roles of composer, performer and audience.

⁵⁴ Cutler and Johnson, p. 2.

3**Chapter 3 (4, 5?) The Main Work**

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The works discussed below form the Main Work of the submission, as described in section 1.6, and shows the changes in my thinking in the course of the PhD programme outlined in section 1.5.

The following works are discussed:

- **3.1.** *Grieg*
- **3.2.** *Adrian Boult Hall ist kaputt: By Brass*
- **3.3.** *maneuvers / groove space*
- **3.4.** *YBRIDE*
- **3.5.** *Pointing at Things: It started when you read this*

I have chosen the works listed above to form the main part of my submission, since they best communicate specific aspects of my research project.

I will address specific considerations of the research in each work:

- *Grieg* shows how all decisions made in the composition process can relate directly to the idea through the use of concept.
- *Adrian Boult Hall ist kaputt: By Brass* demonstrates how this use of concept can be applied to composing work for live performance by a large group of musicians and in directly addressing an audience.
- *maneuvers / groove space* shows how this process communicates the concept to the audience and the effect this has on a collaborative process.
- *YBRIDE* exposes how incompatible working methods can block the work as a whole from communicating the compositional concept as part of a collaboration.

⁵⁵ Cutler and Johnson, p. 2.

- *Pointing at things: It started when you read this* is the clearest example of the concept being communicated to the audience during the performance and extends the decision-making process to the audience.

3.1

Grieg

The idea for *Grieg* came about when I discovered that my Apple computer could convert text into a spoken track. This is an option that appears in a drop down menu when you right-click on any selected text, and is featured on all current Apple computers. When I was exploring this tool, I discovered that one of the different voices you can choose the text to be spoken in is a voice called 'cellos', which will sing any text to the tune of *In the Hall of the Mountain King* by Edvard Grieg. This discovery made me laugh because the context in which it was used was so unexpected and absurd, as suddenly I was listening to a seminal work of the classical music canon with lyrics; it even restructures the tune in order to serve the phrasing of the words. At this point all context of the original piece by Grieg had disappeared apart from the most familiar excerpt of the melody.

In the Hall of the Mountain King is one of the many iconic pieces of classical music that have been absorbed into popular culture through their use in advertising, mobile phone ringtones, etc. This whole piece has been reduced to a short familiar tune and it doesn't matter any more whether it is played by an orchestra, Midi, a single voice or by any other means. The reason it is featured on the Apple computers is not out of respect for Grieg or his composition, nor does it make a reference to classical music. It is only there because of its familiarity in popular culture. Grieg himself and the original considerations of the work are removed altogether. I wanted to highlight this by juxtaposing some of the missing context with the tune.

My work required a text to produce the music. By getting the computer to sing a text about Grieg, I was able to reconnect his identity with the tune. Since the tune is part of popular culture and is used uncritically of its original context, the equally uncritical use of Google and Wikipedia seemed the most appropriate way to find a text. The combination of Google and Wikipedia is by far the most common way of gaining information. This is proven by the high ranking of Wikipedia on the Google search engine for almost any key word and, when googling Grieg, the first link is to the Grieg Wikipedia page. Wikipedia's insufficiently referenced information is aesthetically similar to the unreferenced use of famous classical pieces in pop culture. It doesn't really matter where the information came from or even if it

is entirely accurate; what is more important is it being readily available, easily accessible and presented in a familiar way.

In my piece, it was vital to present the process of creating the song, because that allowed me to make the tools that are used (Google, Wikipedia, Apple computer feature) visible. When searching for how to do something, particularly on a computer, it is YouTube that ranks highest on Google. Again, it's not important to me why the content is there or how it was discovered and it's not important to watch whole videos but just to extract the information you need. In my experience people are often uncritical of information available on the internet, as it is often impossible to know if the information is verified or not. In much the same way they are uncritical of where these appropriated tunes of the classical repertoire come from: their original context, intention and presentation. Grieg's *In the Hall of the Mountain King* is also known as the theme from the Alton Towers Theme Park advert, or Dvorak's *Symphony No. 9* is also known as the music from the Hovis bread advert. I use information in the same way in my work, using what is prevalent over what is factually verifiable.

By choosing the YouTube tutorial as the format for presenting this process, further emphasis is placed on the tools of popular culture as the format itself reflects the content. The process of producing the song and the format of the presentation all become compositional material of *Grieg*. The compositional material creates a work that appropriates structures of popular culture. The work is performed within an artistic context in concert halls, gallery spaces, on my artist website or within the context of this PhD submission. When placed in this way we are able to look at the tools themselves and not only at the material they communicate. The tools and thus the composition process are utilised as part of the artistic material of the work, allowing the work to reflect on their use in wider culture. In this context, *Grieg* highlights popular culture's emancipation of Grieg's identity from his most famous piece by using related tools to introduce him back in.

3.2

Adrian Boult Hall ist kaputt: By Brass

This work was triggered when it was announced to the students of Birmingham Conservatoire that the Adrian Boult Hall (ABH), the largest concert hall in the conservatoire, would be knocked down during the ongoing term. As Frontiers, the conservatoire's contemporary music festival, was approaching and it would be the last edition while the ABH was still standing, I wanted to create a work that would celebrate the hall. As well as

honouring the hall I wanted to find a way to give some control back to the students of the conservatoire, who had no say in the timing and nature of the ABH's demolition.

Forming the idea

I decided to attempt to knock down the ABH ahead of schedule. It is a well-known phenomenon that it is possible to demolish objects with sound, the most famous example is a singer smashing a wine glass with their voice. This phenomenon happens when the sound that is produced is loud enough and matches the resonant frequency of the object. In the case of the wine glass this is the pitch that one hears when the wine glass is tapped. I theorised that if I could find the resonant frequency of the ABH then I would be able to demolish it by reproducing that pitch very loudly. The attempt to knock down the hall was purely theoretical: I knew that success was extremely unlikely, but the focus of the work was not succeeding but rather preparing and making the attempt.

Finding the resonant frequency

All structures have resonant frequencies, but rooms, and particularly concert halls, have many different resonant frequencies. So I concluded that in order to knock down a hall, all these resonant frequencies would have to be played at the same time.

To find the resonant frequencies of the ABH, I used a tool⁵⁶ on the internet that will calculate the resonant frequencies of any room based on its dimensions. Using the resonant frequencies was essential to stand a chance to knock down the hall but it also functioned in a different way: Much the same as we hear the sound of the glass if we tap it, by playing the resonant frequencies of the hall we are able to hear its own inherent sound. This produces a sonic image of the ABH, celebrating the hall itself as a musical object.

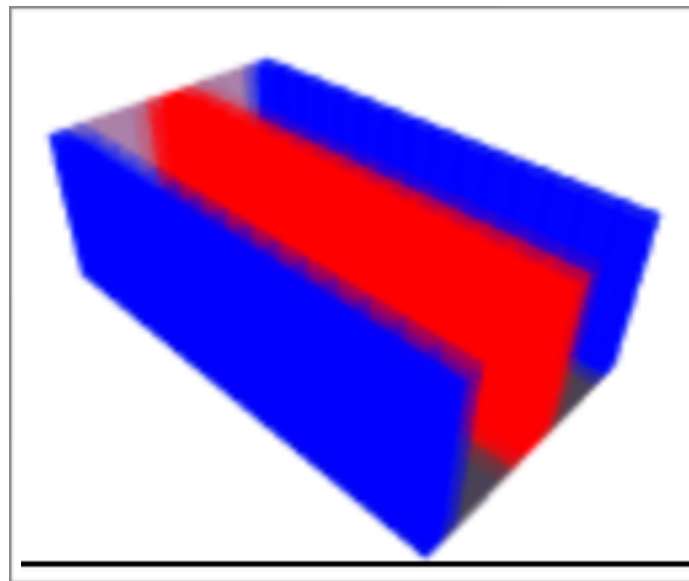
I needed to work with multiple loud instruments to reproduce all the resonant frequencies. I chose to work with brass instruments as they are the loudest pitched instruments that can be found in abundance within the Conservatoire. Choosing brass was additionally suitable as it let me work with the single instrument brass choirs of the Conservatoire. These brass choirs are rather unique to the Conservatoire environment, since other institutions rarely have enough brass players. It was conceptually important to use students of the conservatoire as performers, and using an ensemble structure that is inherent to the conservatoire emphasised the context of the work even more strongly.

⁵⁶ Andy Mel, *Amroc - The Room Mode Calculator* ([n.d.]) <<http://amroc.andymel.eu/?l=3076&w=1798&h=1078&st=false&so=false&r60=2.0>> [accessed 15 January 2016]

Positioning the performers

I also followed the concept to position the performers in the hall. The website I used to get the frequencies also provides a visualisation of the node point (the point at which a sound wave's amplitude is zero) of each frequency. Figure 12 shows a sound wave that is travelling across the width of the hall. The node points of the sound wave it shows, are marked by blue and red boxes. Theoretically if a sound was produced from the blue box on the left of the diagram and travelled precisely across the width of the hall, then that sound wave's amplitude would be zero at the red box and at the blue box to the right of the diagram.

