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# Here Comes Everybody

Strategies for a transdisciplinary creative practice

Peter Nagle

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Creative Practice  
(Music) at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

Submitted to City University, Northampton Square, London EC1V 0HB

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November 2024

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Audiovisual documentation of the work discussed in this thesis can be accessed at <http://www.peternagle.co.uk/here-comes-everybody>

## List of materials

The works listed here fall into two categories: Primary work, which comprises the main focus of the thesis, and satellite work, which is referenced in relation to the primary work. All materials are supplied as files on a USB memory stick. *Ouroboros* is additionally supplied as a CD.

Links to the AV documentation can also be found at:

<http://www.peternagle.co.uk/here-comes-everybody>.

## Primary work

### Congregation [2.3.2]

- AV documentation of performance
- Edited video
- Notated materials (PDF)

### The Fade in Time [2.3.1]

- Full performance video
- Edited video

### Once up on a cube [3.1]

- AV documentation of performance
- Recordings of live sound production
- Max patch with associated sound files

### Ouroboros [3.3]

- AV documentation of installation/performance
- CD of domestic installation sound files
- Max Patch with associated sound files
- Notated materials (PDF)

### Two Rooms [Prelude; 2.1.2]

- Edited video documentation



- Edited sound file

### **Where Does A Body End? [3.2]**

- Full installation AV documentation
- Edited video
- Rehearsal AV documentation

## **Satellite work**

### **Arrivals [1.1.3]**

- Documentation of realisation of Viv Corringham's sound walk undertaken in Greenwich/Plumstead, 2021.

### **Drone Sweet Drone/Corridor Drone [3.3.1]**

- AV documentation

### **Fifty Breaths [2.1.1]**

- Field recordings

### **Here Comes Everybody [3.3.5]**

- Audio performance documentation

### **Live on Zoom [2.2.1]**

- AV performance documentation

### **Rising of the Lights [2.2.2]**

- AV performance documentation

### **Under Eastern Way [2.1.1]**

- AV documentation of found installation

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Bob and Sue Nagle.

## **Abstract**

This practice-as-research project explores ideas of ontological ambiguity, disruption and transformation through sonic materiality and conceptualisation.

Building on a consideration of drone as an ontologically ambiguous phenomenon that can present as both object and event, and an articulation of a material-conceptual sonic continuum, I describe a heterogeneous, transdisciplinary praxis in which diverse creative methods combine in a state of entanglement, destabilisation and reconfiguration of ontological identity and interrelationships. I discuss these processes in terms of atmospheres (Böhme, 2018), hyperobjects (Morton, 2013) technique as embodied knowledge (Spatz, 2015), and interrelations between and agencies of human and nonhuman bodies (Bennett, 2010; Ihde, 2009; Barad, 2007). I characterise this approach as rooted in an aesthetic of multiplicity (Stone, 2020), magpie methodology (Carter, 2013), unknowing-in-doing (Challenger, 2022), and wayfaring (Ingold, 2011). In this praxis personal embodied knowledge is deployed not as an agent of self-valorisation, but as a commons through which collaborative artists may support each other to extend their practice beyond the boundaries of their own expertise and experience. I propose this approach as having a wider societal implication in the cause of 'being ecological' (Morton, 2017), and suggest the term "Interflow" to describe this mode of transdisciplinary praxis.

*Identity is an indispensable place to start, and a terrible place to finish.*

Gary Younge (Buxton, 2022)

## Pre-

By the time I sat down and listened, everything was fixed. In one of a connected suite of large rooms, I had placed my electric guitar, connected to an amp via pedals including a loopstation, and created a layered drone of resonant tone and feedback. All my active input was over. The process felt more sculptural than compositional. Now I needed simply to remain in the room, or move between rooms, and listen to the sound I had made as it reverberated through them.

