

**Grandchildren of Experimental Music - performing the compositional act by creating  
intriguing situations in which musical sound may occur**

Andrew Thomas Ingamells  
(Andy Ingamells)

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**COMMENTARY**

## **ABSTRACT**

This portfolio of work explores alternative methods of musical composition that question the distinction between composer and performer, presenting an integrated and interdisciplinary artistic approach that aims to engage a broader public in the production of experimental music. The seventeen pieces in the portfolio are playful outcomes of a practice that, whilst rooted in musical concerns, does not privilege the sounding result.

In the accompanying commentary the heritage of experimental music and Fluxus is used as a starting point to reconsider the traditionally separate roles of composer and performer. I assert that these roles currently remain distinct and separate in contemporary practice, despite the challenge that experimental music and Fluxus posed to conventional music-making. In order to address this I reconfigure the relationships between composer, performer and listener through an interpretation of a diagram by experimental composer George Brecht, and develop a framework in which the act of composition can be performed through 'reading', 'character' and 'playing'.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Grandchild of Experimental Music (background and context)

Since the late 1950s the conventions of compositional practice have expanded to incorporate diverse disciplines and approaches, initially chronicled by Michael Nyman in his comprehensive study *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond* (1974/1999). In the preface to the second edition Nyman proposed a hitherto unwritten book “Son of Experimental Music” should be written (1999, p. xvii). I have not undertaken such a book, but instead have conducted in-depth practice-based research into how this heritage can lead to the formation of new approaches to composition through the creation of an original body of work. Rather than composing music in isolation, how can I integrate the process of composition into performance in order to reclaim the fun of creativity in so-called ‘serious’ music? How can the act of composition be performed?

Writers dealing with the subject of experimental music often forgo a precise definition of the term in favour of description by means of varied musical examples, or by articulating the philosophical outlooks of various practitioners. Composer and author Jennie Gottschalk describes it as “challenging to pin down” (2016, p. 1) in her recent survey entitled *Experimental Music since 1970*, and musicologist Cecilia Sun, writing in *Grove Music Online*, states that works of experimental music “do not share one defining compositional characteristic” (2012). The editor of *The Ashgate Research Companion to Experimental Music* (2009) James Saunders introduces this authoritative account of the practice by asserting that the book “does not attempt to define experimental music explicitly” but that defining the term “is an emergent feature of the writing” (2009, p. 1). Defining ‘experimental music’ is thus problematic, with Gottschalk suggesting that it is in fact “a position - of openness, of inquiry, of uncertainty, of discovery” (2016, p. 1).

Experimental music is often described as being in an antagonistic or oppositional relationship to the institutionalised mid-20th Century Modernist avant-garde, which was epitomised by the music of composers such as Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Luciano Berio. An anti-institutional position was certainly adopted by some of the practitioners associated with experimental music, but by no means all, and this has since been contradicted by its co-option into the very institutions that it once perhaps sought to critique. The American composer John Cage (1912 - 1992) is a case in point. His works and writings pervade accounts of experimental music, and composers associated with the term tend to have some kind of relation to him, either through direct contact or through his influence. However, despite cultivating an outsider position, he is clearly recognised as being part of the institutional musical establishment in the 20th Century.

Sun (2012) outlines four features by which music deemed to be experimental provided an alternative to the mainstream avant-garde. These are:

- Chance procedures instead of total control
- Graphic scores and written instructions instead of conventional musical notation
- Radical simplicity instead of complexity
- Unorthodox performance requirements instead of traditional notions of virtuosity

These features are a useful starting point for clarifying and contextualising the practice, however, this project will not offer yet another attempt at definition. I find the term ‘experimental music’ to be useful to me because I take inspiration from work that has historically been described in this way, and adopt its position “of openness, of inquiry, of uncertainty, of discovery” (Gottschalk, 2016, p. 1) as an effective way to make work myself.

Experimental music allows the framing of things that are not normally considered music as music in order to think about music. I am trained as a composer with some formal training in visual art, and usually perform my own pieces in different performance contexts like theatres, bars, art galleries, concert halls and other public spaces. I also work in collaboration with other musicians and ensembles. As a child I learned music on the tenor horn and piano, but do not consider myself accomplished on any musical instrument in a traditional sense. Instead I explore alternative methods of musical composition that question the distinction between composer and performer in order to create works that engage a broader public in the production of radical music.

Although the concept of a composer who performs is an established convention in Western music stretching back to the Classical period, the notion of performing the act of composition, without recourse to the discourse of improvisation, is overlooked. Pianist and interpreter of experimental music Philip Thomas maintains a distinction between the roles, asserting that “[their] experiences are very different, even if the composer *is* the performer” (my emphasis), and that “the physicality of performance makes the performing experience wholly different to the composing experience” (2009, p. 78). This is symptomatic of a broader attitude that composing and performing are separate functions, even when combined within the same person. Despite the challenge to traditional music offered by experimentalism, even Cage, arguably its leading historical proponent, stated “composing’s one thing, performing’s another” (Cage, 1955/2009, p. 15). It is within this gap that I locate my practice. It is necessary to explore this in-between territory because it offers a new perspective on how music can be made and how the ‘fun’ element of musical creation can be celebrated directly.

My identity is that of a composer-performer, where the roles are fully integrated. When choosing other people’s work to perform I am drawn to text scores and graphic scores with a preference for pieces that are vague and give a lot of scope for play. This is the kind of work that I make myself. I am attracted to the visual and theatrical aspects of music as much as the aural, and engage with what is termed the “extramusical” through music:

As a practice, music is positively obsessed with its media specificity. Only music includes, as part of its discursive vocabulary, a term for the foreign matter threatening always to infect it: “the extramusical.” (Kim Cohen, 2009, p. 39)

Conversely this project questions what a musical practice would be if music was *not* obsessed with its media specificity, if ‘extramusical’ was an irrelevant term. My portfolio displays a diverse range of activities that proceed from this conception of music, some of which may be more or less recognisable as traditional music.

Through framing something as music I can say ‘listen to this and look at this for a while’, and I can say it directly to an audience who are in front on me. I can speculate as to what they might be thinking, and can use that to make further work. This is possible because I am both the composer and performer, and the integrated approach of performing the compositional act takes this body of work beyond craftsmanship towards a praxis: a way of being. What musicologist Christopher Small terms a “musicking” activity (Small, 1998, p. 9). As a composer-performer I get to share space with the audience, to be with them in person, experiencing the act with them.

Chapter 4 of Nyman’s original study covered the practices of the Fluxus art tendency, which concentrated on brief instructional scores (see Figure 1) and small, disciplined actions (1974/1999, pp. 72-88). Much of my own performance work is based on text scores that resemble the work of Fluxus. Experimental music, and Fluxus in particular, allows me to engage directly with other things that I like, such as humour, comedy and physicality. I can explore a broad range of sensations that music can offer beyond sound such as exhaustion, anxiety, touch, exposure and embarrassment, but with the reduction and focus that experimental music offers. It allows focus on the performance of one thing for a period of time.

**#3 —**

**Nivea Cream Piece (November, 1962) — for Oscar Williams**

First performer comes on stage with a bottle of hand cream, labeled “Nivea Cream” if none is available. He pours the cream onto his hands, and massages them in front of the microphone. Other performers enter, one by one, and do the same thing. Then they join together in front of the microphone to make a mass of massaging hands. They leave in the reverse of the order they entered, on a signal from the first performer.

Premiered November 25th, 1962 at Alle Scenen Theater, Copenhagen, at Fluxus Festival.

Figure 1: Example of a text score by Fluxus artist Alison Knowles (1965/2004)

A contemporary proponent of Fluxus-like methods is German composer Johannes Kreidler, whose large-scale piece *Audioguide* (2014a) displays traits that I observe as being an embodiment of the composer-performer identity. This 7-hour piece features Kreidler performing Fluxus-like actions on video (1:27:00), in addition to appearing onstage for discussions about the process of composition itself, which is framed as music (5:55:00). Rather than performing music on an instrument he films himself in his work-space performing seemingly non-musical actions such as falling or twirling his arms in order to generate sounds. In an earlier manifestation of the work (*Feeds. Hören TV*, 2010), Kreidler states onstage: “Ich bin kein Schauspieler, sondern Hörarbeiter” (I am not an actor but a sound-worker) (0:30). This is consistent with Philip Thomas’ definition of experimental music as music that “engage[s] the performer in an act of work, rather than interpretation” (2009, p. 98).

Kreidler describes in *Audioguide Interview* that the spoken aspects of the pieces are “musicalised”, akin to the practice of ‘recitative’ in opera. This is done using strategies such as “censorship tones”, more commonly used in television to censor offensive language (2014b, 1:00). Kreidler’s approach develops British artist Martin Creed’s notion that “talking about work is work” (Cattelan, 2005, pp. 110-111) and brings it into the musical sphere: ‘talking about music is music’. Throughout this project I have framed my own talking as music in order to convey my ideas as music.

In her 2016 statement entitled ‘The New Discipline’ composer-performer Jennifer Walshe discusses this way of working as:

A music being written when Dada, Fluxus, Situationism etc have aged well and are universally respected. It takes these styles for granted, both lovingly and cheekily, in the same way it takes harmony and the electric guitar for granted. As starting points. As places to being working (2016, p. 5)

Walshe’s statement accurately describes my own practice. My musical inheritance is Anglo-American experimental music and Fluxus. The late-fifties and sixties in music history appeals to me because this is the music that I am able to perform. To me it offers liberation and potential, a way to test out different ways of living and being in the world, beyond both rigid hierarchical music making and submission to neoliberal market economics. This is why I see myself as a ‘grandchild’ of experimental music. This approach is not new, but these historical practices allow my work to exist. Journalist and musician Robert Barry summarises this attitude by stating that:

Experimental art today is rarely a shot in the dark; more likely, it is a considered engagement with a detailed and often contradictory history. (2017, p. 28)

I trace a path through this “contradictory history”, beset as it is by factional debates and conflicting attitudes, guided by what I am able to perform. This history provides the starting point for my research project, but I do not propose that my practice faithfully replicates the beliefs and attitudes of its historical protagonists. A grandchild is related to their grandparents, loves them, and bears



some physical resemblance, but does not necessarily live exactly as they did and have the same outcomes in life.

At the outset of the project I was concerned with 'performing the act of composition' in as literal a manner as possible, thinking that this would entail making scores and score-writing visible and audible onstage. The following chapter details a diagram by experimental composer George Brecht that I used to interrogate my identity as a composer-performer, creating a frame through which to reflect upon my work as the project progressed. My aim is to integrate the act of composition into the performance of the music by fully combining the roles of composer and performer. Through doing this I will reveal one possibility in which the act of composition can be performed as part of an integrated compositional-performance practice.

## CHAPTER 2

### Performing the compositional act in a triangular frame

Percussionist Greg Stuart states that experimental music “attempts to radically rethink the relationship between composition, performance and listening” (Hare, 2015). In order to practically investigate how the act of composition can be performed as part of an integrated compositional-performance practice I reflected upon these relationships, which are codified by experimental composer George Brecht in a diagram that he drew in 1959 (Figures 2 and 3). In this diagram he set out how each role is related to every other role in a musical performance.

Brecht’s diagram shows the figure of the composer being related to the other protagonists through the activities of composition, criticism and improvisation. I am concerned with the figure of the composer-performer, someone who integrates both roles at the same time. Brecht’s original diagram can be reconfigured to put composer and performer together, making composer-performer, with the relationships rearranged accordingly. This results in a square with an intersection in the middle (Figure 4), as opposed to the previous star shaped configuration. In the middle of this new diagram there is a meeting point where improvisation, performance and score-reading collide. These terms can be used as a starting point to better define the activity of a composer-performer. Through reconfiguring Brecht’s diagram a conception of the composer-performer is revealed as person who combines the activities of improvisation, performance and score-reading into a fully integrated practice.

Considering these three terms allows me to reflect on how my work operates without pinning it down to a set of ingredients. The three terms go hand-in-hand. None of my pieces are pure examples by which one of the terms could be defined. Doing that would feel too much like an exercise or an etude, which I wanted to bypass for the real thing: making new pieces of work. As the project progressed I realised that my practice was allowing me to rethink what these three terms, improvisation, performance and score-reading, might mean for me. Over the course of the project the meaning of these terms changed for me to: reading, character and playing.