Figure 12: example of node points⁵⁷



I used this information to decide that each performer should stand on a node point and direct the bell of their instrument in the direction of the sound wave. Practically speaking, this resulted in the performers being spread out across the whole ABH.

Structuring the performance

In order to structure the work, I researched the demolition of buildings by several means. Demolition by explosion seemed aesthetically the most similar to my planned attempt with sound. When watching a demolition by explosion, the majority of time is spent waiting. After a short address from the site manager, all you can see are people checking things and talking seriously to each other in ways you can't understand, preparing the demolition leading to the actual demolition attempt. My work adopted this structure. The longest part of the performance was spent preparing the demolition by distributing precise pitches to the performers, informing the performers where to stand and which way to face. This

⁵⁷ Ibid.

process could not be fully understood by the audience as it was too far away from them and required specific knowledge (see 3.2.4 at 2 min 4 sec).

Addressing the audience

Following the structure, I also addressed the audience directly with a short introduction (see 3.2.2 at 0 min 38 sec) and after the attempt, I addressed the audience again to explain that we had failed (see 3.2.2 at 7 min 9 sec). These introduction and closing statements were essential in framing the preparation and attempt to demolish the ABH as part of the performance. Without the introduction, the process that led to the attempt could have been seen as a purely technical element to the work. The introduction also allowed me to share some of the concept of the work by explaining what would happen and pointing out the potential health and safety risks. The content of this introduction and the following section of preparing the attempt created a visceral suspense; I even found myself almost believing that we could succeed and the sense of disappointment when we failed was surprisingly real.

Positioning the audience

The audience were restricted from entering the hall by a barrier. The barrier was made of poles that are usually connected by velvet ropes and used in a museum context to protect the art work from being touched by the audience. However, I replaced the ropes with hazard tape, which has the opposite intention of protecting the public from a dangerous site. By combining these two uses of a barrier, I achieved an ambiguity between exhibiting an art work and protecting the audience, suggesting that the event was both a legitimate attempt to knock the hall down and a performance. This also emphasised the real chance of succeeding and the bizarre notion that somehow the performers were 'protected' by their high-vis jackets and ear defenders.

The closing statement announced the attempt to knock down the hall as a failure, creating a clear end to the performance.

3.3

maneuvers / groove space

maneuvers / groove space is a dance performance that was created and premiered in Zurich, Switzerland in collaboration with choreographer Sebastian Matthias and performance artist Nino Baumgartner.

This work applies the compositional approach outlined in *Grieg* and *Adrian Boult Hall ist kaputt: By Brass* to a collaboration with artists from other genres who have different approaches to creating work. My concept was followed closely to create the material, and thus was strongly present in the work. This became apparent when my collaborators started to make decisions towards their artistic proposals and the dramaturgy of the work in reaction to my concept.

Sebastian Matthias and the groove space series

This is the second of five works in Matthias's performance series *groove space* that researches the choreographic 'groove' of different cities with new artistic collaborators in each city. Matthias's choreographic works deal with audiences that are free to move about the performance space and the dance is designed to be experienced somatically. In his PhD thesis, Matthias defines 'somatic' as follows:

While the Duden (German Dictionary) defines "somatic" based on greek "soma" (σῶμα) for body as "relating to the body" and separates "somatic" from spirit, soul, mood, in the discourse of somatic dance practices the term "somatics" is understood as the entirety of the living body: body, spirit, soul and its environment. Thomas Hanna established an understanding of "somatics" as the inner individual experience: "the body as perceived from within by first person perception."⁵⁸

Within this open performance setting, the dancers and audiences can get very close to each other, enabling the audience to perceive the dance not only visually, but also somatically, stimulating their own movement and thus a shared physical sensation with the dancers. To create material for the work, Matthias and his dancers observe situations in everyday life such as the people moving or waiting in a subway station, and then research choreographic solutions for recreating that somatic sensation within the theatre space.

Forming the idea

My brief was to compose music that I could perform myself using live electronics and electric guitar. Matthias had originally planned the work without music but then worried that if the performance was too quiet, it would make the audience feel "uncomfortable". Therefore, I chose to focus on 'comfort' as the main idea for the composition. With the music as a late addition, it was clear that my role lay outside Matthias's main artistic

⁵⁸ Sebastian Matthias, *Gefühlter Groove – verknüpfte Bewegungsinteraktionen in Clubtanz und zeitgenössischer Choreographie* (unpublished doctoral thesis, HafenCity Universität Hamburg, 2016), p. 33.

considerations for the work, meaning I could consider my role in the background. I made this thought productive by also considering the notion of 'background music' as an idea to support the creation of the musical material. Thus, before exposing my approach to the collaborative process every compositional decision I made was based on the ideas of 'comfort' and 'background music'.

Initial composition process

My initial steps were to create a live electronics system and music to perform live on the electric guitar.

Live electronics

To follow the idea of comfort, I chose not to consider my own feelings of what is 'comfortable', as this would make the composition reflect my own opinions rather than 'comfort' itself. Consequently, I chose to look for common occurrences of comfort that I could find through a Google search (see 3.1), settling on three occurrences of comfort:

1) The Comfort Noise Generator

On modern communication systems (such as Skype), when one party is speaking, the other party's computer transmits no sound in order to save bandwidth. The unwanted result of this mechanism is that the speaker may believe that the transmission has been lost, and therefore hang up prematurely. To avoid this issue, the speaker's computer generates a synthetic sound called 'Comfort Noise' that reassures the speaker that the connection has not been lost.⁵⁹

2) Comfortable Sound Level

CERN (European Council for Nuclear Research near Geneva, Switzerland) has defined sound levels as part of its safety guide for experiments. In order to describe these levels measured in decibel, they provide a list of reference values which includes Comfortable sound level (40-60dB).⁶⁰

3) comfortingmusic.com

This is the website of composer John Barnard, providing free music which is designed to be comforting for people with anxiety and stress. The music I chose for this work was

⁵⁹ Anonymous, *Comfort Noise* ([n.d.]) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comfort_noise> [accessed 29 September 2014]

⁶⁰ Anonymous, *Safety Guide for Experiments at CERN* (2004) <<http://safetyguide.web.cern.ch/safetyguide/Part3/25.2.html>> [accessed 29 September 2014]

used on the relaxation audio channel for long-haul British Airways flights from 2005-06.⁶¹

As the performance space being too quiet was considered “uncomfortable” by Matthias, I decided to create my own version of a Comfort Noise Generator (CNG) that would reassure the audience by playing music into the performance space only when it was quiet.

All three occurrences of ‘comfort’ were used to make my CNG. A microphone was used to measure how loud the performance space was; when it was sufficiently quiet my CNG played the music found on comfortingmusic.com, never louder than Comfortable sound level as defined by CERN. The result is that no accidental silence can happen during the performance.

Guitar Music

To create the material I would perform live on the electric guitar I first focused on the idea of ‘background music’.

I began by thinking about background jazz musicians and the material they use. Most players will use a *Real Book*, which is a collection of jazz standards (popular jazz songs) available in various transpositions and to suit different voices. Pieces from the book are chosen at the whim of the players and most often performed from sight. Songs are then repeated multiple times with the players choosing when to stop. To follow this thinking I decided to make my own version of a *Real Book* called *Comfortable Music*.

To create the *Comfortable Music* book I worked with a list of the ten most frequently used chords in popular music⁶² (G, F, C, a, d, e, E, D, B, A⁶³) which I found online whilst searching for ‘comfort’. To produce a reasonable amount of varied songs, I used a website where you can insert a list of letters and it will tell you all the words that can be created from them⁶⁴. This produced a total of 80 words (for example BAG), which became 80 songs by playing each letter as a chord.

⁶¹ John Barnard, *Calming Music* ([n.d.]) <<http://www.comfortingmusic.com>> [accessed 20 September 2014]

⁶² Dave Carlton, *The Hooktheory Blog: I analysed the chords of 1300 popular music songs for patterns. This is what I found* (2012) <<http://www.hooktheory.com/blog/i-analyzed-the-chords-of-1300-popular-songs-for-patterns-this-is-what-i-found/>> [accessed 29 September 2014]

⁶³ An upper case indicates a major chord and a lower case a minor chord (the B in this case relates to the German notation system where B is equivalent to the note Bb in the UK notation system which I used as the work was created in the German speaking part of Switzerland).