I knew from previous experience how sounds, and drone textures in particular, seep into and permeate the place where they are placed. What I became increasingly aware of as I stayed there though was the *presence* of the sound. There was a strong sense of something there in the room with me, an object with a physical existence. Moreover, although the sound was a closed circuit with no new information entering, I had a strong sense of it moving and shifting. It felt not as though I was listening to a short, repeated idea over and over, but that I was in the presence of something physical, and *alive*.



Fig. 1: Two Rooms Setup

## -lude

And around the lawn the rann it rann and this is the rann that Hosty made. Spoken. Boyles and Cahills, Skerretts and Pritchards, viersified and piersified may the treeth we tale of live in stoney. Here line the refrains of. Some vote him Vike, some mote him Mike, some dub him Llyn and Phin while others hail him Lug Bug Dan Lop, Lex, Lax, Gunne or Guinn. Some apt him Arth, some bapt him Barth, Coll, Noll, Soll, Will, Weel, Wall but I parse him Persse O'Reilly else he's called no name at all. Together. Arrah, leave it to Hosty, frosty Hosty, leave it to Hosty for he's the mann to rhyme the rann, the rann, the rann, the king of all ranns. Have you here? (Some ha) Have we where? (Some hant) Have you hered? (Others do) Have we whered? (Others dont) It's cumming, it's brumming! The clip, the clop! (All cla) Glass crash. The (klikkakkaklaskaklopatzklatschabattacreppy-crottygraddaghsemmihsammihnouithappluddyappladdyakon-pkot!)

{ Ardite, arditi!  
Music cue.

### "THE BALLAD OF PERSSE O'REILLY."

Have you heard of one Hump-ty Dump-ty how he  
fell with a roll and a rum-ble and curled up like Lord O-la-fa  
Crum-ple by the butt of the Mag-a-zine Wall of the  
Mag-a-zine Wall Hump-hel-met and all Da Capo

(Joyce, 2000, 44)

*Two Rooms* was the first piece I made when I began this research project in 2019. The experience of making it embodies the initial impulse: the idea that drones can, in some contexts, or *atmospheres* (such as a concert), be encountered as performative, musical gestures happening in time; but in others (as installations in a gallery, for instance), they present more as a physical, material presence in the room.

*Finnegans Wake* is a torrent of words and collections of letters that stretch the definition of "word". Semantic understanding is elusive. The book's language is a dense fog that obfuscates as much as elucidates, a reflection of its characters' shifting identities, and the ambiguities of their thoughts and experiences. In some respects, to attempt to understand the *Wake* is a mistake; one must *experience* it. It strains

and pulls at the boundaries of meaning, its puns and onomatopoeia threatening to pull grammar itself apart. I characterise this as a push towards a sonic embodiment: onomatopoeia explicitly evokes sound, while punning is a device that pushes literature beyond its normal mode of expressing a single thing at a time, towards something more akin to music, in which we may be afforded several simultaneous relations and meanings, and also a sense of a profound experience that lies beyond



semantic meaning as such.<sup>1</sup> It is also a book rooted in its Irishness: its word-play and word deconstruction and reconstruction is intimately connected to the Dublin accent in which it is implicitly narrated. It is a book that needs not to be simply read, but *heard* (Gerber, 1987).<sup>2</sup>

The preceding words appear as two parallel texts rather than a single sequence because to present either strand first risks valorising one as more important than the other. Although certain chronological and sequential expectations are followed in this text, I consider it at heart a nonlinear history (DeLanda, 1997) of the project it describes.<sup>3</sup> The idea of ambiguous, mutable identity, embodied in drones, is at the heart of this practice-as-research (PaR) project. Drones may be encountered as allographic, event-based phenomena in the concert hall as music, or in an encounter in a gallery as sound installation, where they take on the autographic qualities of a physical object. This creates a sense of *ontological ambiguity*: I use this term as a metaphor to capture the sense of phenomenological instability of encounter (Object? Event?

---

<sup>1</sup> Paradoxically, in the extract above it is the moment at which music notation is introduced and sound is explicitly evoked that the text becomes less sonic in nature.

<sup>2</sup> I have discussed this further in relation to Cage's *Roaratorio* (Nagle, 2023).