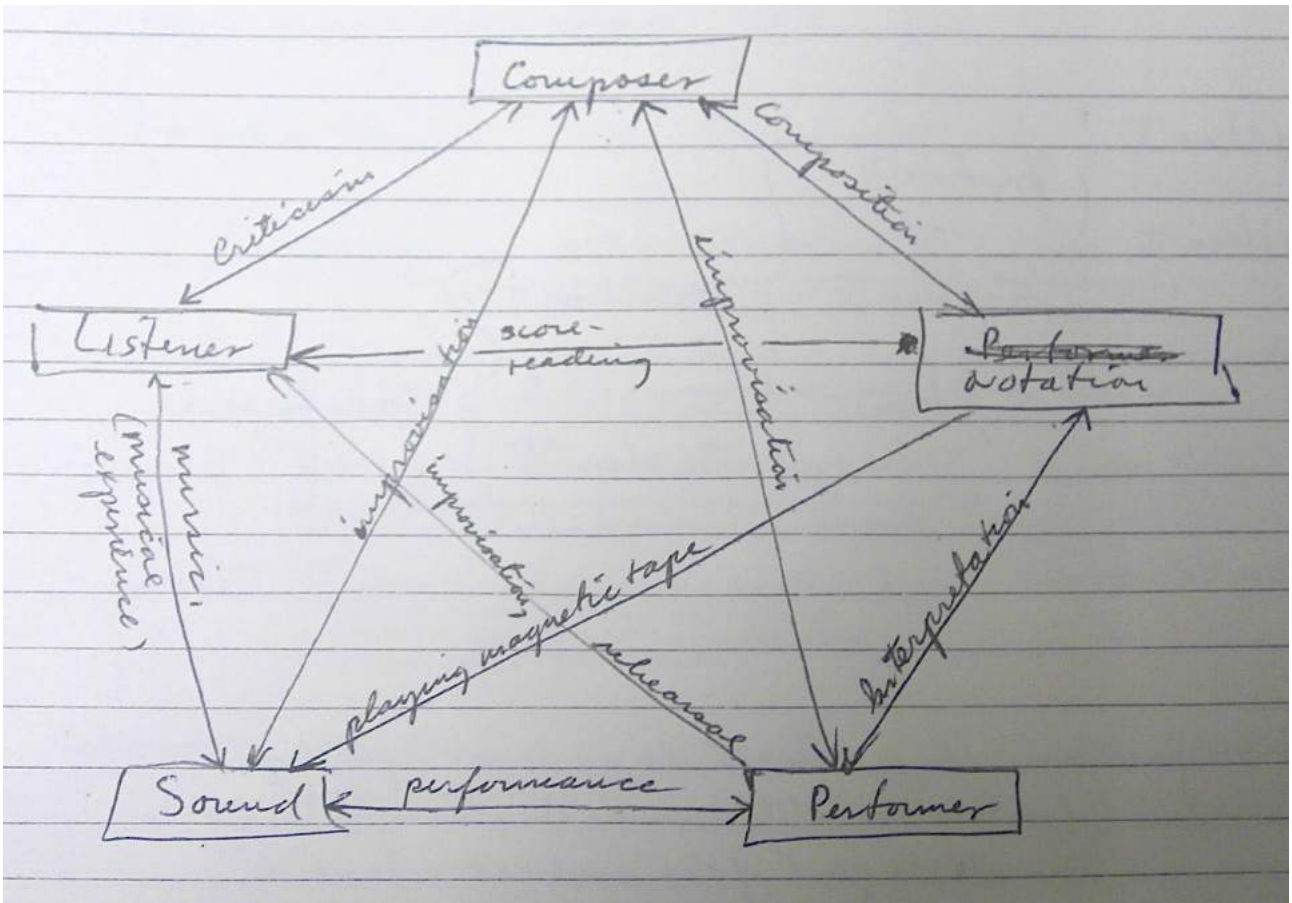


Figure 2: George Brecht's diagram from 1959 (Daniels (ed.), 1991, p. 127)

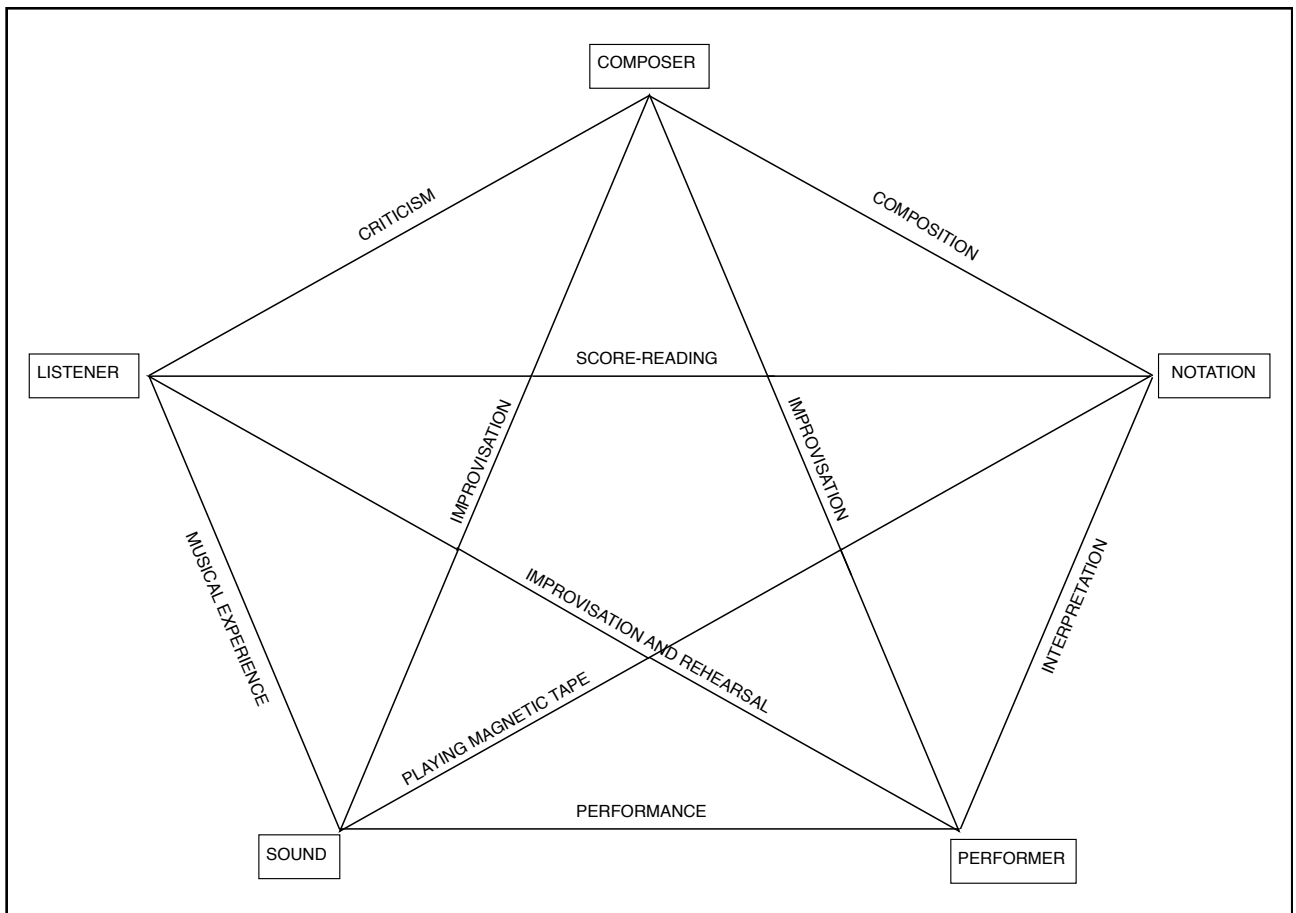


Figure 3: A computer processed version of Brecht's original diagram

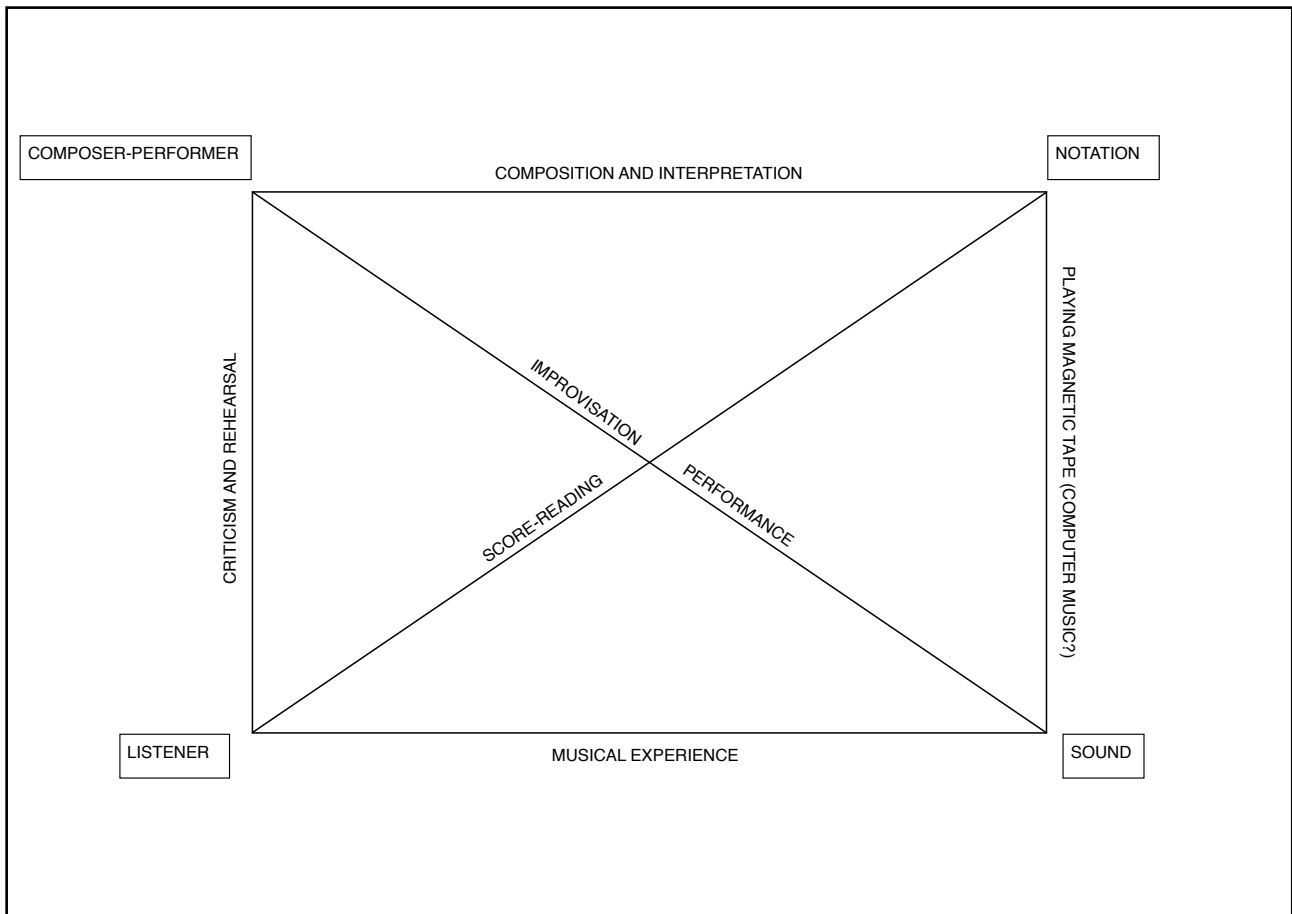


Figure 4: Square-shaped rearrangement of Brecht's original diagram

## 2.1 SCORE-READING = READING

At first I considered the term 'score-reading' to be the most relevant to my project, and took the other two terms, 'improvisation' and 'performance', for granted because I was confident that I already knew what they implied. In the Western classical tradition the performers are most likely to read something onstage, which is true even in the case of famous examples in the history of experimental music. Pianist David Tudor, talking about performing John Cage's 4'33" which has no notated sounds and requires the performer(s) to sit in silence onstage, states:

I was looking at the first movement and I was turning pages because I was reading the score in time. (Dickinson (ed.), 2006/2014, p. 86)

This statement shows that even a piece with no notes to play can still have something for the performer to read. When watching performances of experimental music I want to know what is written on the pages in front of the players, especially in the case of graphic scores such as *Treatise* by Cornelius Cardew (1967, see Figure 5) and *Kandinsky Studies* by Deborah Pritchard (2016, see Figure 6) where the visual content of the score is as compelling as its sounding result. However in performances of such pieces the visually interesting score is hidden from the view of



the audience. The visual aspect of the score is only communicated via sound, so that the graphic score may as well be written in traditional musical notation or ignored completely. As a practitioner interested in the theatrical and visual aspects of musical performance, I want this act of reading to be demonstrated to the audience directly, rather than communicated via an act of translation through music. This idea is explored in my works *Waschen* and *Composing music for 11 minutes dressed in 18th Century costume*. In both of these pieces the audience are able to see the process by which the piece is being constructed through the performance. The act of reading onstage is made manifest.

*Waschen* clearly shows me reading text onstage, and the audience are able to follow pitches appearing onscreen in *Composing music for 11 minutes dressed in 18th Century costume*. However, other pieces are less direct, involving me reading actions by copying them as they are projected on a screen, or shouting instructions. Pieces such as *Packaged Pleasure* and *Up Down Left Right* involve myself and other performers reading movements and actions, and *EU-ligans* and **\*\*\*SURPRISE PERFORMANCE\*\*\*** require both performers and audience to follow vocal instructions. For this reason I have changed the term from 'score-reading' to 'reading'. In pieces with an instructional element the material that provides the impetus for the music becomes the *content* of the music. Musicologist Adam Harper confirms that this is currently an under-explored area of musical practice:

[Text-based formats] allow the act of reading the text to occur at the level of performance as well as listening, so that the two activities begin to merge. This is a rich and currently pretty esoteric area of aesthetic possibility, with few listeners appreciating music in this way. (Harper, 2009)

I agree that this is a rich area of aesthetic possibility because musical scores are often compelling documents in which lots of information can be encoded and displayed. The merging of reading and performance allow for more information to be communicated with an audience, and for this area of experience to be opened up to people who may not be able to read written music.