⁶⁴ James Stanley, *Countdown Solver* ([n.d.]) <<http://incoherency.co.uk/countdown/>> [accessed 14 October 2014]

To introduce one of my chosen occurrences of 'comfort' into the guitar music, I decided to again work with Comfortable sound level. Each chord was assigned two values: an amplification value (from 1-10), which dictated where the volume knob of the guitar should be positioned and a dynamic value (from *ffff* to *pppp*) which dictated how hard the guitar should be strummed. These two values were inversely proportional, so that the higher the amplification level, the softer the dynamic level. The aim when playing the chords was then to keep the resulting volume at Comfortable sound level.

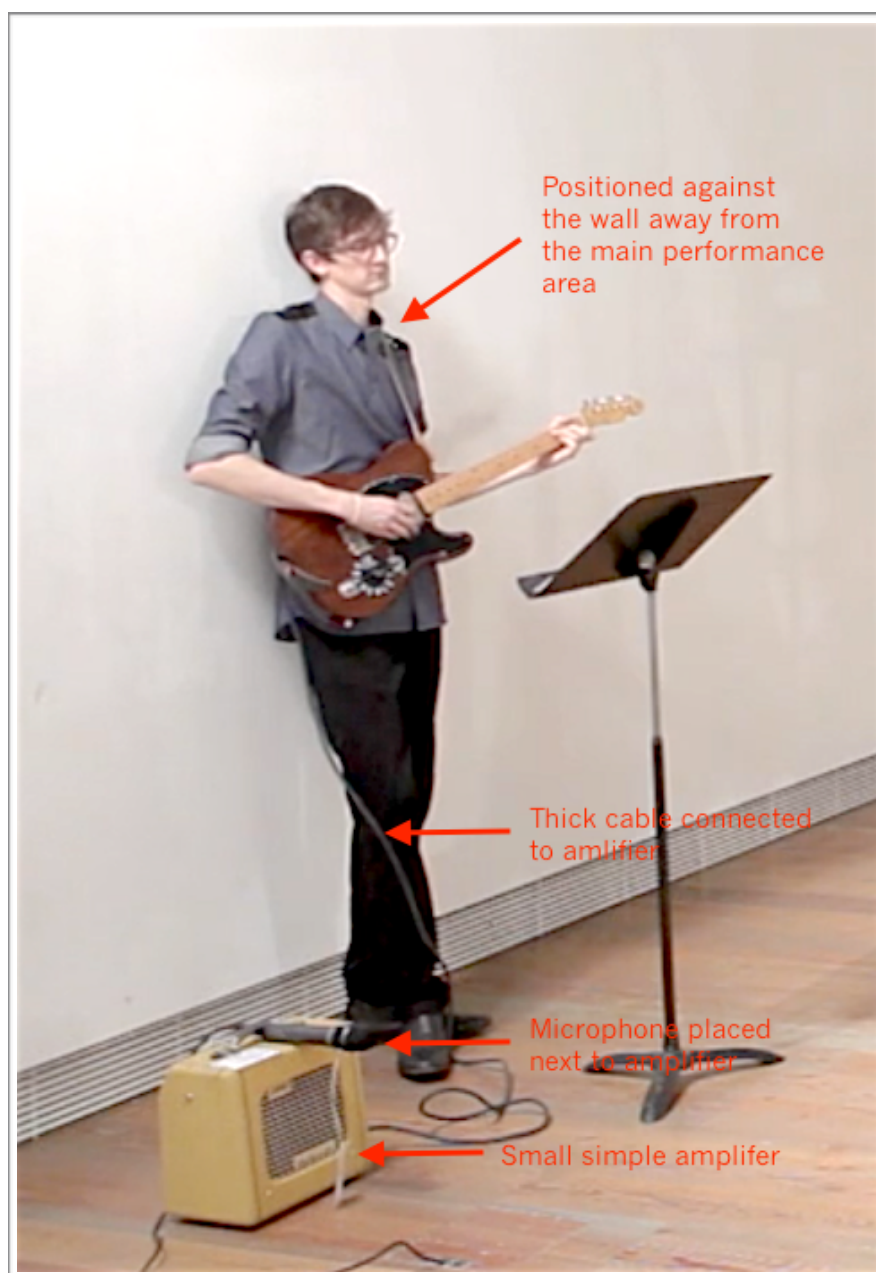
Further links to comfort are also present in the creation of the book. The function of 'background music' is mostly to provide comfort, which also supported my initial decision to work with the idea of 'background music'. By choosing chords that are very familiar, the harmonic material is never surprising. Due to the prevalence of the guitar in pop music it is also the case that these chords are very easy and comfortable to play on the guitar.

Performing with the live electronics and the guitar

Deciding how to perform the composed material is an essential part of my composition process (see section 1.2).

Following the idea of 'background music', at the beginning of the performance I positioned myself against the wall and away from the main performance area in the centre of the space. The electric guitar set-up was very simple and the link between the guitar and the amplifier was made as clear as possible by using a thick cable. The microphone that controlled the CNG was also placed next to the amplifier (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: Live Performance



To perform from the *Comfortable Music* book I used it in the same way as was described when referring to the *Real Book* - flicking through, choosing a song and repeating it until I felt I had played it enough, before moving on to the next song which was chosen and performed in the same way.

Placing the microphone that controlled the CNG next to the amplifier visually linked the two elements together. However, the nature of the CNG is that the music it produces can never be heard at the same time as the guitar. The way the CNG interacts with the guitar music brings attention to the music it produces, as it is constantly muted and un-muted when the guitar plays and stops (see 3.3.6 at 20 min 37 sec).

Several times during the performance I also repositioned myself, unplugging the amplifier before moving to a new position on the outside of the performance space. These moments brought further attention to the music produced by the CNG as it was given more time to be heard.

Giving the audience access to the concept

In this work, instead of supporting the communication of the concept by addressing the audience directly with speech (see 3.2), I added four performative elements to give additional access to the concept:

- 1) To make the changes in amplification level more visible I placed a sticker on the volume control of the guitar and used a more precise volume knob (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Exaggerated volume control



- 2) Labels were attached to the microphone, amplifier and the computer that controlled the CNG, briefly explaining their functions (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: Label attached to amplifier⁶⁵



- 3) A scene in the performance was added specifically to highlight how the microphone mutes and un-mutes the music played by the CNG. The microphone was handed to individual audience members who then got a chance to play with the CNG by using their voice to mute the 'background music'. In this situation the label on the microphone was particularly useful as when the audience member was handed the microphone, they had the chance to read about the function of the microphone before using their voice to activate it (see 3.3.5 at 4 min 48 sec).
- 4) No music was performed from memory, which placed emphasis on the structure of the scores through the act of reading.

My initial thinking was that these four elements would be the primary method to communicate the concept during the performance. However, I realised that they only give access to how specific elements function and do not give direct access to the concept of 'comfort' or 'background music'.

⁶⁵ The label reads: "The volume of the guitar is adjusted to remain comfortable as defined by CERN. Die Lautstärke der Gitarre wird so angepasst, dass sie nach der Definition von CERN angenehm bleibt."

Reactions from collaborators

I came to the conclusion that my concept of 'comfort' was clearly expressed in the work because of how precisely I had followed it in creating the material for the performance. I knew that the concept was clearly communicated, since my collaborators had to make decisions that reacted against it to meet their own artistic intentions. Whilst their reactions weakened my concept, it remained present in the performance.

In reaction to my concept Matthias requested that I add three elements:

- 1) It became clear that Matthias didn't want the whole work to be 'comfortable'; I therefore had to compose a way for the CNG to not provide music even if the performance space was quiet. To achieve this I took the microphone and tapped on it directly. The system remained active but was tricked into thinking it had detected a loud sound in the performance space. As I did this I walked around the space to make this action visible.
- 2) A rhythmic moment was also required. To compose this I made an arrangement of a song from the *Comfortable Music* book that was based on a tongue-in-cheek comment by Matthias saying that Baumgartner's performative actions reminded him of the stage show *Stomp*. I used morse code for the word 'stomp' to produce the rhythmic structure, and outlined the pulse by stomping on the floor for the duration of the piece (see 3.3.6 at 37 min 39 sec).
- 3) I was also requested to sing a song whilst playing the guitar. I created the *Definition Song: Comfort* as described in section 2.1.1 (see 3.3.6 at 53 min 51 sec).

Conclusion

I came to realise that the most effective way to communicate a concept in a performance is to ensure that all decisions relate directly to it. It is not necessary to address the audience directly and tell them what the concept is (see 3.2) or, as in this work, to add extra material pointing towards it; rather the concept can be embodied in the performance via the compositional decisions that are made where even reactions to requests from collaborators can refer directly to the concept.

Additional aspect of the performance that I have taken forward

In addition to the comments made above, the performance situation of *maneuvers / groove space* also influenced my future work.