<sup>3</sup> A chronological overview of the project can be found in Appendix 1.

Something else?). This ambiguity of perceived states raises a possibility of transformation between these states – or situations in which what mode of encounter is happening is uncertain. In claiming the *Wake* as a work of noncochlear sound art (Kim-Cohen, 2009), I also begin to map out another dimension of sound encounter, the edges of which may be embodied by the materiality of the drone in *Two Rooms* and Joyce's sonic conceptualism. These four aspects – object/event, material/conceptual, and the ambiguities between them – form the framework in which I expand this notion of ambiguity beyond its initial context of drone to permeate my entire practice and my own sense of self-identity as a creative practitioner. My practice is heterogenous, embracing musical composition, performance and improvisation, but also sound art, performance art, film, visual art and literature — because the act of writing about my practice becomes itself a part of it. This brings together a multiplicity of creative approaches, entangled in the atmosphere of ambiguous, shifting identity found in drone. In this thesis I show how this aesthetic informs and transforms my artistic work, and also, through its connections to 'being ecological' (Morton, 2017) suggests a broader scope of being and a transformation of self that it is vital and urgent to engage with as we 'may find... [ourselves]... living in an age of mass extinction' (Ibid., 37).

# 1: Contexts, Strategies, Methods

## 1.1: Contexts

The initial impetus for this project lies in my longstanding interest in the aesthetics of drones. This is not a project *about* drones, but they embody some key qualities and ideas that form the basis for my research. I therefore begin with a consideration of these aesthetics, some concepts of material and conceptual, or *non-cochlear* (Kim-Cohen, 2009) sound, and atmospheres (Böhme, 2018). I consider drones as avatars of the allographic (i.e. as performed musical *events*) and the autographic (in sound/installation art as *objects*). These identities are not stable, and their perception depends on the contingent circumstances of encounter: this instability creates both an ambiguity of ontology of the drone, and a possibility of moving between states. I also discuss some artistic works which, although not explicitly sound-based, exhibit characteristics that can be framed as conceptually sonic, or embody processes analogous to those I aim to present in my work.

The ideas in this thesis are contextualised within a series of interrelated tripartite terms (Fig. 3). *Objects*, *events* and *things* represent some of the tools used in this project, and are elucidated in the course of the

descriptions of contexts [1.1],<sup>4</sup> strategies [1.2] and methods [1.3].

*Encounters, disruptions and transformations* delineate some experiential modes contained within the work described herein [2; 3]. Working

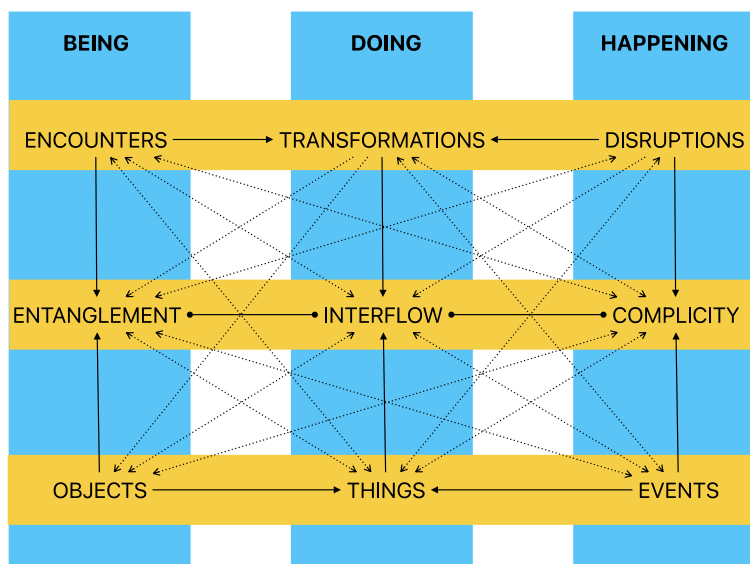


Fig. 3: Matrix showing the interrelations between the principal elements and terminology.