## 2.2 PERFORMANCE = CHARACTER

I often work with stereotypes of classical composers that I glean from television, film and my own lived experience. I am especially drawn to egregious stereotypes because they are funny and because I see a part of myself in them that I do not like. Examples include television programmes such as Channel 4's *The World's greatest musical prodigies* (2009) and depictions discussed in Adam Harper's 2009 blogpost 'What is a [classical] composer?'. Harper states that:

To a greater or lesser extent the hype, the image, the mythology, the context, the extra-musical socio-cultural meaning, whatever it is - the human ritual - is always a part of the overall aesthetic package of musicking. There is no music without it, only sounds. (Harper, 2009)

If my project is to truly explore the extramusical then a consideration of the "hype" and "image" is integral. This is a truism in pop music, where the projection of persona is important, but I feel that playing with persona as part of the work, rather than in support of the work, can be as much a part of the act of composition.

Throughout this project I have performed various identities based upon what I imagined composers to be and how I have observed composers being portrayed, in addition to exaggerated or altered versions of myself and my inner life. This is particularly prevalent in *Packaged Pleasure*, where I display an arrogant and deluded persona, akin to a musical version of Ricky Gervais' character David Brent in the television programme *The Office* (2001). The word 'performance' took on an altered meaning for me, now referring to how I performed myself and my identity rather than in the sense of being engaged in a rendition of a piece of work. I am the focal point of all but one of the pieces in this portfolio, and because of this I question how I construct and perform my own character. This manifests itself differently from piece to piece. I play with my identity, observing it and reconstructing it through my work. This playing takes on different forms: being a control-freak and bossing people around (\*\*SURPRISE PERFORMANCE\*\*), talking pretentious and convoluted nonsense on the BBC (*BBC Radio Luck*), and dressing up like Beethoven (*Composing music for 11 minutes dressed in 18th Century costume*).

## 2.3 IMPROVISATION = PLAYING

The term 'improvisation' became increasingly important as my project progressed. I originally thought of the non-written parts of my work as being 'indeterminate', coming from my experience as a practitioner of experimental music. 'Indeterminacy' was the term favoured by John Cage for pieces that gave the performers a significant degree of choice in what they played.

Michael Nyman uses 'indeterminacy' as one of the key defining features of an experimental musical practice, dedicating an entire chapter to it (1974/1999, pp. 110-138). Experimental composer Christopher Hobbs, at the end of this chapter, talks about the roles of composer, performer and listener, and how musicians should move effortlessly between these roles:

The best analogy I can think of where the participants take active and passive roles quite freely is that of a party. Say you substituted host for performers, guests for listener (composers don't concern us right now). As well as making conversation, you'd make music, perhaps in the same way as you'd make conversation. (Nyman, 1974/1999, p. 138)

I am attracted to this idea of musical performance resembling a party because of the fun this connotes, and see an indeterminate/improvisatory approach as a source of playfulness and joy in my practice. Indeterminacy is my inheritance from experimental composers such as John Cage, Christian Wolff, Pauline Oliveros and from Fluxus, and is a basic operating principle in my compositional-performance practice. I take for granted the fact that some pieces are not fixed and can vary significantly between performances. This is the case with *He that plays the English Gentleman shall be welcome*, which gradually settled over three iterations, months apart, and which I still do not feel will ever reach a finished form because it relies on the reactions of observers who have to get involved. Much of my work changes depending on how sympathetic the audience is, and nine works in the portfolio have what could be described as indeterminate elements:

- *Having never seen (a) Ghost* (indeterminate with respect to how my hands will affect clarinettist's playing)
- *I WANT YOU* (indeterminate with respect to how audience will interact)
- *Squashing* (indeterminate with respect to the progress and outcome of a squash game)
- *BBC Radio Luck* (indeterminate with respect to what questions an interviewer would ask)
- *Waschen* (indeterminate with respect to how I wash my body)
- **\*\*\*SURPRISE PERFORMANCE\*\*\*** (indeterminate with respect to how audience will interact)
- *EU-ligans* (indeterminate with respect to how audience will interact)
- *He that plays the English Gentleman shall be welcome* (indeterminate with respect to how audience will interact)
- *Up Down Left Right* (indeterminate with respect to how each participant will interact)

When thinking about work I make lots of notes in a notebook, primarily describing what I would like to happen in a performance. However, I rarely translate these words into a score. I find other ways of taking my ideas into performance, rather than through notated music. Thus I am aware that, from an outside perspective it appears that I improvise a lot, but this is not improvisation in the conventional sense. Rather I feel that I am engaged in an act of free play, similar to how I remember being a child. My memory of this time is that I would come up with a situation and keep modifying it as I played, only being concerned with what was needed in the moment. However, it is



important to note that my practice is not about pretending to be a child, or to research how children play and then applying it to composition. This project is about how I work now, and thus I am only referring to my memories of being a child here. Improvisation in this way came out of necessity in pieces such as *EU-ligans* and it is explored through collaborative work such as *In which we went looking for one thing and found another*.

Researcher of experimental music Virginia Anderson uses the term ‘empirical composition’ (1984/2002, p. 8 footnote) to describe the act that western people would most associate with classical music, which could also be described as sitting at a desk and writing music, trying it out by singing or on a keyboard instrument, finding what you like or what ‘works’ by intuition and then editing and refining it until you have a composition. An illustration of this process is a scene with the character of Antonio Salieri in Miloš Forman’s 1984 film *Amadeus* (Figure 7) working out a melody alone at a harpsichord then writing it down on paper.



Figure 7: F. Murray Abraham playing composer Antonio Salieri engaged in ‘empirical composition’ in the feature film *Amadeus* (1984)

In my work I view improvisation as a manifestation of ‘empirical’ composition being performed live. I have tried to illuminate an expanded notion of the process of empirical composition through the work in my portfolio, to focus on it and to perform it. Composition is my instrument, and I can improvise with it, performing the compositional act. It makes me reactive and responsive, but not on a musical instrument or on a laptop or synthesiser.

Christopher Small, in his study of African-American music-making *Music of the Common Tongue*, remarks that:

Composition and performance are [...] part of a single act which Europeans call improvisation but others call, simply, playing. (1987/1994, p. 46)

This provides me with a better term for improvisation in my work, one that more clearly defines how I use it: 'playing'. I offer a blend of the meanings of the verb 'playing' in my work, which refers to both playing music or just playing by engaging in an activity for the sake of enjoyment.

## **2.4 READING, CHARACTER AND PLAYING**

I now have three terms with which to describe my practice: reading, character and playing. These three terms can be made into a triangle that serves as a frame in which my works can be plotted, depending on what characteristics they embody (Figure 8). It is a field situation, akin to Rosalind Krauss' "expanded field" of sculpture (1979/1986, pp. 277-290).

The triangular shape of my new diagram, and the field situation it represents, reflects my feeling about how I position myself as an interdisciplinary practitioner. This feeling is like being a metal marble surrounded by three magnets in a triangle. The three magnets represent Art, Music and Theatre (Figure 9). I try to stay in the middle of the magnetic field, but get pulled in one direction or the other. Each piece that I make feels like a pull towards one of the magnets, which I try to resist. In fact the three terms in my triangular frame: reading, character and playing, sound closer to a description of theatre than music. In this way I am adhering to John Cage's early dictum that experimental music should go "towards theatre" (1957/2009, p. 12).

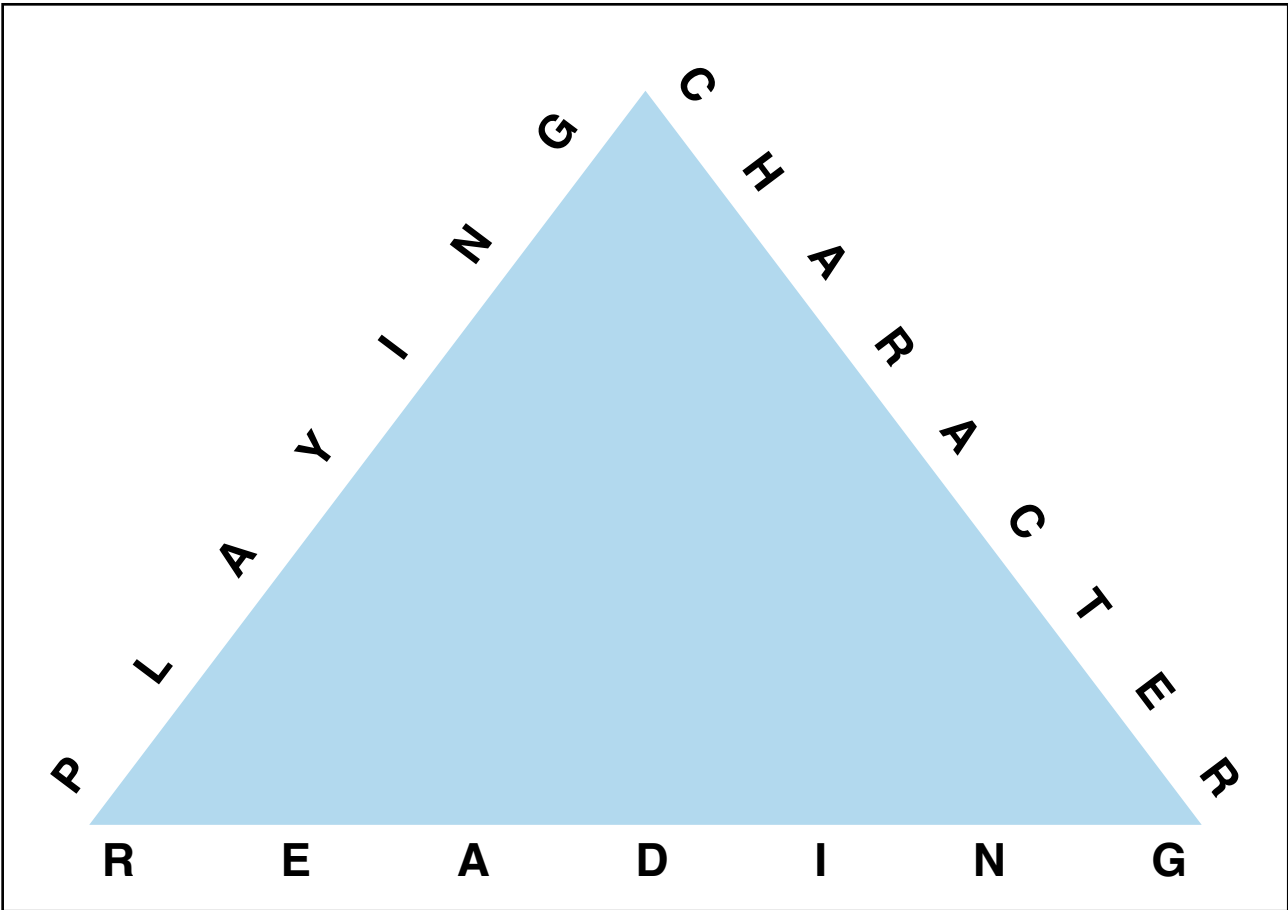


Figure 8: My triangular frame, redefining score-reading, performance and improvisation as character, playing and reading