Gaining experience in creating and performing in a 'social space'

For the performance situation in this work, Matthias, Baumgartner and I tried to create a 'social space', where audience members are free to move around and rely more on the learned notions of social interaction in everyday life rather than according to the internalised rules of traditional theatre performance.

This work toured to three more cities: Basel, Switzerland, Freiburg and Hamburg both in Germany, and was performed altogether around 10 times. This gave me a wealth of experience with the specific performance situation of the work. The challenges of performing in the social space are quite different from the traditional format of a seated audience facing the stage. The social space highlights the performativity (how the material is performed as opposed to what is performed) of the performers. I have become much more comfortable performing in these situations but moreover, as the performance itself is a composed element in my work, this setting is extremely supportive in communicating that. I have therefore taken this forward into my future performances, considering how it can be possible to create a social space with an actively and physically engaged audience, but without it being facilitated by a choreography.

3.4

YBRIDE

YBRIDE is a dance performance that was created in Berlin, Germany and premiered in Hamburg, Germany, in collaboration with choreographer Josep Caballero García.

This work shows that when a concept is used to create multiple independent pieces and to arrange them into a larger structure, they can communicate information about each other and embody the concept within the whole work. I reflect on the consequences when a concept that is embodied in the composed elements is not acknowledged by collaborators and reduced to a desirable musical aesthetic that is then used for a performance without regard to its concept.

Josep Caballero García

García's choreographic work focused on using biographical information as material (personal stories, memories, traditions, movement etc.). The majority of his works deal with gender concerns. For *YBRIDE* (from 'hybride', French for 'hybrid') García, focused on the 'hybridity' of the selected dancers, in regard to both their cultural and gender identities. From these concerns he selected personal details from the dancers' biographies as the basis for the choreographic material. The largest part of the performance was formed of

solos where the dancers performed traditional folk dance steps from the area in which they and/or their parents were born whilst simultaneously telling personal stories from their past.

Forming the idea

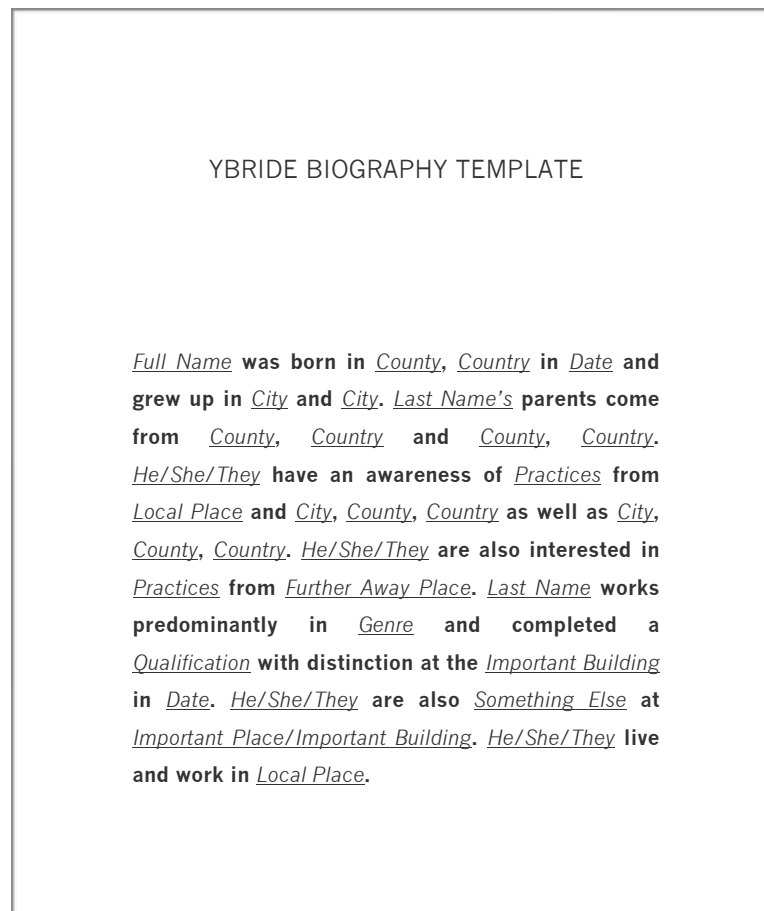
My brief was that I should also work with the notion of 'biography' and that I should be able to perform all of the music myself live onstage solely with acoustic instruments. As I was also supposed to perform onstage I chose to channel my own personal biographical history through a concept whereby the function of the music within the work would be to communicate my concept. By doing so the concept could become an entity and part of the performance with its own needs and stories to tell.

To form the concept, I therefore decided to work with the notion of the 'artist's biography' – the kind you often find in programme notes – as this is usually the meaning of the word 'biography' in an artistic context.

Composing with the idea of biography

My initial engagement with the notion of biography produced the work *Artistic Biography Model* (2.1.2.1). The template gave me a structure on which all other decisions could be based. During the composition process and while working together with my collaborators I made a new version of the *Artistic Biography Model* called *YBRIDE BIOGRAPHY TEMPLATE*. This allowed the template to point at 'hybridity' by including the plural pronoun and the birthplace of parents (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: YBRIDE BIOGRAPHY TEMPLATE



The YBRIDE BIOGRAPHY TEMPLATE thus became the core material of the work. By using the template to create the music, the abstract notion of biography was embodied in the performance.

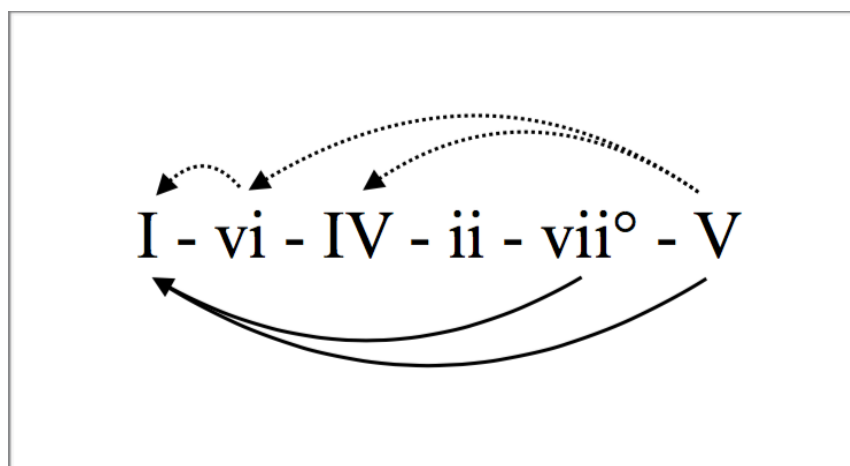
In order to produce harmonic material, I used each of the dancers' professional websites to fill in the template. I then chose six points where information had been filled in (Full Name, County, Country, Genre, Qualification and Important Building) and used the information to make six chords for each performer. For example, in each of the dancers' biographies 'Genre' was filled in with Dance. By selecting the letters of the word that can be interpreted as musical notes, the resulting chord became D, A, C, E. in the same way one dancer's name Dani Brown, becomes D, A, B.

I chose to play an upright piano in the performance for several reasons: There is one in the corner of every dance studio I have worked in, and in this way is entirely connected to learning how to dance but it is also connected to learning to compose, creating a point of

common ground between the two genres. The upright piano is usually used to represent different instruments, for example, being used to approximate the sound of an orchestra or even just a concert grand piano. In this work the upright piano was chosen to be itself and the points made about the multiple contexts in which it is used became its 'biography' connecting it to the concept. This let me suggest that the piano, like the concept, is also an entity in its own right and performs in the work by sharing its biography, in a different but relatable way to the dancers' performance of their biographies.

To include the piano's biography into the concept I chose to work with the rules of functional harmony in western music, as this directly links to the initial steps in both a dance and music education. I chose to structure the order in which chords would be played according to a functional harmony diagram (see Figure 17).

Figure 17: Functional Harmony Diagram



The Roman numerals in the diagram represent triadic chords (in the key of C major they would be C, Am, F, Dm, Bdim and G). To produce functional harmony you can begin on any chord, moving to the right as many steps as you want, but in order to travel to the left you must follow an arrow (for example it is never possible to move from chord V to ii).

To expose these considerations and the harmony system that was being followed, all pieces used the triadic chords described in the diagram to produce effective tonal music alongside the chords created from the biographies. This meant that I had a set of chords for each performer and a set of chords that 'belonged' to the piano, and it was by combining these sets of chords and by working with the biography template as a structure that I was able to create musical material for the work.

Structuring the pieces

Initially I wrote three short piano pieces (*Hybrid Biography Model*, *Without Dancing* and *Trance*) that relate to the concept and the biography of the piano and use the *YBRIDE BIOGRAPHY TEMPLATE* as a structure in different ways. In all three pieces the text of the template (or parts of it) are spoken as the piano plays, reinforcing the connection between the piano chords and the concept.