through these ideas in my practice leads to the ideas of *entanglement*, *complicity* and *interflow* [4]. All these can be considered as subsets of a wider tripartite description of modes of existence and activity: *Being*, *happening* and *doing*. The purpose of these threefold articulations is to bypass some common binaries (object or event, music or sound art) and move towards a more fluid, *fuzzy* [1.1.1] and mobile sense of a

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<sup>4</sup> Cross-references throughout this thesis are indicated in square brackets. In the PDF these are hyperlinked, creating the possibility of a nonlinear path through the text.

continuum of encounters with sound. The way I have written these tripartite terms here represents the chronological progression of my work; the differing order in Fig. 3 represents the understanding of the final emerging terms as at the heart of the concerns of the work, as well as the sense of these terms not as a linear progression but a collection of ever-shifting perspectives and foci.

The works in this portfolio traverse a range of modes of ambiguity and identity. Beginning from the notion of the installation in *Two Rooms* [2.1.2] occupying an ambiguous state between being an allographic manifestation of sound through time and being a sonically embodied object present in the room, *The Fade in Time* [2.3.1] and *Congregation* [2.3.2] investigate the possibility of transforming between these states, and in so doing uncover disruptions of the audience experience when a staged atmosphere is transformed. The disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic [Interlude] causes a shift of emphasis from the idea of enacting such disruptions and transformations of identity on others to being the subject of them. *Once up on a cube* [3.1] considers the relationship between sound and movement and my role as sound producer in the context of such a collaboration, while *Where Does a Body End?* [3.2] takes the idea of identity in collaboration further into a transdisciplinary mode where the distinction between sounding and moving practices begins to dissolve. Finally, *Ouroboros* [3.3] represents a return to a more conventionally musical mode but altered by the experience of the previous work, a summing up of the elements of the

research, and a consideration of how the identities of audience and performers may be transformed into community.

All of these works play with ideas of ambiguity in a variety of ways, including ideas of what a “work” actually is. How these ambiguities play out is often unpredictable: the question of failure may arise. One response to this question lies in Cage’s definition of experimental music as ‘not... an act to be later judged in terms of success and failure, but simply... an act the outcome of which is unknown’ (Cage, 1978, 13). This is certainly relevant: the outcome of *The Fade in Time* [2.3.1] for instance was not as anticipated, but that unexpected outcome proved to be a vital insight in the research process. Stoerchle’s idea of “success in failure” (Dusapin, 2022) is perhaps a better model here: in work which puts an emphasis on people being placed outside their normal parameters, be that audiences, performers or composers, actions will take place that under those parameters might be defined as failure, but in these redefined contexts that failure is not simply negated but in some ways the aesthetic goal. Improvisation plays a significant part in this practice: as improvisers we are always ready to perform, and we are never ready to perform (Koller, 2024). ‘Failure creates new pathways; it disrupts prescribed patterns’ (Zakiewicz, 2022).

These main works delineated above are accompanied by what I term “satellite works”: work that orbits the main pieces of the portfolio, and provides additional context and perspectives for the ideas explored and how they developed.

### 1.1.1 Drone aesthetics: between object and event

The sense of physical presence that a drone-based texture such as *Two Rooms* [Prelude; 2.1] begins to manifest over time points to an ambiguous ontology: drones may present in the context of musical performance, either as underpinning to conventional musical flow or foregrounded as gradual process music; or they may present (often though not exclusively in a gallery context) as installation/sound art. I characterise the former as a performative, allographic identity, and the latter as a quasi-autographic identity exhibiting object-like characteristics. *Dream House* (Young and Zazeela, 1993) is a good example of this, notwithstanding Young's framing of his practice as music. Young's work subverts conventional notions of *telos*. *The Trio for Strings* (1958) undermines a serial structure through its extreme durations of both tones and silence (Potter, 2002, 34-41). *Composition 1960 #7* (1960) goes further, presenting a single harmony and no indication of an ending to be approached, beyond the implication that 'a long time' is probably finite. The name of the ensemble that Young assembled with various members<sup>5</sup> from the early 1960s, the Theatre of Eternal Music, indicates his aspiration: not to step beyond the ontological boundary of

---

<sup>5</sup> including at various times Terry Riley, Angus MacLise, Tony Conrad and John Cale. Conrad in particular later pursued a long-running argument against Young's notions of authorship within this group [Postlude].