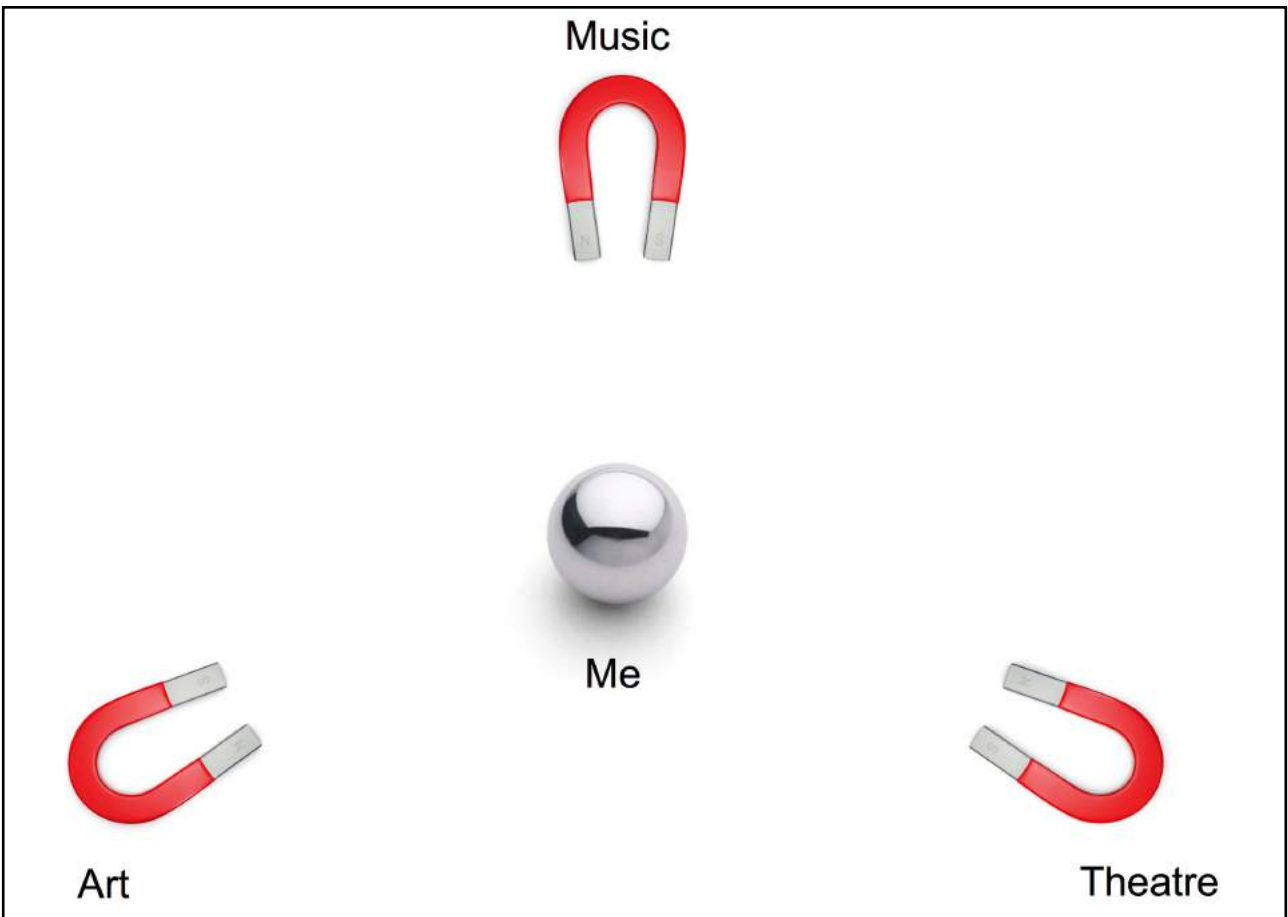


Figure 9: My position as an interdisciplinary practitioner

## CHAPTER 3

### Intriguing situations in which musical sound may occur

In this chapter I discuss each of the 17 works in the portfolio individually, providing contextual information that complements the pieces themselves. There are a lot of references between the works, and I establish connections between them. However, grouping them thematically would feel very forced, and would not reflect the field situation of my conceptual framework (Figure 10). There would be so much overlap that any thematic grouping would be rendered meaningless. The pieces are therefore organised here in chronological order of performance, showing the development of my thinking through my practice over the course of the project.

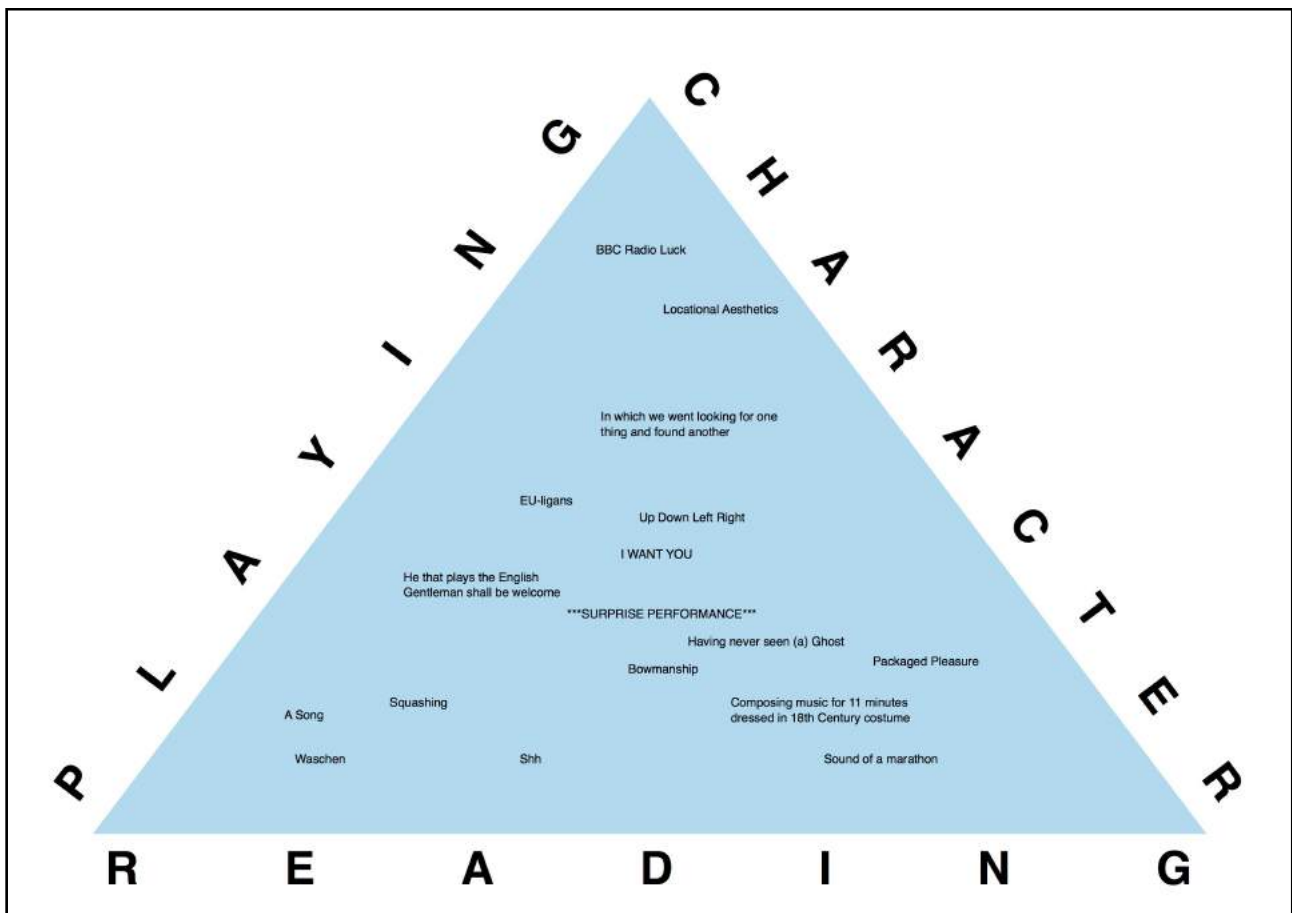


Figure 10: My triangular frame with the 17 pieces from the portfolio plotted on it according to how much of each characteristic they embody

### 3.1 Sound of a marathon

This piece is about describing a sonic experience in speech and framing it as a piece of music. I achieve this by taking somebody else's story and putting their words in my own mouth by lip-syncing. I explore the idea that talking about music can be considered a musical experience itself.

A story was given to me by my friend Ana Ribeiro. She recorded herself speaking about an experience where she had been engulfed unexpectedly by marathon runners whilst walking around a city on a quiet Sunday morning. This story appealed to me because it enabled me to vividly imagine a compelling sonic experience. I was given an opportunity to perform during a concert in Cafe OTO, an intimate and informal venue where people talk and exchange anecdotes as well as listen to music, which was an ideal place to share this story.

Ana's first language is Portuguese and her way of speaking English is very distinct and pleasant to listen to, but I felt that to just play the recording in a live concert situation with no visual stimulus would not have been effective. It might have been ignored by the audience if there was no physical performance taking place on which attention could be focussed. I chose to maintain Ana's voice but to perform as a human focal point in order to establish a frame and focus attention on the story. I prepared a pre-recorded audio track, copying Ana's speech to make it look like I was speaking, and once this had been established I confused the situation by revealing that I was lip syncing, then finally revealing Ana's voice.

I knew that I would not be able to memorise the entire text and replicate it perfectly onstage, so this audio track enabled me to fake it. The whole performance is lip-synced. I hint this to the audience at 5:40, where the spoken text drops out leaving only the sounds of saliva in my mouth. Ana's voice then appears in place of my own at 6:30, as I keep on lip-syncing. I then layered up the spoken track to produce a sonic effect similar to the effect described by Ana of all the runners running in different rhythms, engulfing her.

To make the audio track I ran for 10km then played Ana's recording on earphones and copied what she said into a microphone, altering my voice by giving it a panting and breathy quality. By doing this I present the idea of a performer as an athlete, making a display of physical prowess onstage by running 10km to the concert hall prior to the beginning of the performance. Through this activity I equate virtuosic musical performances with spectator sports. Performing a concerto or any other virtuosic piece of music is a display of physical prowess. It is a display of skill in the same way that spectator sports are a display of skill.

Ana's initial audio recording of her story is like a musical score that I used as an impetus to make a piece, akin to an elaborate text score. In this way *Sound of a marathon* is an initial exploration of 'reading' in my triangular frame.

### 3.2 Shh

In this piece I intervene in a radio broadcast by repeating a single vocal sound to change the meaning of a phrase. I achieve this by cropping together all the occurrences of the 'Hit Music' ident on CapitalFM during a typical hour-long broadcast to make an audio track, then saying 'shh' every time the ident appears in order to create the phrase 'shit music'. The piece is a video work, but has also been performed live on several occasions. The meaning of this piece is ambiguous: the audience could infer that I am saying pop music is shit, or alternatively that my own performance is shit. When performed alongside other pieces in a concert setting it could look like I am trying to say that the other music in the concert is shit. I prefer to maintain this ambiguity: if the audience are questioning what I mean then I consider them to be active rather than passive listeners.

The vocal sound 'shh' is ordinarily used to tell people to be quiet. Classical concert audiences are conventionally supposed to sit quietly during a performance, and people might tell each other to 'shh' if they fail to abide by this convention. This sound is thus a byproduct of musical performances, an aspect of the 'extramusical' which is foregrounded in this piece.

The only action in the performance is the synchronisation of the 'shh' sound with the beginning of the phrase 'Hit Music'. This focus on synchronisation is similar to my lip-syncing in *Sound of a marathon*. Traditional score-reading produces a synchronised sound-image of written music, and I see performing skilful acts of virtuoso synchronisation as an expansion of this traditional practice. The pre-recorded part is an audio score that is used to indicate when the 'shh' sound should be made. In my performance I follow this audio track in the same way that I would follow a score of written musical notes, and so *Shh* is another early example of 'reading' in my triangular frame.

### 3.3 Having never seen (a) Ghost

This piece is about how composers manipulate performers through the music they write. It was conceived as an initial exploration into how I could 'perform the compositional act', using the logic of the figure of the composer physically imposing their will on an instrumentalist, with the composer's intention being sacrosanct, as described by Adam Harper:

The performance of classical music is generally ruled by The Composer's Intention, whether s/he's alive or dead. Especially if s/he's alive and on the same continent, though, all agency is turned over to her/him if possible. (Harper, 2009)

I wanted to test the procedure of directly affecting the actions of a performer onstage. I achieved this by devising a series of actions for myself that would interfere with, and eventually ruin, an otherwise conventional musical performance by a bass clarinetist. By doing this I performed the character of a controlling composer and their power over musical performers, especially when they

are still alive and present to tell an instrumentalist exactly how they want the music to be played. I expanded on this idea of the composer-as-manipulator in later pieces such as *I WANT YOU*, **SURPRISE PERFORMANCE** and *EU-ligans*. In this sense the piece is an expression of 'character' in my triangular frame.

My movements are devised from Patrick Swayze's hand movements in the famous 'clay pot' scene from the film *Ghost* (1990), where he cheekily destroys a pot being thrown by Demi Moore whilst trying to assist her. The scene is famous and often parodied. It is a relaxed and funny scene and as such was a playful and humorous way of devising the performance. The bass clarinetist plays arpeggios from *Unchained Melody* (The Righteous Brothers, 1965), which is the song accompanying this scene. I 'read' Swayze's hands as a score, mapping his hand movements onto the hands of the bass clarinetist, akin to the way that musical notation tells a musician where to put their hands in order to produce sound on an instrument (see Figures 11 and 12). This act of reading is not made explicit in the performance because the scene from the film is not shown. My reading of the hand movements takes place prior to the performance, and the timings for performing these actions are delivered to me via an earpiece whilst I am onstage. Pre-recorded audio instructions tell me where to put my hands. I could have chosen to improvise my actions, but in this early stage of the project I was primarily concerned with 'reading', and so chose to remain faithful to the scene. This also gave the piece a more concentrated atmosphere, keeping my attention focussed on performing the correct actions, rather than deliberately trying to elicit laughter from the audience. People familiar with the film may intuit this act of reading.

I continue this idea in later pieces such as *Bowmanship*, where actions from film clips become the basis for my own movements. Further pieces like *Packaged Pleasure* display the video material that I read onstage, making the act of reading much clearer to the audience.



Figure 11: Screenshot from the famous 'clay pot' scene in the feature film *Ghost* (1990)



Figure 12: Screenshot from *Having never seen (a) Ghost* (2014), showing the fingers interlocking in the manner of Patrick Swayze and Demi Moore's fingers in Figure 11



### 3.4 I WANT YOU

This piece is about how music is disciplined and about how it can be a collective activity. I adopt the manner of a military drill sergeant and coerce an audience to rote-learn a jingoistic song. The coercion is made explicit: rather than me trying to be 'nice' to the audience I am deliberately antagonistic by shouting and pointing at them.