In *Hybrid Biography Model* (see 3.4.3 at 11 min 5 sec) the text of the whole template is spoken as naturally as possible and a chord is played each time a placeholder is spoken. The piece is played two times, first with the triadic chords that belong to the piano and the second time with the chords created from my biography.⁶⁶

In *Without Dancing* (see 3.4.3 at 61 min 26 secs) only the placeholders in the template are spoken in the order they appear. After each word that was used to create a chord is said, it is followed by the triadic chord and the chord created from my biography.

In *Trance* (see 3.4.3 at 69 min 10 sec) the template text is read with the placeholders taken out. The text is then reorganised by dividing the text into six sections and giving each section a chord, the root of which is played as the text is spoken. The order of the sentences then followed the steps of a folk dance (see below).

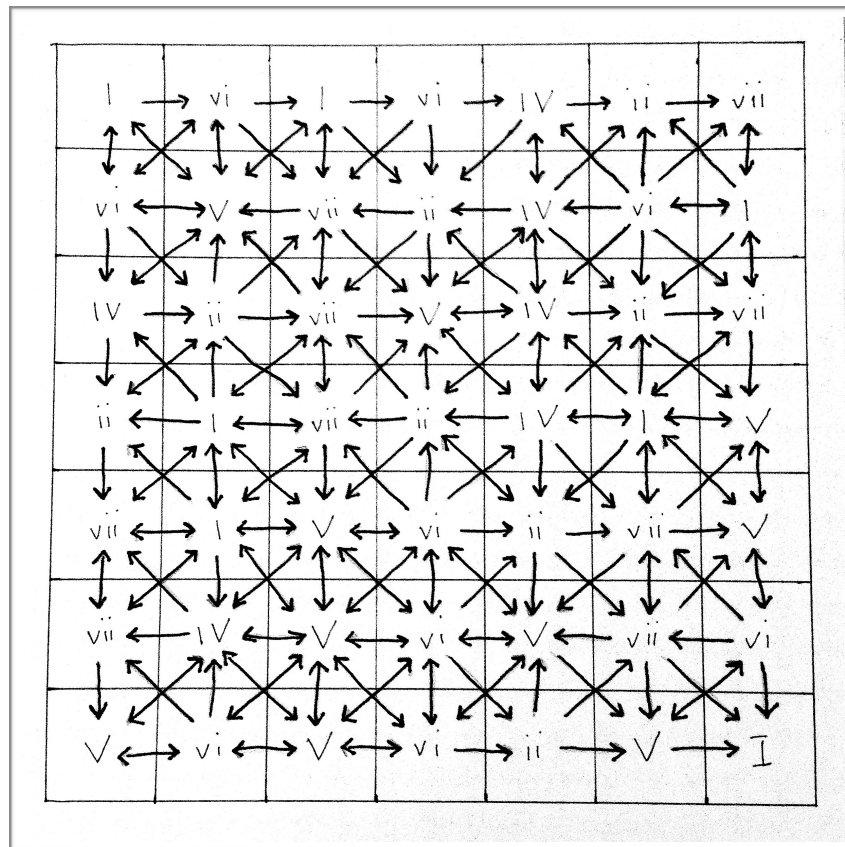
By speaking the text alongside playing the piano, the speaking itself also became inherently musical and the piano pieces gained the aesthetic of songs.

Folk Dances

I also composed four 'folk dances', each dedicated to a specific performer. In these four 'folk dances', the biography template is not used to structure the music. Instead, the steps of one folk dance that each dancer performs during the work were translated into a musical structure. In this way the piano is literally dancing the dances, only translated into piano music. To make the translation, I designed a diagram that allows the functional harmony diagram (Figure 17) to operate in two dimensions (see Figure 18).

⁶⁶ The peculiar layout of the score (3.4.1 Hybrid Biography Model) is due to the idiosyncrasies of working with text in the notation software Sibelius. The score was intentionally left with mistakes in hyphenated words. A third part to this piece, which worked with those mistakes, was planned but was cut by the choreographer (see section on collaboration).

Figure 18: Dance Step Translation Diagram



All the dances that I chose to translate had a simple and repetitive step pattern, and by imagining the diagram under the dancers' feet, I was able to select a chord for each step and thus to produce a musical realisation (or translation) of the dance. The system was used to produce three of the folk dances, each dedicated to one dancer. The fourth dance, however, needed to be dedicated to myself as the fourth performer. Since I didn't dance any solo folk dances in the performance nor feel particularly connected to any folk dance tradition, I decided to use my biography in a more abstract fashion instead. I used the original version of the *Artistic Biography Model*, in order to create a new 'dance' for myself and by doing this further connected this section back to the concept.

Cabaret

The Four Folk Dances were used as musical interludes in my solo (see 3.4.3 at 34 min 15 sec). Like all of the solos in the work the brief was for me to share personal biographical information. However, as stated, my biographical concerns are expressed through the concept and consequently this section instead shares information about the creation of the musical material.

Although the spoken text in *Cabaret* is less structurally composed than in the other instances of speaking the text from the biography template, this speaking can also be seen as song-like because of the context of the other spoken texts.

Dark Room

Dark Room (see 3.4.3 at 9 min 41 sec) brings together the structure of the four folk dances and the biography template. The performers come to the piano one at a time until all are playing and speaking. The template was divided up in the same way as in *Trance*, but this time is spoken with the placeholders, presided by the root of the chord, and organised by the structure of each performer's folk dance.

Communicating the concept

As described, the musical concept of this work is communicated within the various pieces and sections of the work. Each piece also communicates specific information about the composition process and can give insight into how the other pieces were composed. For example, in the two versions of *Hybrid Biography Model*, both the triadic chords belonging to the piano and the chords based on my biography are used, exposing how the system of functional harmony is dissolved by changing the chords. In *Without Dancing*, only the placeholders in the template are spoken and only the placeholders that produced chords are followed by chords played on the piano, in both the triadic and biographical versions. This creates a further link between the two different harmonies and between specific words and their associated chords. These two pieces, when looked at together, also provide information about each other and communicate specific considerations of the composition process.

Collaboration

During the rehearsal process it became clear that García and myself have very different approaches to making work, especially regarding how best to continue once the material is located.

García used extremely challenging tasks in order to create material for the dancers' solos, which required dancers to speak text and dance complex structures at the same time. The tasks were so difficult that they often led to mistakes. I found this very interesting, because it exposed the person behind the performer: the very real struggle with the tasks prevented them from putting on a chosen 'performing attitude', and so it was aesthetically very direct while at the same time exposing and placing importance on the task itself. However, the choreographer had the dancers rehearse the tasks over and over until all mistakes were

polished out. The personal texts, which the dancers spoke and had written themselves, were corrected for grammar and structure and made as clear as possible, eliminating all idiosyncrasies.

This process of polishing and rehearsing in search of a traditional virtuosity in the performance results in the material itself being the only possible focus of the work. This lies far outside of my own interest in creating art, as for me the material is the medium for the concept. Whilst the choreographic material does provide some information through its biographical content, it can only be engaged with on a theatrical level. By not correcting the text, for example, its personal activation would be much more transparent. The structure and the mistakes perhaps contained within could communicate much more to an audience about the person who had written the text than the content of the words. The same can be said of the dance. By polishing and rehearsing, the visible negotiation of the dancer with the task is removed, and the task itself as well as the person behind the dancer is hidden.

Once again I followed my concept clearly and as a result it was communicated in each piano piece and when all the composed elements of the work are viewed together. For me the work was about my concept of the biography template, but in this collaboration my focus on concept was simply incompatible with García's ideas for the work. García simply engaged with the music on an entirely sonic level using it very traditionally, and positioning it in the dramaturgy according to where it supported the choreography.

In conclusion, García uses a representation of 'biography' rather than allowing the actual biography of the performers to come through. Whereas I follow my concept precisely to create work and follow it through to the performance, García uses the idea as a starting point to create material and then arranges it according to what he feels will produce a successful dance performance.

At the request of the choreographer, two additional piano pieces were created, which used the structures and material of all other pieces. *Mantra* gave me an alternative to dancing, and *Das War Mein Erstes Leben* was composed to allow a dancer to play the piano. However, although they reinforced the compositional decisions of the other pieces, they did little to communicate my concept. Thus across the dramaturgy of the whole work, my concept of an *Artistic Biography Template* was lost.

The moments where my music was the focus of the work were still successful in communicating my concept within their own duration. If all the other elements of the work

were removed, then I was confident that the concept of my work would be effectively communicated to the audience. It was this thinking that encouraged me not to move on from *YBRIDE* as a failure, in terms of my own artistic interest, but rather to take the composed elements forward and create new works with the same material.