The video documentation of this piece in the portfolio is a short extract of performance that lasted seven minutes in total, so some description of the piece is required. I stood in front of an audience at an art gallery opening event with the audience stood informally around the gallery facing me. A sound installation (*Broken Ensemble: War Damaged Musical Instruments (brass section)*, 2014) by artist Susan Philipsz played through large speakers around me. My performance was part of a showcase event of musical responses to the installation. Philipsz had suspended a group of large horn-shaped speakers in the gallery, which played pre-recorded tracks of war-damaged bugles playing tones from the 'Last Post', a bugle call used by the army to bring the troops home, and now used to commemorate all victims of war. It symbolises an ending. I decided to perform something that was used as a beginning to war, as a mirror to Philipsz's work. I memorised the refrain from a patriotic song that was used to recruit British men into the army during the opening years of World War 1: *Your King and Country Need You* with lyrics by Huntley Trevor and music by Henry E. Pether (Farrington, 1914). I broke the refrain down into six parts and shout-sang single lines. After I had shout-sang each line I pointed to the audience in the manner of the famous *Lord Kitchener Wants You* poster by Alfred Leete (1914, Figure 13), indicating that the audience should repeat the line. Once the audience understood what I wanted, which took about a minute, they reluctantly joined in with the singing.

Susan Philipsz's installation played throughout my performance. I began by shout-singing the first line of the song, then pointing at the audience for the same duration as the shouted line. I kept doing this until the audience joined in on their cue. Once I was satisfied with the audience's response to each line I progressed to the next line, occasionally going back to the beginning and shouting two lines at a time to encourage the audience to get used to the song and commit it to memory. I had to perform this with some sensitivity to how the audience might react, so the exact structure was not determined beforehand. I left it to my own intuition as to how much of the song to repeat, and was prepared to cut the performance short if I felt that the audience were uncomfortable with the action. The performance ended with me shout-singing the whole refrain. The experience was like rote-learning, which is exactly what we were doing as a group.

Through this piece I further explored the composer-as-manipulator character from *Having never seen (a) Ghost*. This is further developed in later pieces such as *EU-ligans* and *\*\*\*SURPRISE PERFORMANCE\*\*\**.

# BRITONS



"WANTS  
**YOU**"

**JOIN YOUR COUNTRY'S ARMY!**  
**GOD SAVE THE KING**

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Reproduced from an original poster, held by the Imperial War Museum, by Gavin Martin Ltd.

Figure 13: Poster by Alfred Letee (1914). Sammlung Eybl, Plakatmuseum Wien/Wikimedia Commons

### 3.5 Squashing

This piece was my contribution to a large-scale hour-long show made in collaboration with German theatre artists Ludwig Abraham and Daniel Verasson. It was conceived as a theatre piece specifically for the empty art museum in Marburg, Germany. It is about how talking about music can be made into a musical experience. I achieve this through the real-life percussive accompaniment of a squash game, emphasising how this leaves the players out of breath, thus breaking up their speech. An explanatory text highlights this point at the end of the piece, taking the maxim “talking about music is like dancing about architecture” as a point of departure. This line has been attributed to many different people including Laurie Anderson, Miles Davis, Frank Zappa, Clara Schumann, Elvis Costello, Steve Martin and Thelonious Monk. However blogger Garson O’Toole concludes on *Quote Investigator* that American comedian Martin Mull probably came up with it first (O’Toole, 2010).

*Squashing* is antagonistic towards the audience in order to challenge their passive spectatorship. This is achieved by not providing seating, and moving the action around the room so that the audience are unable to find a place to comfortably lean and observe the performance for very long without putting themselves directly in the way of the squash game.

Ludwig and I begin by playing the highly repetitive children’s alphabet game ‘Grandmother went to the market’ whilst playing squash. This was done in order to establish the situation and get the audience used to listening to us speaking and playing squash simultaneously. We prepared and memorised a list of words so that the game would run smoothly with no interruptions other than the gradual change in our voices as we became out of breath, and the lapses of concentration caused by our attempts to strike the ball.

This piece again demonstrates the character of composer-as-athlete, displaying the virtuosity of combining squash with speech and thus equating the physical spectacle of instrumental virtuosity with that of spectator sports.

An explanatory text forms the ending of the piece. This text is introduced before the end of ‘Grandmother went to the market’ is reached, which serves to break the expectation that has been established by the game. The explanatory text was translated into German and during the performance we alternate the lines between English and German, with the text performed twice through to allow both versions of each sentence to be heard. This explanatory text justifies the piece to the audience and allows them to see the thinking behind the activity.

Later I developed *Squashing* into an episode for a radio broadcast entitled *Locational Aesthetics*. In this recording I discuss the idea behind the original piece, saying “the sounds of the voice when you’re out of breath; I think it really changes it and it really gives it a different character. And it, it’s that character that sounds like music”.

### 3.6 BBC Radio Luck

This piece is about how an interview about music can actually be musical itself. I achieved this by using a party blower as a quit-smoking device, and took drags on it as though I was smoking, during a radio interview. By talking about music I played with ideas for new performances in real time, an example of ‘playing’ in my triangular frame.

I appear live on BBC Radio Essex pretending to be my colleague, composer Neil Luck. I discuss Neil's upcoming large-scale operatic work *Herakles!* (2015), having never actually seen the piece myself and knowing very little about it. The BBC presenter is unaware that he is speaking to an imposter. Neil asked me to do this because he was unable to attend the interview himself and we bear a passing resemblance to each other. I could have learned more about *Herakles!* but instead chose to improvise using an element from one of Neil's performances that I attended at Birmingham's Ikon Gallery in 2012 (*Gaze* by Neil Luck and Fiona Bevan), during which he pretended to smoke a party blower.

The music in *BBC Radio Luck* was made just by talking about it. What I described was not Neil's piece, and is also not a piece that I have made. It is what art critic Nicolas Bourriaud describes as “trailer” form:

Having been an event per se (classical painting), then the graphic recording of an event (the work of Jackson Pollock, with photographic documents describing a performance or an action), today's work of art often assumes the role of a trailer for a forthcoming event, or an event that is put off forever. (2002, p. 114)

The interview was intended to be a trailer for Neil's event, but he gave me free rein to do whatever I wished. The result is a blurring of fact (*Herakles!* is an actual piece) and fiction (*Herakles!* bears no relation to my description in the interview). I used this trailer to make another trailer for a piece that does not exist. The key element of this piece is that, through pretending to be Neil, and not really knowing what I am supposed to be talking about, I could try out different ideas and could develop a character. I made fictional music just by talking about it and reflected on my own ideas about music in a high-stakes situation. The high-stakes were that fact that I was forced to keep talking, and to seem like I knew what I was talking about because of the necessity to avoid being outed as an imposter.

An emergent outcome of this activity is to suggest that a lot of composers look and sound the same (posh white men), so are interchangeable. The experience allowed me to think out loud and say things that I might not usually say because I was freed from my own ego. I could test out my ideas, such as speculating about the audience for experimental music. When asked by the presenter what I imagine the audience will think when watching *Herakles!* I say that I want you [the audience] to think: “where do you truly belong and where would you like to be?” (at 10:38 in the

video documentation). As the saying goes, no truer word was spoken in jest. I am unsure as to whether I planned this line or not, but the important thing is that it was given the chance to appear. Quick responses were needed because I was pretending to be Neil, who would have known the answer. So I had to give the impression I knew the answer, and this was the first thing that came to mind.

In the same way that John Cage's writing "became part of his creative process, rather than simply an explanation of it" (Stones, 2013, p. 127), this activity served as a way for me to explore ideas about performance and my composer-performer identity *whilst* engaged in the act of performing.

### **3.7 Composing music for 11 minutes dressed in 18th Century costume**

This piece is about how the process of writing music can also be considered musical in itself. I achieved this by filming myself typing directly into music-processing software and transcribing the result so that it could be played as a live soundtrack to the video.

The idea for the piece came from my job as a music copyist. I type up the written music for composers who are unable to use music-processing software. The software has a function where a note that you type automatically sounds when you type it, something that composers using this software become very accustomed to. Dutch ensemble Orkest de Ereprijs are famous for being able to play rhythmically complex work and the sound of someone typing music into a computer programme somewhat resembles (in a rather clichéd way) the music that they perform. When they asked for a piece of music, I saw a good opportunity to test this idea.

The music in the original video was composed empirically in real time. I am composing in the video. No plan was made as to the music I would type into the Sibelius music software programme. The video was thus a performance in itself. It was a video of empirical composition in action. I transcribed the music from this video, writing it out so that it could be replicated by a human reading it and playing it on an instrument (such as the piano). I then orchestrated this for Orkest de Ereprijs to play along with a click track, so that they could play precisely in time with the original video.

In this way the piece concerns the relationship between contemporary computer technology and traditional Western Classical music. I communicate this to the audience through the stereotypical image of a classical composer in popular imagination, such as the caricatures of Mozart and Salieri in *Amadeus* (1984), composing using contemporary technology. It could be described as a "technomorphic" work. (Girard, 2012, p. 103) "Technomorphic" writing is defined as "transposing electronic models to the field of instrumental music" (Wilson, 1989, p. 68 quoted in Girard, 2012, p. 103). This matters because it displays the inner workings of written music to the audience, both watching live and viewers of the video, thus demystifying the process of composition.

When viewing the video documentation, the occasional inaccuracies in the playing and the coughs from the audience signal to the (insider) listener that this is a recording of a real ensemble rather than just high quality computer-generated sound (MIDI). The non-precise castanets also do this to some degree, but on reflection television-style foley effects such as the percussionist typing on an amplified computer keyboard would have been more effective at producing an illusion. It would also have required the percussionist to read the video as a score (a precursor to *Packaged Pleasure*).

Like Minimalist composer Steve Reich's early tape works such as *It's Gonna Rain* (1965/1992), the procedural aspect of the performance is audible to the listeners, in a similar way to my later piece *A Song. Composing music for 11 minutes dressed in 18th Century costume* could be seen as a step-by-step method to make "classical" music. The process of creation is made audible, so that it is the *content* of the piece, rather than something unseen that leads to the outcome. Although the process of transcription now remains unseen.

It is also about what I consider the public perception of a composer to be: someone dressed in old-fashioned clothes working away on their own writing classical-sounding music by candlelight. I achieved this by dressing up and writing pastiche music. Visually this piece evokes the stereotyped image of a classical composer on British television discussed in Adam Harper's afore mentioned blogpost 'What is a [classical] composer?':

To a certain extent, these two [television] programmes demonstrated that even though the words 'composer' and 'composition' are actually very broad, basic and flexible terms, they do nonetheless conjure up very narrowly specific sorts of musical practice in the popular imagination - typically involving stories of long dead white male geniuses in eighteenth- or nineteenth-century getup scratching away with quills, up to their powdered wigs in the complex deliberation apparently involved in designing a masterpiece. The musical style such words evoke is just as limited - the word 'composer', though it could and perhaps should refer to anyone who creates music of any sort, invariably implies the restricting prefix 'classical' and all the cultural baggage that goes with it. (Harper, 2009)

As a practitioner who works outside the mainstream of classical music this piece was a vehicle for me to indulge a fantasy of creativity: becoming a "real" composer by wearing a costume. It explores cultural stereotypes of composers, suggesting that their image, rather than one of genius, is just another image that can be played with.

### 3.8 Waschen

This piece is about how reading a musical score onstage can become part of the theatricality of musical performance. I perform as a solo singer, but not a trained singer, and read my body in a mirror as though it is a written musical score. The word 'waschen' is written all across my body with thick black marker pen. 'Waschen' is the German word for 'washing': I first developed this piece in Switzerland and the title stuck. The words are written in a seemingly arbitrary fashion with no formal pattern, but serve the purpose of written music notation as something to be read onstage during a performance.

As I perform the piece I take a bar of soap and wash the words from my body whilst reading the words in a mirror. When I touch a particular part of a word I sing it, reading my body as though it is a musical stave. The higher up my body the word is written, the higher I sing, and the lower down it is written, the lower I sing (see Figure 14). When the ink is dark I sing loudly, and as the ink fades I get softer. When the ink has disappeared, no sound comes out of my mouth. This should become clear to the audience as the piece progresses.

The text on my body is not just a score for reading, but forms an essential part of the theatre of the performance itself. The act of reading the written text and responding to it musically can be followed by the audience. They are not required to join in, though, because I felt this would be too didactic and I had already explored this in *I WANT YOU*.

Appearing naked in the performance acknowledges the influence of performance art in my practice, prominent examples being the works of Marina Abramovic and Ulay such as *Relation in Space* (1976) and *Imponderabilia* (1977). The logical reason for performing naked is because the piece involves washing, and I am usually naked when I wash my full body. The piece was performed in a ruined chapel in London with the audience stood completely surrounding me. It was very cold. This element of suffering further linked the piece to the early performance art of Marina Abramovic and Chris Burden, and the piece could thus be described as: tropes of seventies performance art repurposed as a musical score.

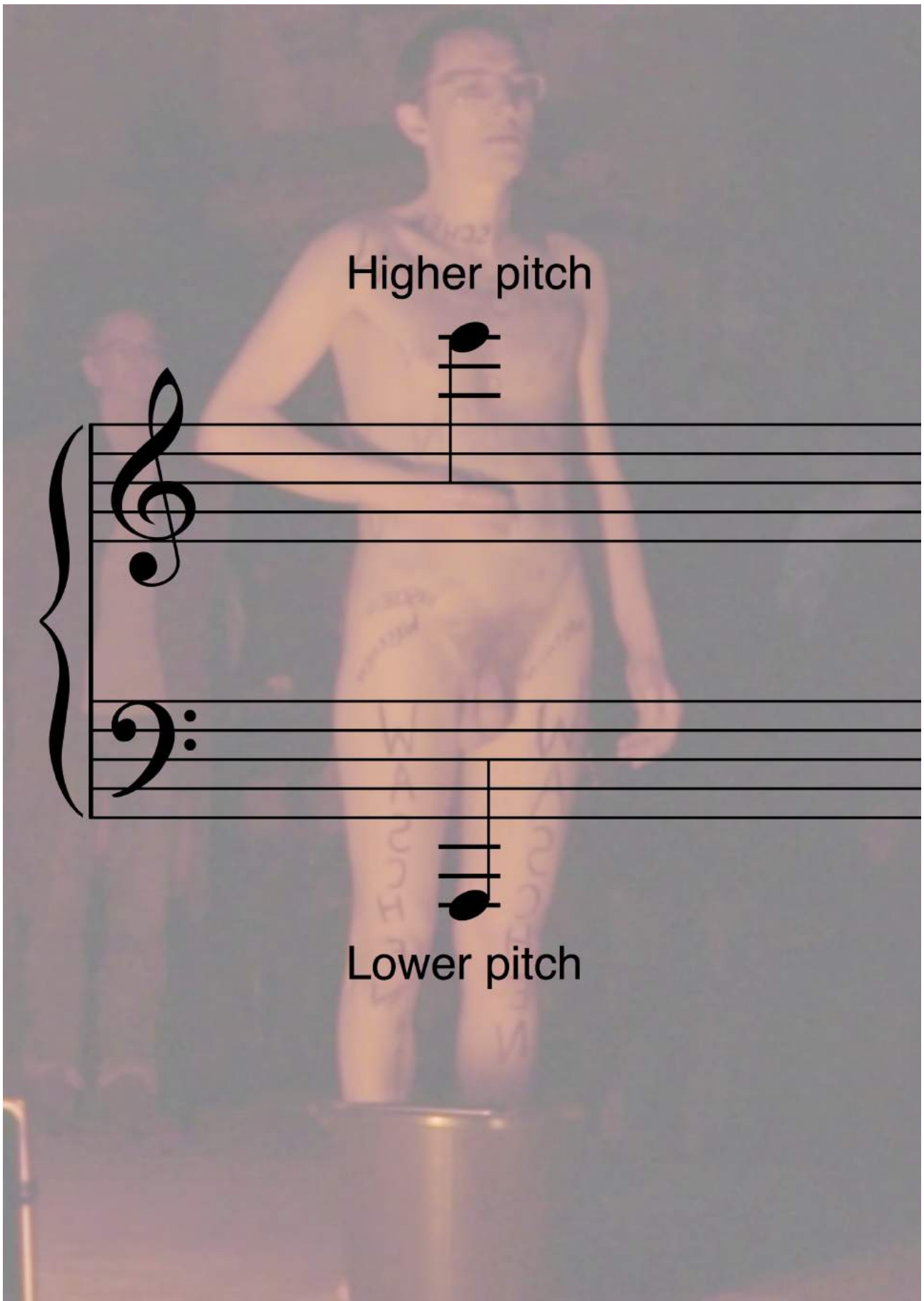


Figure 14: Screenshot from *Waschen* (2015) showing how I read my body as a score



### 3.9 Bowmanship

This piece is about extended instrumental playing techniques, a trope of mid- to late 20th-Century Western classical music, and their theatricality. I achieve this by using a violin bow as a sword to perform a disciplined sword-demonstration routine. My choreography was devised from clips of Uma Thurman in *Kill Bill* (2003) and Michelle Yeoh and Zhang Ziyi in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000). It is a further example of 'reading' in my triangular frame, using actions in famous films as instructions akin to musical notation in a similar way to *Having never seen (a) Ghost*.

This piece displays an element of childlike make-believe, like playing at sword-fighting in front of a mirror in my childhood bedroom. It is not an overly skilful performance but more like a dedicated amateur than a professional sword-handler or martial artist. I perform the piece myself rather than getting a professional sword-handler because I am a musician who is implicitly expected to play an instrument. This situation is like a professional symphony orchestra recording an album of pop songs in which they play the right notes but are unable to embody the drive, swing or image of the pop artist. In such a situation they are playing at being a pop artist.

The performance is comic and playful, even though I maintain a serious expression throughout. This is the behaviour of a classical concert soloist, who maintains a measured demeanour throughout a performance until the end, at which point they relax, signalling to the audience that they may also relax and applaud. The piece was rigorously rehearsed because I find a seemingly frivolous action executed with seriousness to be funny, highlighting the absurdity of concert performance rituals.

Sincerity is the key to this type of work, requiring the same rigour being applied to pretend sword-fighting as practising the violin for an important recital. All musical performance is a disciplined action of some kind, so these disciplined actions should not just be limited to operating musical instruments. After all, traditional performance techniques, from any musical tradition, are just aggregates of small decisions taken by many different people in the past. They are far from perfect, and highly contingent, so we need not be beholden to them.

I talk about *Bowmanship* as part of *Packaged Pleasure* (at 12:37) and *Locational Aesthetics* (at 00:12), describing two different accounts of the inspiration and thinking behind the piece. Both of these accounts are simplified and exaggerated versions of the truth, a little like this commentary but in a different register.

### 3.10 Packaged Pleasure

This piece is about the character of the composer as a self-interested narcissist making self-indulgent work. I achieve this by reading a documentary about myself as a musical score, in which I play an exaggerated version of myself influenced by egregious stereotypes from television. The conceit of the piece is that I am a composer-performer who is so vain that he reads a documentary about himself as a score by mirroring his own hand movements whilst wearing bells on his wrists. The form of the artist portrait video is taken as a site of musical performance where I develop the notions of 'character' and 'reading' in my triangular frame.

This was a collaborative work made with composers Kaj Duncan David and Mathias Monrad Møller for the Nordic Music Days festival in Copenhagen in 2015. The theme of the festival was 'jouissance'. We interpreted 'jouissance' in the poststructuralist sense of an excessive type of pleasure linked to the division and splitting of the self (Childers & Hentzi (eds.), 1995, p. 162-3). Pleasure in this sense for me was having a documentary made about me and getting to play up and caricature my own arrogance in real life.

Our initial ideas were to make something about the widely reported "selfie addict" Danny Bowman, who was obsessed with taking the perfect selfie (Aldridge & Harden, 2014). I spent a week living with Kaj and Mathias, filming material that could be used for a mockumentary about my life as a composer. My exaggerated persona was inspired by real-life composers such as the protagonist on Channel 4's 2009 documentary series *The World's Greatest Musical Prodigies*, as well as famous character creations such as Alan Partridge (*Knowing Me Knowing You with Alan Partridge*, 1994) and David Brent (*The Office*, 2001). We included shots of me in poses from paintings of Narcissus. For example, I adopt the pose of Caravaggio's *Narcissus* (1599) at 21:03. Although not strictly a selfie, the piece is a 25-minute portrait which is implicitly directed under my control as the subject.

My presence onstage, reading the video as a score, leads to ambiguity as to whether these delusions of grandeur are genuine or affected. Performances of this work have elicited varied reactions, from the 'knowing' laughter of an initiated audience of musicians, to the obnoxious alter-ego being received at face value without question. This leads me to question whether we like our composers eccentric, deluded and arrogant, following the maxim 'everybody loves a villain'. I achieve this by purposely displaying aspects of the "prophet-in-the-wilderness, who-cares-if-you-listen mentality" described by music journalist Alex Ross in his comprehensive account of 20th-century classical music *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (2007/2009, p. 569).

*Packaged Pleasure* is the main piece in this portfolio in which I develop the idea of reading a video as a score. This follows on from *Having never seen (a) Ghost* and *Bowmanship*, but now with the reading material in full view of the audience. In this way it is a development of *Waschen*, because the audience are able to see how I am reading the video as a score.

I wear bells on my wrists which tinkle as I copy my own hand movements in the video, showing the audience that I am an instrumentalist reading the video as a score that allows me to play an instrument. They are used in order to bring sound to my movements, rather than me making movements in order to produce sound, and have the additional quality of accompanying my farcical claim to be a “genie” (11:28) with a magical pantomime tinkling.

There is something uncomfortable about this piece. I present an awful character that does not encourage the audience to keep watching or listening. It is unconventional when presented as music, and requires patience on the part of the audience in order to get through the full 25 minutes. The audience finally get to hear a piece of recognisable music at the end, although there are examples of other musical performances throughout the film.

Through this piece I perform a version of myself obsessed with “being seen as radical” (Ingamells/ David/Møller, 2015, 16:05). This could be equated with composer Federico Reuben’s concept of “imaginary musical radicalism” that he perceives in contemporary experimental music today:

It is also interesting to notice that all of these practitioners present themselves as radical, but without any reasonable proof; they often rely on bad taste and comedy, and embody symptoms that could be associated with late capitalism: narcissism, obsession, paranoia, delusion, hysteria and schizophrenia. *Imaginary musical radicalism* perpetuates the current condition of western music and politics, revealing it through the futility of its own (imaginary) radicalism. (Reuben, 2015, p. 242)

*Packaged Pleasure* purposefully displays most of the traits that Reuben mentions: narcissism, obsession, paranoia, delusion, hysteria and schizophrenia. The piece suggests that I am enjoying myself in spite of the seemingly futile gesture of radicalism. The spoken monologues came from discussions with Kaj and Mathias. All three of us knew the stereotypes we were dealing with and enjoyed playing with them. The piece may seem like an in-joke, but it translates outside the field of contemporary music. There are deluded pseudo-intellectuals in many different fields, and the references made within the video do not refer to contemporary music too specifically.

### **3.11 \*\*\*SURPRISE PERFORMANCE\*\*\***

This piece is about composers imposing their will on both players and audience, and as such is a development of ideas from *Having never seen (a) Ghost* and *I WANT YOU*. I achieved this by shouting instructions at both players and audience with a large acoustic megaphone. It highlights the fact that musical scores are a set of instructions to be followed during a performance. I achieved this by making the delivery of the instructions (my shouting) the focus of the piece.

In this piece I feel like I am actually ‘performing the compositional act’ in a very direct way. I physically put things together with my voice, pointing to people and telling them where I want them and what I want them to do.

\*\*\**SURPRISE PERFORMANCE*\*\*\* has been presented twice. The first performance was at an event to mark the launch of the *Collaborations in Place-based Creative Practice: Birmingham’s Public Art Strategy 2015 - 2019* document at The Nest @ Glenn Howells Architects in Birmingham on 24th November 2015. This document (2015, p. 5) states the need for public art to “act as a catalyst for collective thinking about what we want from our society” (Councillor Ian Ward, Deputy Leader of Birmingham City Council). On page 8 it states that public art should “encourage everyone to be creative”. This is tied to Christopher Small’s idea about music being a projection of an ideal society, where he suggests that a person taking part in a musical performance is doing three things:

1. He or she is exploring, affirming and celebrating a sense of identity;
2. He or she is taking part in an ideal society which the participants between them have brought into existence for the duration of the performance;
3. He or she is modelling, in the relationships between the sounds he or she is making, listening to or dancing to, the relationships of that ideal society. (Small, 1987/1994, p. 74)

\*\*\**SURPRISE PERFORMANCE*\*\*\* makes this collaborative participation explicit, but rather than between performers and listeners, it is between myself (as composer-performer) and both the instrumentalists *and* the audience together. Both instrumentalists and audience have very little idea of what is going to take place until they are in the performance, which puts the instrumentalists in the same position as the audience, and vice versa.

At first glance my authority figure is not conducive to an “ideal society”. However, the ideal situation is reached when my voice is eventually drowned out by the sound of the music, and everyone is playing together.

There are four sonic elements that make up this piece: me shouting, violin tremolos, trumpets blasting, and balloons popping. I explain the piece to the audience as I shout instructions to them, and as the instruments are introduced they serve as an accompaniment to my speech, akin to recitative in opera. The piece gradually builds up in texture as the sonic elements are introduced one by one.