Three works, *Biography and Pushing a Piano* (viii.ii), *Learning to Play the Piano* (viii.iii) and *Four Folk Dances* (viii.iv), which addressed the issues that arose in *YBRIDE*, are included in the appendix. They sit outside the narrative of this chapter due to the fact that they re-realise an existing concept. They are, however, of interest since they demonstrate how I continued to develop the material originally composed for *YBRIDE*.

3.5

Pointing at Things: It started when you read this

This is a live performance where the audience and the composer create the work together through the use of instruction scores.

In this work the concept is embodied in the performance by following it closely to create the material. The audience members are able to discover the concept by interacting with text scores and further to communicate the concept by interacting with each other during the performance. This work builds on the experiences made in the two collaborations but, in contrast, follows the concept uninterruptedly through to the production of the performance.

Pointing at Things

The concept of this work is 'Pointing at Things', i.e. bringing a person's attention to something that happens in everyday life and claiming it as a performance. This concept closely relates to both John Cage's *4:33*⁶⁷ and Peter Ablinger's *Weiss/Weisslich 29*⁶⁸. In these works, the everyday sounds that are heard in the chosen performance space (whether this is in a concert hall in *4:33* or an outside space in *Weiss/Weisslich 29*) are the material of the composition. In my use of this concept, it is not only about bringing attention to sounds but rather to any sound, action, movement, event, object or structure as the material of the composition.

⁶⁷ John Cage, *4:33* (London: Edition Peters, 1952)

⁶⁸ Peter Ablinger, *Weiss/Weisslich 29* (1996) <<http://ablinger.mur.at/docu01.html>> [accessed 20 August 2017]

The concept

The concept in this work functions differently to concepts in my other works in the submission, where it is possible for me to trace the initial idea for the work to the forming of the concept. Here the concept of 'Pointing at Things' was the initial thought that triggered the composition process – without being developed from an idea first.

The concept is very specific, as defined above, but is at the same time extremely open with regard to what is pointed at and what does the pointing. Every decision that is based on this concept is both pointed at and is pointing at something else, and each decision is performing the concept and simultaneously reiterating it. Thus, the concept becomes inseparable from any decisions based on it. The title of the work is literal. It does not only refer to the audience but also to myself at the moment I understood the concept enough to write it down: by reading it, the artistic work had already begun.

By acknowledging this, my usual understanding of structure and content becomes blurred, as both become primarily performances and expressions of the concept, rather than tools that can allow the concept to be performed.

This makes all elements of the composition become inseparable from each other and the concept, whereby the initially precise and definable concept becomes increasingly large and continuously more complex. The complexity does not come from developing the concept; on the contrary it stays the same but is reiterated by every element.

By taking this into consideration, more than in any other work in the portfolio the concept is truly embodied in every element of the composition process and performance, even extending into all decisions and actions made by the audience.

Reflecting on the performance

Pointing at Things: It started when you read this was triggered by being offered a residency at Frankfurt LAB, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. The connection of the trigger to the city of Frankfurt encouraged using the concept to point at the city. The work does not only operate in a physical space but also in a virtual space. The audience members are physically situated in the theatre space (Frankfurt LAB) and moving within a scaled down map of Frankfurt am Main that shows only the outline of the city, the river Main and the location of Frankfurt LAB.

The 'pointing' is achieved by distributing instruction scores that ask the audience to move to locations on the map, to mark additional landmarks, and eventually to begin to change

the map altogether. As the audience members follow the scores, they are encouraged to not only consider the physical actions that they are making in the theatre (from here on described as the 'physical space') but also to consider an imagined version of the 'real' city of Frankfurt (from here on described as the 'virtual space'). It is this process of imagining the virtual space in connection to the physical space that creates the many different layers of this work. The instructions are very simple but complexity is created by transplanting one's own actions, and the actions of others that one observes in the physical space, into the virtual space and by the productive confusion that everyone is potentially occupying both spaces at the same time. By doing this, not only actions that would be physically possible in the virtual space can be imagined, but all kinds of actions that would be physically impossible in everyday life become entirely possible in the virtual space, for example sitting in the middle of the river Main.

Conversely, by simultaneously occupying both spaces, interaction in the physical space is changed. In the performance, by being busy considering the virtual space it became possible to get very close to other audience members in the physical space. For example, when following the score 'Go to a park and lie down.', many audience members clustered very closely together and lay on the floor (see 3.5.2 at 1 min 48 sec) . When considering both the physical and virtual spaces on their own, this close proximity to each other would usually be avoided. However, by considering the possibility that in the virtual space each audience member would be much further apart, these kind of physical actions become possible.

Things that happened before the audience enter the theatre, for example the journey they travelled on to get there, can be brought into the present by imagining them in the virtual space. In this way, it is not only possible to witness physically impossible actions in the virtual space but also temporally impossible actions: actions that literally happen first need not have any relation to how they are placed within the virtual space.

Delivering scores

Composing a system to distribute the scores in the performance space was another essential component to the performance. Rather than have it as my responsibility to distribute the scores directly, I wanted the audience to be responsible for this, so that all elements of the performance could be created by them. One score in the performance that is repeated multiple times instructs the audience to take another score and deliver it to a person of their choosing. This has several effects on the performance: it creates initial movement in the physical space and it creates a transparent structure that requires the

audience to engage with this score in order for the performance to move forward. The audience taking part in the creation of the performance thus becomes a fundamental element of the work.

The notion of the audience creating the work together promotes the establishing of a social space, where audience members rely on their ways of interacting with others in everyday life, over the internalised notions of how one should behave in a performance. This creates a consistency between the ways of interacting in both the theatre and the city, further connecting the physical and the virtual space. Connecting the spaces in this way, however, shifts the attitude of the audience, and the resulting interaction in the physical space becomes unique to the performance. The creation of the social space also encourages active decision-making by the audience: if, how and when an audience member follows any score can be chosen and is not enforced (and reacting to others' decisions becomes part of the choice). It also reduces the fear that one's choices will expose or single out an audience member in the performance.

Communicating the concept

In this work, the audience is not explicitly told the concept of the work. All decisions towards the creation of the scores, the preparation of the performance space, the creation of background music and every other element I composed were informed by the concept. By interacting with these elements and with each other, the audience are performing the concept and, by doing so, embody it themselves.

4

Chapter N: Conclusion: this should not repeat material previously given but draw the whole thing together.

69

This chapter will form a conclusion based on an informed critique of my own work. It will then highlight elements of the research project that I felt were particularly successful and elements that I might have done differently in hindsight. Lastly, it will suggest my next steps as a composer and how others might usefully engage with the outcomes of my research project.

4.1

It should include some informed critique of your own work

70

This PhD offers a deeper understanding of how the decisions made in the composition process inform what is communicated in a performance.

By researching through practice and using each new composition process to reflect on the previous works, I have come to the realisation that a concept is most effectively communicated when it is embodied in the performance by basing all compositional decisions on it.

Analysing the decision process in each work, I was able to locate the elements that blurred the concept and thus made it more difficult to communicate. In my initial composition processes, some decisions were made that were not directly informed by the concept, but instead based on outside influences (requests from collaborators, personal taste, etc). I realised that they do not communicate the concept but rather secondary or subsequent considerations.

The same is true for decisions based on previous decisions: Creating a chain of decisions with each new decision based on the last is a strategy that seems, on the surface, to follow the concept closely. However, only the composer who made the decisions can easily trace that chain back to the underlying concept. To the audience, the access to the concept becomes increasingly blurred by this process, since in the performance many elements of the composition are presented at once and the linearity of the composition process is not

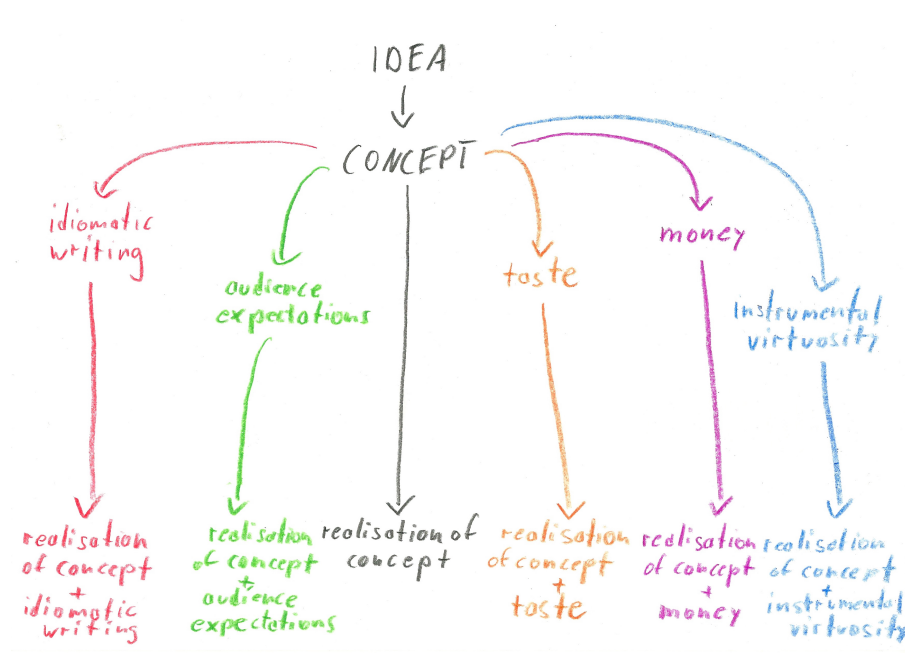
⁶⁹ Cutler and Johnson, p. 2.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.2.

reflected. Thus, the result is that many things are being communicated at once. This can be compared to a conversation between two people: if one tries to communicate too many things in one sentence, it is likely that nothing is understood.