Returning to Adam Harper’s blogpost about established practices in contemporary classical music, he reiterates that:

All agency is turned over to [the composer] if possible, a constant dialogue is maintained and the absurd reifications of ‘what s/he was trying to do or say’, or the ‘sounds in her/his head’ have to be fully ‘realised’, especially concerning a premiere. (Harper, 2009)

In this piece my intentions are made explicit. I am responsible for telling the performers and audience how to carry out the piece. I bark instructions at them, encouraging them to perform the piece in a certain way. I harangue people into doing what I want. My spoken text is improvised but always follows the same pattern. By not having a fixed text I am free to respond to the different reactions of audience members. I tend not to 'pick on' individual audience members like a standup comic might do, preferring to treat the audience as an anonymous mass so that they become aware that they are actually free to contribute as much or as little as they choose. Some members of the audience choose to observe the piece from a distance and not actively participate in hitting the balloons. This can be seen in the video documentation at 05:50.

The concerns of the concert organisers about adhering to the health and safety regulations were incorporated into my speech. I warned the audience to watch out for the pins on the bows of the violinists, and also not to block any of the emergency exits (01:11).

The text was improvised because I had no opportunity to rehearse the piece. A balloon drop is expensive to install, and I had no way of knowing how an audience would react. Returning to Small again:

There is not much point in practising alone what can only be done in a group. (Small, 1987/1994, p. 464)

Repeating the piece allows me to perfect my patter, but I will always have to be flexible due to different audiences reacting in different ways. In both performances the audience responded enthusiastically, and I was left to shout encouragement from the side of the performance space whilst all the balloons were gradually popped. At this point I shouted even louder to be heard over the sound of the violins, trumpets and balloons. This built to an inevitable crescendo, before fading as the number of balloons decreased and the audience and instrumentalists ran out of energy, bringing the performance to what felt like an expected conclusion.

### **3.12 Locational Aesthetics**

This piece is about the art/life dichotomy and how people can experience music in their everyday lives. I achieve this by making short factual recordings in the style of BBC Radio 4 broadcasts like the 'Inheritance Tracks' feature on *Saturday Live*, or *Tweet of the Day*, talking about how I experience music through seemingly non-musical activities like running, playing squash and fencing in my own daily life. I perform the character of 'composer-as-athlete' with the added dimension of a lonely-hearts column, describing how three activities that I do on my own are related to music. I then invite the public to call me if they would like to join me, which is a response to the popular image of solitary composers working in isolation.

The acts that I describe are both 'everyday' and strange. It is not unusual that people go running, go fencing or play squash, but more unusual that they would run with horns in their mouth, fence with a violin bow, or play squash whilst talking about music. If people did this then it is possible they could have a musical experience by "waking up to the very life [they're] living" (Cage quoted in Nyman, 1999, p. 26). The recordings are a playful response to experimental composers such as John Cage, who call for attention to be paid to the sounds of everyday life as music.

The speaking part is culled from improvised speech, in a similar manner to *Packaged Pleasure*. I repurposed elements from earlier pieces in the portfolio: *Bowmanship*, *Sound of a marathon* and *Squashing*. This enabled me to talk about my ideas within the setting of a performance, similar to *BBC Radio Luck*, and has a precedent in the performed lectures of Cage such as *Lecture on Nothing* (1959/2009, p. 109-127) where his "writing became part of his creative process, rather than simply an explanation of it" (Stones, 2013, p. 127).

During my musical education I considered a lot of academic musical analysis to be based on number sequences and patterns, so addressed this criticism in a playful way by using my phone number to generate a melody. I assigned each number from 0 to 9 to a pitch of the chromatic scale, creating a short melody out of my phone number, although this is not noticeable to the listeners.

### 3.13 EU-ligans

This piece is about collective activity and intervening in a piece of music, changing it by adopting a different approach to performance. I achieved this by coercing a pub full of people to sing Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*, the anthem of the European Union, in the style of England football supporters singing *God Save the Queen*. Rather than performing for passive spectators I used my performance skills to engage a group of people in collective action where there was no audience, similar to *I WANT YOU* and *\*\*\*SURPRISE PERFORMANCE\*\*\** and my later piece *Up Down Left Right*.

This took place on the evening of June 23rd 2016, the day of the EU Referendum, and was not pre-planned. It was an act of imagination or play-acting, in which I pretended (and encouraged the audience to pretend) to be someone else through music. This led to a moment of catharsis due to the feeling of apprehension as to the result of the vote amongst the assembled pub goers.

Prior to the footage being filmed I made an impassioned speech stating that people who believed in continued EU membership should show as much passion as football supporters during the World Cup. So we should sing the EU anthem as if we were football hooligans singing *God Save the Queen*. The action was an example of 'play' in my triangular field. It taught me that sometimes it is not always conducive to compose in isolation, where I have lots of time to consider what will

happen, because then the 'moment' would disappear. Composer George Lewis describes improvisation as:

[...] exploration, discovery and response to conditions, part of a ubiquitous human practice of real-time analysis, generation, manipulation, exchange, and transformation of meaning, mediated by (among other factors) the body, history, temporality, space, memory, intention, material culture, and diverse methodologies." (Lewis, 2007)

The instantaneous nature of *EU-ligans* led to a lack of full video documentation, but setting up video recording equipment would have altered the nature of the piece by making the participants self-conscious. The piece does not at first appear to be improvisatory in the conventional sense. *Ode to Joy* already exists, and the English lyrics were quickly translated online just prior to going onstage. The idea to do this piece came in the moment, as a response to something that was happening in real time. Having the song and ability to quickly find the lyrics at my disposal was similar to the way improvisors are always prepared and ready to respond to a given situation, musical or otherwise. It is an example of my practice being improvisatory, playing with composition.

Through this piece I further explored the composer-as-manipulator character in a similar way to *WANT YOU* and *\*\*\*SURPRISE PERFORMANCE\*\*\**. The specific context mattered. I tried to repeat this activity in Germany in August 2016 but received a completely different reaction from the audience. Nobody sang along because I failed to build a rapport, leading me to conclude that the success of the first performance was due to it being situated in an ideal context. This further confirms that the success of the original action was down to it being improvisatory. When I tried to fix the action and repeat it the outcome was completely different.

### **3.14 He that plays the English Gentleman shall be welcome**

This piece is about getting an audience actively involved in a sensory task in order to deliver information to them. I achieve this by suggesting that people can play the violin by pelting me with tomatoes as I try to defend myself using a violin as a bat. Once the audience have become involved in this way, and are thus implicated in the task, I encourage them to complete a puzzle that spells out: 'this sentence was composed and activated by all of us playing together' (translated to 'Dieser Satz wurde von uns allen komponiert und durch unser Zusammenspiel aktiviert' in the second performance that took place in Germany).

This piece has developed across three different performance occasions. The first took place outdoors and engaged passers-by in the manner of street theatre. The performance area was set up like a cricket game, with me dressed in cricket whites and a scoreboard displaying written instructions in the manner of a text score. It was a situation that passers-by could choose to engage with for any length of time, like an installation. For this first version I wore a discreet

earpiece playing the refrain from an old sentimental song about cricket (*The Cricketers of Hambledon* by Peter Warlock, with lyrics by Bruce Blunt, 1928/2011). Whenever I struck a tomato I sang whichever phrase of the song happened to be playing in my earpiece at that moment, so that participants would be encouraged to keep pelting me with tomatoes if they wanted to hear the whole song. This first version did not involve the puzzle element.

The second and third versions of the piece resemble the medieval ritual humiliation of punishment in the stocks rather than a cricket game. These were presented during more conventional concert situations with an assembled audience, although without traditional seating arrangements. The audience gather in front of me in a semicircle and throw tomatoes freely from all directions. Because the audience were all gathered together and not passers-by I was able to introduce the secondary task of spelling out a sentence using children's foam bath letters. Each letter was numbered and sandwiched inside a tomato prior to the performance. The thinking behind this was as follows: I am often involved with delivering information (musical or otherwise) to an audience, so I wanted to use the violin to deliver the text to them. By playing together, both myself and the audience are involved in putting something together, which is what composition is after all. This fact is explained through the sentence.

In the second performance I get a laugh from the audience when I adopt the stance (1:13). The situation itself is comical, and throwing tomatoes at a performer is something you hear about but rarely get the chance to actually do.

The piece is an expansion on Fluxus pieces such as *One for Violin (Solo)* by Nam June Paik (1962, in Higgins, 2012), where he slowly lifted a violin above his head over the course of five minutes, then brought it crashing down onto a table. Fluxus scholar Hannah Higgins states that many Fluxus pieces such as this:

[Rely] on the sensory capacity of the hand at the same time as the action establishes a strong connection between the hand and an object in the world. (2012, p. 68)

In a similar way my piece engages multiple senses. The audience gets to hold, feel and smell the tomato. They physically throw it, choosing how hard to throw and whether to try to hit me. They also have to take a position on whether they want to potentially damage a violin or not.

I again indulge a fantasy of being a sportsman, and the audience can choose to indulge the fantasy of pelting a performer with tomatoes. In this way the piece is an example of 'character' and 'playing' in my triangular field.



### 3.15 In which we went looking for one thing and found another

The Darmstadt International Summer Course for New Music in Germany is, according to Alex Ross, “the principal showplace of the avant-garde” (2007/2009, p. 426). This piece is about exploration and play as forms of musical collaboration, challenging the received idea of the solitary compositional ‘genius’ that is celebrated at this institution. I achieved this by engaging in open-ended play with Lia Kohl and Owen Davis from Chicago-based contemporary music ensemble Mocreep. Together we used the occasion of the course to explore an abandoned building over nine days. We enjoyed ourselves and wanted to communicate that joy to other people through a performance by selecting things we had experienced that could be transferred to a concert hall. The video in my portfolio shows the outcome as a presentation performance.

The Darmstadt Summer Course is an institution famous for being a hotbed of High Modernist musical activity during its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s with attendees exploring new musical territory. We used *Scouting for Boys* by Robert Baden-Powell (1908/2004) as an impetus to guide our exploratory activities, taking our logic from the term ‘avant-garde’:

As Halévy intended it, the avant-garde was less about being a superior elite than a kind of scouting party, forging ahead, clearing the path, and heralding the battalions that were to follow. (Barry, 2017, p. 131)

Our exploration was driven by performative concerns, focussed on play. We documented this work in photographs, audio recordings and video recordings and these documents were shared publicly on Twitter. We each kept journals to document our working process through writing and drawing, leading us to consider how descriptive information can be communicated as a musical experience. Our presentation performance is also about amplification and focus, amplifying things that we found and heard. We also amplify things using a car speaker system or by putting pellets in a tractor, or by focussing a camera on them.

We were trying to communicate joy in the face of a competitive and highly serious music institution:

The reclaiming of fun as part of the serious business of human life is the most subversive and revolutionary aim of all. (Small, 1987/1994, p. 382)

This is one of the emergent themes of my research project, and I approach this by integrating enjoyment into the process of composition through performance. This is not to say that there is no joy in traditional composition, but rather that the possibilities for fun can be expanded.

This work was situated within an environment broadly supportive of experimental music. Because this was a ‘knowing audience’ of musicians, they recognised aspects of the performance as specifically musical, whereas a non-knowing audience might not have. Other members of the

workshop group, as well as some audience members, decided to join in towards the end of the performance, which was an unexpected yet welcome surprise.

### 3.16 Up Down Left Right

On Saturday 11th March 2017, I invited members of the public without prior conducting experience to individually conduct a Salvation Army brass band. Responding to the conductor's gestures and movements, the band created a spontaneous piece of music with each participant which contributed to a new score that was then recorded in July 2017. I was invited to do this by art producers Situations, to respond to the place and the people of the Salvation Army Citadel in the St Paul's area of Bristol in order to create a project that would mark the development of the new Citadel building. This opportunity arose from Bristol City Council's Section 106 Policy, whereby an organisation using public funds should spend 10% of those funds on a piece of public art.

In this piece the spotlight is passed to the audience so that they can see the effect of their own actions on a piece of music by inhabiting the role of a brass band conductor. I achieve this by creating a situation in which the roles of audience and performer are blurred. The band is an audience to the participant-conductor, and the participant-conductor is an audience to the band. This is something that has occurred throughout the project in pieces like *I WANT YOU*, *\*\*\*SURPRISE PERFORMANCE\*\*\**, *EU-ligans*, and *He that plays the English Gentleman shall be welcome*. Spectatorship is active rather than passive in these cases, and in *Up Down Left Right* I am no longer the centre of attention. The spotlight is passed on to each participant.

When I first visited the Salvation Army in Bristol in Spring 2016 I asked whether it would be possible to observe a band rehearsal. The answer was 'no ... but you're welcome to join in!'. I used to play in a brass band as a teenager so playing the tenor horn again after ten years was both a daunting and exhilarating experience for me, and also proved an opportunity to talk to the Salvationists about the music and the Citadel on a regular basis.

The members pointed out a table in the Citadel prayer room. It is an Ikea table that has been covered in fragments of Salvation Army music that have been cut up and glued together by members of the church. This is reminiscent of a famous scene from composer Mauricio Kagel's 1970 film *Ludwig Van* (25:34). In the archive I then found a piece with the word 'fragments' written on it called *Our Army Veterans* which is like a 'greatest hits' of the early Salvation Army material dating back to 1923, leading me to consider how Salvation Army brass band music could be fragmented in a performance to create a new piece of work.