External parameters often have an impact on the presentation of the work. Whether this is based on traditional settings, collaboration, commissions or personal taste, they do not serve to communicate the concept unless they are included in the creation of the concept (see Figure 19). Within my approach to composition, all decisions matter, not only those that lead to the creation of material. The presentation and structure of the material can also serve to communicate the concept. If all elements of the performance, including the material, the structure, the staging and the way of performing are composed, they can all embody the concept and make it clear and accessible to the audience.

Figure 19: Michael Wolters: *Concept and Realisation*.⁷¹



4.2

– what has worked really well,

⁷²

The research project as a whole has been hugely beneficial in developing a significantly deeper understanding of my composition process and approach to composition. I have

⁷¹ Michael Wolters, *Teaching material from BMus3 Contextual Studies: Conceptual Art/Conceptual Music* (Birmingham: [n.pub.], 2014).

⁷² Cutler and Johnson, p. 2.

been able to address the issues that led me to undertake this research, found answers to my research questions and satisfied the compositional aims I outlined.

The project has effectively used practice to conduct the research whereby the primary method of reflecting is via the production of new works. By centring the research project on the practical implementation of the research aims and questions towards the creation of artistic work, the research became embodied in my portfolio and produced multiple outcomes that have an impact on both the academic and professional sectors.

I have found diverse ways to communicate the idea through a performance, and likewise this has led to vastly varied outcomes. Each outcome communicates the concept of the work through its performative elements and in light of the interdisciplinary nature of the work can be relevant for artists of all genres.

One extremely challenging part of the project has been developing my spoken and written language skills to effectively communicate my findings alongside the artistic works. Facing this challenge has been crucial in gaining a deeper understanding of my work and in positioning myself within the academic landscape. The decision to compose the commentary as a composition allows not only the content to reflect on my work but to bring the writing of the commentary closer to the concerns of practice-based research. By considering writing about my work as a composition, the commentary not only supports the practice but becomes part of it.

Throughout the PhD programme I have presented my work across Europe, collaborated with both national and international partners, negotiated my own solo projects and gained a wealth of experience through this process.

4.3

sight.

what bits you might have done differently with hind-

73

In hindsight, I would have changed the structure of the timetable of the project. Given the chance to begin the project again, I would have placed more importance on the development of my practice in the first six months of PhD study alongside the PGCert. Whilst the PGCert was supportive for me locating my work in the field and developing my academic position, it became a little too abstract, as it was not grounded in the practical

⁷³ Cutler and Johnson, p. 2.

application of my thinking into artistic work. Therefore, the impact of the PGCert could only be fully perceived in the following months, when I focused on applying the research aims and questions to practice.

4.4

Don't be too apologetic, but tell us what you've learned from the project, and what others might usefully derive from it.

74

I have learned that understanding the effect of decision-making in the composition process is essential to being able to communicate the idea that triggered the work in a performance. By exposing the specific relationship between decisions, what they are based on and what they communicate, the outcomes of this PhD can be used for artists from any genre to consider the effects of their decision-making process on the creation of a work with regard to the communication of the idea.

4.5

It should point towards future work: how you see yourself developing as a composer from here on,

75

I want to develop the specific relationship with concept, and with the audience as performers that is outlined in the work *Pointing at Things: It started when you read this*. I intend to combine this with continued reflection of a non-musician's specific relationship to performing with musical instruments that began in *Learning to Play the Piano*. By combining the concerns of these two works, I will explore how the audience can be facilitated to perform, bringing the act of performing into focus, over and above the material being performed.

4.6

or how others might usefully engage with the compositional questions you have set yourself.

76

The works included in the submission, together with the reflection of my composition process included in this commentary, suggest an approach to composition that outlines

⁷⁴ Cutler and Johnson, p. 2.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

several examples of how working closely with a concept can allow it to be communicated to the audience in a performance.

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of my work, the outlined approach to composition can be used as a basis for artists of any performance-based discipline who have a wish to communicate the idea that informed the creation of the work through a performance.

viii

Appendices (= mainly lists, lyrics/poems used, or other concise material that sensibly stands outstand the main text, e.g. because it is referred to in several places). ⁷⁷

viii.i**Birmingham Conservatoire****The PhD with Musical Composition****Guidelines for Commentary to accompany the Portfolio**

(revised February 2006; updated 2013)

These guidance notes should be read in conjunction with the RDC-approved guidelines, *MPhil and PhD by Musical Composition* (1996, ref. 2003) and the training booklet, *Academic Writing*, available from the Research Office at the Conservatoire.

The Commentary that accompanies the submitted folio of compositions should be written with these principles in mind:

- (1) It should be designed to enable the examiners and other readers to make sense of the entire submission.
- (2) In lay-out and style it should follow standard conventions for PhD theses, including:
 - Abstract;
 - Table of Contents;
 - Contents of folio, each work listed in normal catalogue style, with date of composition, instrumentation, number of movements, and location of any submitted recording; the principle work should be here be clearly identified and differentiated from supporting works.
 - Contents of any submitted CD or DVD with track listings;
 - Acknowledgements (including an identification of your supervisors);
 - Main text in Chapters, sections and subsections identified by conventionally styles;
 - Appendices (= mainly lists, lyrics/poems used, or other concise material that sensibly stands outstand the main text, e.g. because it is referred to in several places).
 - Full list of your own compositions, at least since start of project.
 - List of Works discussed (by composer, with publishers, dates and recordings if relevant, in standard format)
 - Bibliography
 - Discography [as appropriate].
- (3) The minimum length is 6000 words (including everything in the Commentary) but a more functional length is 12K - 15K words. Note that if you are up to 20K you are almost certainly using your Commentary for a purpose for which it is not intended and serious discussion is needed with your supervisors.
- (4) The purpose of the Commentary is to provide information and context for the examiners and other people who read your thesis. Note that they don't know anything about you or your intentions, or why you have selected the particular set of compositions for inclusion. Note also that there is an expectation in PhD theses for critical reflection, and examiners will expect to find this in your Commentary.
- (5) The standard and style of writing must be PhD-worthy in level and style – see *Academic Writing* for detailed guidelines.

⁷⁷ Cutler and Johnson, p. 2.

(5) How you organise your Commentary is up to you, but a format such as the following is appropriate:

Chapter 1: Background and Context: who you are and your background as composer; some discussion of what musical composition is for you, by reference to recent major composers who are important for you. Briefly discuss key works, not in the abstract but in relation to what you have absorbed from them. This section may be used to identify changes in your own thinking over the duration of the programme. Then tell us the main idea behind your project and give a brief description of the Main Work by way of introduction; a brief account of your compositional objectives. Plot the route of the rest of the Commentary.

Chapter 2: Supporting Works: briefly introduce each supporting work (typically 4 or 5), the background to its composition, why it is in the folio and how it relates to the main work and to the points you develop in Chap. 1. You may here include some brief technical/analytical discussion, but direct comparisons with the main work will probably work better in the context of the latter, below.

Chapter 3 (4, 5?) The Main Work (see below)

Chapter N: Conclusion: this should not repeat material previously given but draw the whole thing together. It should include some informed critique of your own work – what has worked really well, what bits you might have done differently with hindsight. Don't be too apologetic, but tell us what you've learned from the project, and what others might usefully derive from it. It should point towards future work: how you see yourself developing as a composer from here on, or how others might usefully engage with the compositional questions you have set yourself.

(6) In your discussions of the main work, you need to cover the following general points, always adapted to the needs and style of your particular work.

(a) This is the 'meaty' part of your thesis, and may cover several chapters or one large chapter clearly sub-divided into headed sections.

(b) Begin with the details of how you came to write the work, of your initial intentions and how these might have changed over the period of the course. Situate these in relation to your aesthetic ideas about what you'd like your music to be (Chap. 1), and/or questions of technique.

(c) Refer to other works (your own or by other composers) as appropriate (if it informs the discourse).

(d) Generally take each movement in turn, referring to specific page numbers and bar numbers in the score, and to CD tracks where appropriate:

Briefly situate the movement in the overall shape of the piece (e.g. the first movement might be 'introductory').

Briefly present the movement in 'expressive' terms or an appropriate equivalent;

Outline the broad structural features to help the reader navigate – a concise one-page graphic representation often helps here.

Illustrate your compositional techniques, e.g. by showing a detail of applied pre-compositional devices if meaningful, or how you managed your material; here use analytical charts etc as appropriate;

Discuss instrumentation and other relevant aspects;

If you're setting text or dramatic/visual association, the relationship with the music will always need discussing.

(e) Then summary, 'reassembling' the work. Do say something about the gap between intention and realisation – how it's come out differently, how you've been surprised etc.

(f) Use musical examples only if a reference to a submitted score is not sufficient (e.g. if you are referring to a work not included in your folio)

(7) All submitted scores must be presented according to modern conventions of musical notation, including title page, instrumentation page, contents of movements page, and full bowing/phrasing etc as appropriate; and always include bar numbers identified on each page of score. Electronic works for which there is no score need to be accompanied by a graphic display of the main outline of each movement or piece giving timings and displaying the main events identified so that there is a visual point of reference for your discussions (i.e. the graphic display should be designed with your discussion in mind, and *vice versa*).

(8) Generally think in terms of a project, and aim to develop a *narrative* (story) of its development and realisation. Brutally remove anything that could be construed as digression, and don't get involved in writing a thesis that is not a direct Commentary on your compositions – save that for a different project!

This is one possible template; what you decide to use should cover roughly the same territory, albeit always adapted to your particular style of composition and the nature of your project.

For further information, do contact your supervisor, or Joe Cutler or Christopher Dingle.

Good luck with your project.

Joe Cutler
Peter Johnson

Addendum

If you feel that thesis of works and commentary model for a composition PhD is restrictive for your research project, you should speak with your supervisors and Christopher Dingle about the options.

viii.ii**Biography and Pushing a Piano**

This was the first work to come directly from the research process of *YBRIDE* following its performance. It was a first attempt to address the issues I had with the nature of how the music of *YBRIDE* was presented in the performance.

Biography and Pushing a Piano takes away the setting, the dancing and the dancers' biographical texts from the original piece and leaves only the composed elements that follow the concept. I also composed the performative actions required to move the piano and reorganise the space around an audience that in this case are free to move around in the space, placing the focus on the composition and its structure rather than on the carefully rehearsed dance and the felt dramaturgy of the original work.

This work framed the material in a performative situation that allows the focus of the work to be the concept and the composition process of the work over the material content. Whilst sonically the music is the same, by composing the performance and structure that frames the elements used in *YBRIDE* this work comes much closer to my own idea of what constitutes a successful work.

Positioning the piano

In *YBRIDE* the piano was relocated several times in the performance. In this work the piano is also relocated but with rules based on where the majority of the audience are standing. The piano begins against a wall before being pushed into a position where the majority of the audience are standing, encouraging the audience to determine where the stage should be.

The four performers of this work do not have a dance background but a music background, producing a considerably different performance aesthetic.

Whilst the majority of the piano pieces are performed by myself, the other three performers are responsible for moving the piano and as such need to react to the performance space and the position of the audience. The performers are thus free to talk to each other and do not need to hide their own process of decision-making and dealing with the task at hand. This exposes the task-based performative elements and further communicates that the audience matters and the work is adjusting to the situation they create.

As the performance is adjusted in reaction to the performance space and the audience's movement, there is no ideal performance situation. Instead the performance shifts to fit the situation it is presented in.

viii.iii

Learning to Play the Piano

Learning to Play the Piano is a new work based on the system of composition that created the piece *Das War Mein Erstes Leben* in *YBRIDE* (see 3.4.3 at 46 min 38 sec).

The concept of this work was to use a non-musician's relationship with a musical instrument to make a lack of experience necessary to perform the work. This suggests a new kind of virtuosity that is based on a lack of experience, a notion that has become very interesting to me.

In *Learning to Play the Piano*, a text that relates to the notion of learning to play the piano was chosen from the web site pianonanny.com⁷⁸ and then composed to reflect more accurately the situation, stating that through the process of following the score, the performer is playing a 'real' piece of contemporary music. The score is a list of instructions which are displayed clearly to the audience and includes the documentation of the 'performance' that can be shown afterwards as a second part of the work. First the performer labels all of the keys before going on to read a text, where certain randomly chosen words require the performer to play a chord as they speak. Because the performer needs to find chords from the newly labelled keys, the spoken text becomes broken and structured in an unfamiliar way, attempting to lead the listener into considering the speaking also as music.

The beginning of this work, before any keys are pressed, becomes very important because it is here that the performer is given all the tools that they need in order to produce music, and by creating the tools live it is communicated to the audience that they are witnessing a non-musician. Thus expectations and perceptions of the performance begin to shift, allowing the composition process to be perceived over ideas of a musical performance in a traditional sense. Following this, the text that is later spoken confirms what the preparation process has highlighted. Further, by highlighting the non-musician we are able to see that the potential for mistakes is intentional and included within the composition.

⁷⁸ Craig Wilson, *A testimonial from one of our students* ([n.d.]) <<http://www.pianonanny.com>> [accessed 7 August 2017]

It is the notion of a non-musician being responsible for creating music that simply could not be created in the same way by a trained musician that is the key point of this work. The performer's lack of ability shapes the work.

viii.iv

Four Folk Dances

Four Folk Dances is an orchestral arrangement of the four 'folk dances' that are contained in the *Cabaret* section of *YBRIDE*. These works were perfect candidates to extract from *YBRIDE* as they do not relate directly to the concept of the biography template. This work is really a full stop to the various works that are related to *YBRIDE*. Here the context of the original planned performance was completely removed as a compositional concern and I orchestrated the work in the same way as I would any piano piece.

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Full list of your own compositions, at least since start of project.

⁷⁹

Definition Song: Comfort (2014), Instruments(s) and Voice(s).

maneuvers / groove space (2014), Dance, Performance Artist, Guitar, Voice and Live Electronics.

(with accompaniment) (2014), Installation.

Conceptual Choreography #3 (2015), Text Work/Score.

CRPA (Switzerland) (2015), Visual Work/Score.

How many times do I Blink in a day? (2015), Narrator, Timpani and Recorded Tape.

Definition Song: Health (2015), Instruments(s) and Voice(s).

Definition Song: And (2015), Instruments(s) and Voice(s).

Definition Song: Safety (2015), Instruments(s) and Voice(s).

Grieg (2015), YouTube Video.

Giving Constructive Criticism (2015), Saxophone Quartet, Soprano and Slideshow.

Definition Song: Lecture (2015), Instruments(s) and Voice(s).

elton John Cage the songbird (2015), Exhibition and Guided Tour.

Learning the trombone (2015), Performer and Recorded Tape.

I _____ the hard way (2015), Visual Work/Score.

Artistic Biography Model (2016), Business Card/Score.

Somewhere where the Sun comes up (2016), Piano and Whiteboard.

YBRIDE (2016), Dance, Piano and Metronome.

Adrian Boult Hall ist Kaputt: By Brass (2016), Performer, Trumpet Choir, French Horn Choir, Trombone Choir and Euphonium/Tuba Choir.

TEXT (2016), Exhibition.

Biography and Pushing a Piano (2016), Performers, Piano and Metronome.

Definition Song: Television (2016), Instruments(s) and Voice(s).

Learning to Play the Piano (2016), Untrained Musician, Piano and iPad.

Swing Music (2016), Badge/Score.

Pointing at things: It started when you read this (2016), Performer, Postcard Scores, Masking Tape, Recorder and Recorded Tape.

Four Folk Dances (2017), Orchestra and Organ.

Following the Rules (2017), Performer and Wind Quintet.

Paganini Caprice (re-construction) (2017), Installation.

Intro/Outro Music (Piano Heroes) (2017), Keyboard.

PhD Commentary (2017), Text Composition.

⁷⁹ Cutler and Johnson, p. 2.

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List of Works discussed (by composer, with publishers, dates and recordings if relevant, in standard format)

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LeWitt, Sol, 'Sentences on Conceptual Art' in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 1999) pp. 106-08.

⁸⁰ Cutler and Johnson, p. 1.

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⁸¹ Cutler and Johnson, p. 1.

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Discography [as appropriate].⁸²

[not appropriate].

⁸² Cutler and Johnson, p. 1.