The Portsmouth Sinfonia was an orchestra active during the 1970s and who famously either could not play or played instruments they were unfamiliar with (*In Living Memory*, BBC Radio 4, 2012). They were a key reference point for me in this piece. Their performances were funny and musically

compelling, because 'uncontrolled variables' distorted familiar classics, producing microtonal and rhythmically complex variations.

Working in what is known as the 'public realm' in this way is still quite new to me, and I took the opportunity to learn from Situations' publication 'New Rules for Public Art' that they developed in 2013. I grappled with the notion of creating a community, rather than trying to produce something *for* that community (p. 6). The project was closely developed with Claire Doherty and Georgina Bolton at Situations through a process of discussion with the Salvation Army and a gradual honing down of ideas. The idea to have members of the public conduct the band came quite quickly, inspired by a sketch in *Merry Christmas Mr Bean* (Thames Television, 1992). This sketch was also a good 'way in', because all the members of the band knew it.

The outline of the situation was as follows: The band wait silently in the darkened main hall of the Bristol Citadel. The participant enters alone to the left of the band and sees a spotlight podium with a large poster on the music stand. When they pick up the baton the band are instantly illuminated by music-stand lights. The participant has three minutes in which to conduct the band. After three minutes the lights on the band go down and the band fade out by blowing air sounds through their instruments. The participant is then led out through the band to another door, different to the one they entered through.

The live experience was like a film shoot. There were video cameras set up capturing how participants interacted with the band. The instructions that I devised for the band were as follows:

- Tempo is decided by the conductor.
- Always observe the speed of the conductor.
- Try and pick up a beat.
- If you get lost, stay confidently lost.
- If the conductor stops: stop playing and start again from the beginning on their next beat.
- If you get to the end of the piece and the conductor keeps conducting then start again from the beginning.
- If the conductor does something unexpected, just go with it!
- Always respond with music rather than speech.
- Play confidently!

After the participant had been led out of the hall they were invited to write down what they felt, if they wanted to. Here is an example of one of these responses:

This is what I did: I picked up the baton. The band lifted their instruments up and began to play. I mimicked what I have seen conductors do in films and on TV and at concerts by trying to make bold moves and turning to sections of the band and getting them to play louder and softer. Some of the band kept an eye on me but I think some ignored me (understandably). I sped up for a while. Was I even playing at the right tempo? I took it seriously at first but then the significance and bizarre nature of the situation occurred to me and I laughed at myself. I had a sense of power over these people and yet I was completely

unequipped to make the most of it. What were these people thinking of me? After a while, towards the end, I wanted to stop and ask the band how I should do it properly. The band were understanding and knew exactly what to do and how to respond to my every move, but it felt like they knew the language and I didn't. That's very freeing in one way – I could get away with doing anything and there were no (or few) rules, but in other ways I was restricted by my lack of skills and experience. I was not equipped for this job! Perhaps it was like one of those anxiety dreams where you find yourself in a situation you shouldn't be in and others are staring at you, laughing at you or getting hurt because you shouldn't be responsible for them. (Anonymous participant, 2017)

This participant did not actually speak directly to the band, despite clearly wanting to, and they appear to have been overwhelmed with the power that they were given. I find their response to the situation to be positive because it suggests that the piece created a dynamic and engaging experience that raises questions without providing definite answers.

John Cage stated the following in his essay *Composition as Process*:

A recording of [a piece of experimental music] has no more value than a postcard; it provides a knowledge of something that happened, whereas the action was a non-knowledge of something that had not yet happened. (Cage, 1958/2009, p. 39)

With this in mind I made a 'postcard' of the event. Forty people conducted the band that day, so I took an extract from each participant's interaction, and made a composition. This was composed empirically. The video work is a 'postcard' of the event, and is not where the work is located. The work itself was the 5-hour day.

### 3.17 A Song

This piece is about repetitive music and how it can make an audience feel trapped. I achieve this by taking a well-known children's song and doing exactly what the lyrics call for:

I know a song that'll get on your nerves,  
Get on your nerves, get on your nerves,  
I know a song that'll get on your nerves,  
And this is how it goes.

These lyrics acknowledge that repetitive music can be irritating to listen to, especially in a concert situation where the audience is likely to be sitting, quiet and sober, without dancing. In this performance the loud and abrasive unison opening initially creates this irritation, which persists for several minutes with no sign of change. The singers then gradually desynchronise, opening up the possibility for listeners to be 'rewarded' for their perseverance by an indeterminate counterpoint emerging that is reminiscent of Renaissance choral music.

The choir uses physical means to achieve a 'phase shifting' effect that would usually be done with computers or magnetic tape. This technique of a repetitive sample going out of sync with itself arose from experimental music practices in the 1960s. An early example of this is Minimalist composer Steve Reich's *It's Gonna Rain* (1965/1992). In such works the procedural aspect of the performance is audible to the listeners. *A Song* privileges physicality and the body over computers, with the singers employing the simple gestures of putting their fingers in their ears and moving out of view of each other in order to desynchronise. This is a feature of classical music today: doing things by physical means even though they could be done with computers, something that *A Song* brings to the fore.

The use of a single fragment of material to create a longer form has a precedent in fugal contrapuntal music exemplified by Baroque composer Johann Sebastian Bach. My score (p. 130 in the portfolio) shows the musical fragment above the 15-minute structure that needs to be memorised and followed.

*A Song* is performed in front of a 'knowing' audience of music students, who are most likely familiar with the tropes of Minimalism and would recognise them. Allusions to other 'learned' styles of music (Renaissance choral music and fugue) would also be appreciated by such a knowing audience. The simplicity of the process implies that they could perhaps repeat the performance themselves or join in with the singing. The performance thus affirms a connection to the history of European music, but stating that this music is not as difficult or as serious as some people might have you believe.

## CHAPTER 4

### Conclusions and future work

The seventeen pieces in this portfolio should be taken as a whole, and I see the portfolio as a single work in itself, in the manner of a visual artist's solo gallery show. Each piece functions like a performance-image so that often it is unnecessary to view the entire piece in order to comprehend it. However, the pieces are as long as they need to be and could not be shortened without drastically affecting the outcome. The two and a half hour duration of this portfolio is necessary in order to display the different elements of my practice in varied performance contexts.

The aim of this project was not to define the compositional act and then apply it to performance in order to test whether the notion of 'performing the compositional act' was valid. It was rather to see how an expanded idea of compositional-performance activity could emerge *from* my practice itself. I perform the compositional act by embodying the terms outlined in Chapter 2: 'reading', 'character' and 'playing'. These terms, which together form my triangular frame, are used as a method to reflect upon what happens in the pieces in the portfolio.

My assertion is that the compositional act is a field situation in which the activities of 'reading', 'character' and 'playing' blend and clash. These terms themselves are open to interpretation, emerging and becoming defined over the course of the project. 'Reading' began as a literal analogue of score-reading onstage, before becoming abstracted into different types of mimetic activity. 'Character' became a way to incorporate reflection on music into performances themselves, engendering a self-reflexive approach through humour and caricature. 'Playing', initially growing out of 'indeterminacy', is a slippery term to deal with. It offers a way to develop my work into a praxis, allowing me to become more fluid and responsive in what I do, and increasingly able to operate in different contexts: to inhabit a truly interdisciplinary way of being.

There will always be some kind of preparatory devising process involved in my practice, but I do not consider this to be the 'act of composition'. Composition, which could be described as 'putting things together', for me involves an integration of both the devising process *and* the live performance. I see composition as inseparable from performance, and have tried to make this position explicit in the portfolio and commentary.

'Performing the compositional act' manifests itself in different ways. In some pieces the instructional material that is followed in order to make the music *becomes* the actual music itself. Other pieces enable me to reflect on musical concerns through playing characters and making statements from the point-of-view of caricatures, and by doing so, incorporating reflection into the practice. Some pieces are the result of playful activity carried out 'in the moment' or responding to circumstance. However, none of the pieces presented are pure illustrations of a single term in my triangular frame.

Much of my work is based on popular perceptions of characters, people and activities, rather than objective truth. I use popular perceptions as a way to communicate with an audience, sometimes in order to provoke them into joining in with an activity, often by using humour. On other occasions I do this to make the work more accessible to a general audience in order to puncture the serious atmosphere of the Western classical tradition of which experimental music is a part.

The portfolio presents an essentially musical practice, rooted in traditional elements of music making and Western classical concert conventions, but implemented in a different way: The traditional elements such as score-reading, performance and improvisation, from which the terms in my triangular frame emerged, often do not give way to recognisably musical material. It is a musical practice that does not privilege the sounding result, but sees it as one amongst many different and equal possibilities.

Because the sounding result is not privileged, this practice is an alternative to mainstream musical activity, which *does* privilege the sounding result. As an alternative to the mainstream it is, by implication, also a critique. It is a critique of what artist and musician Seth Kim Cohen calls the “institutedness” of mainstream practices, something that he observes in the following statement in relation to the work of George Brecht:

What is instigated is not institutional critique in the conventional sense but something more like a critique of “institutedness”: of the institutions of music, of the assumptions that underscore its permissions, sanctify its validity (2009, p. 172).

Similarly my practice is a critique of ‘institutedness’ because it offers a way to bypass the mainstream institutions of traditional classical music, as well as other mainstream forms, by expanding the the idea of what can be considered music. The triangular frame is a method of self-definition and an act of resistance against both established tradition and current economic conditions. It is idealistic, but this is to be expected from an approach that draws heavily on experimental music from the 1960s. I offer critique by using fun and joy as subversion. As Christopher Small says: “The reclaiming of fun as part of the serious business of human life is the most subversive and revolutionary aim of all” (1987/1994, p. 382). Through this portfolio I attempt to reclaim fun from the twin things that I see as not fun:

1. Conforming to the current musical status quo of buying and selling, marketing oneself, becoming a ‘brand’ and providing entertainment in exchange for money.
2. Conforming to an anachronistic and stifling tradition.

My practice is fun for me, and sometimes for others. Sometimes I have fun at the expense of others, and at other times I am more generous. Through fun I aim to actively engage people in making music, but not in a didactic way. The goal is to provide examples of what music can be. Not

everybody can perform the pieces in this portfolio themselves, but I suggest the possibility that they could do something like it. People can respond and be involved in an active way.

Resisting cynicism in my work is an ongoing challenge that I face, along with avoiding in-jokes that limit the audience to a small coterie of 'knowing' listeners who are familiar with my references to experimental music and its history. I feel that *Up Down Left Right* is a step towards building a more outward-looking practice, working beyond the narrow institutions of classical composition, and enabling me to engage with other musical cultures and non-professionals to make alternative music that is more tied to place and locality.

I need to move on from framing my work as music, but also must be wary of getting caught in another frame with a different name. Fluxus artist Robert Filliou is referenced by Nicolas Bourriaud in *Relational Aesthetics* (2002) as stating:

Art offers an immediate 'right of asylum' to all deviant practices which cannot find their place in their natural bed (p. 102).

With this in mind it is important that I maintain my position as an interdisciplinary practitioner in order to avoid the comfortable inside of another institutionalised practice. I have defined my own terms through the process of making this portfolio of work. Now I must use those terms to take my practice beyond the musical frame and approach the world directly through reading, character and playing.



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### **Live performances, audio recordings, works of art and videos**

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### **Feature films, television and radio programmes**

*Amadeus* [feature film] Directed by Miloš Forman. Orion Pictures, USA, 1984. 161 min.

*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* [feature film] Directed by Ang Lee. Asian Union Film & Entertainment / China Film Co-Productions Corporation / Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia / Edko Films / Good Machine International / Zoom Hunt Productions, China / Hong Kong / Taiwan / USA, 2000. 120 min.

*Ghost* [feature film] Directed by Jerry Zucker. Paramount Pictures, USA, 1990. 128 min.

'History documentary on the Portsmouth Sinfonia, "the world's worst orchestra", *In Living Memory*, [radio programme] Presented by Jolyon Jenkins. BBC, UK, 19th June 2012, BBC Radio 4, 28 min. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b013fj17> [Accessed 1st February 2015].

'Inheritance Tracks', *Saturday Live* [radio programme] Presented by Richard Coles and Aasmah Mir. BBC, UK, BBC Radio 4, 8 min.

*Kill Bill: Volume 1* [feature film] Directed by Quentin Tarantino. A Band Apart, USA, 2003. 111 min.

*Knowing Me Knowing You with Alan Partridge* [television programme] BBC, UK, 16th September 1994, BBC Two, 28 min.

*Ludwig Van* [feature film] Directed by Mauricio Kagel. Westdeutscher Rundfunk, West Germany, 1970. 91 min.

*Merry Christmas Mr Bean* [television programme] Thames Television, UK, 29th December 1992, ITV, 26 min.

*The Office* [television programme] BBC, UK, 9th July 2001, BBC Two, 30 min.

*The World's greatest musical prodigies* [television programme] RDF Television, UK, 15th June 2009, Channel 4, 49 min.

*This is Spinal Tap* [feature film] Directed by Rob Reiner. Embassy Pictures, USA, 1984. 82 min.

*Tweet of the Day* [radio programme] Presented by David Attenborough et al. BBC, UK, BBC Radio 4, 90 sec.