“music” but to extend concepts of duration beyond human experience. In the *Dream House*, the aspiration to infinity extends to the tone generators being left running even when the speakers are switched off (Grimshaw, 2011, 122). There is ambiguity as to whether the tones can be said to continue if they are not sounded, or whether an array of unchanging tones can be said to continue as process or function as a quasi-object.

Drone music encompasses a vast spectrum of aesthetic experience (Bernard, 2019). Human manipulation of resonant spaces and constructions can be deduced from the earliest times (Sword, 2021; Till, 2019; Fazenda and Drumm, 2013). Such activity is often associated with ritual, and Young may be seen as being in this lineage. Sunn O))) (e.g. Sunn O))), 2015) and Radigue (e.g. Radigue, 1994) have also made use of drone textures in mystical or ritualistic atmospheres [1.2.1], while Demers (2015) explicitly relates drone to apocalyptic thought.<sup>6</sup> McRea (2022) discusses the interplay between ideas of corporeality and an urge to transcendence in the music of Swans. These are loaded terms: I am not concerned here with overt religiosity or spirituality, but ritual in its broader sense of accustomed or prescribed practice has clear relevance in work that considers the nature of its own site and staging. Apocalypse, possibly a melodramatic term in the context of the

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Drone music is the sound of death’ (Demers, 2015, 8).



revelations afforded by an artistic practice, nevertheless seems an appropriate register when considering our ecological realities, even if it manifests as a quiet rather than a biblical revelation.

### *Drones as (quasi-)objects*

Just as drones in performance may shade into the realms of object-oriented art, so sound presented in the context of artworks may reveal performative elements in the apparently static. I use the term “performance” here in a broad sense: not simply performers carrying out designated actions, but a process that occurs and may be aesthetically perceived over time. Attention to a situation brings a sense of events occurring: an apparently static drone presence gradually reveals an eventful atmosphere [1.2.1]. From another perspective, while the work of Sunn O))) and Swans ultimately presents as performance, their use of volume, repetition and suspended motion evinces an ambition towards a manifested sonic-physical objective presence.<sup>7</sup> The ontological nature of sound is contested and even denied (Ridley, 2003). I shall attempt to steer a course between two apparently incompatible ideas: Barad (2007)’s agential realism and intra-action, and object-oriented ontology (OOO). I discuss these below [1.2.2; 1.2.3], but it is worth noting here the

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<sup>7</sup> ‘By lingering in sustained drones, Sunn O)))’s music arrests the body in an unresolved reverberation between corporeality and subjectivization’ (Shvarts, 2014).

opposition between OOO's flat ontology in which objects are said to exist before any relations with other objects (Harman, 2014), and current thinking in quantum mechanics suggesting objects as a category of event, existing only *in relation to* other objects (Rovelli, 2021), the quantum realm being a primary source of Barad's ideas. This being a creative PaR project, I shall take a pragmatic view that these differences as they relate to my practice are essentially a phenomenological matter: whether one encounters something as object or event is a function of the circumstances in which one encounters it, and the possibility of shifting this relational perception through the transformation of those circumstances is at the centre of the practice documented in this thesis.

The essential point is that these identities – objects, events and things [1.1.3] – are *fuzzy*. They shift identity between these modes, and while some present almost entirely stably to human perception as object or event, there is always ambiguity as entities move between states. No matter how clear cut the edge between objects and events may seem, there is always a perspective somewhere that reveals one to be also the other. My skin appears to form a firm and unambiguous barrier between the entity known as me and the rest of the world, but considering the microscopic life that exists on it, and the air, light and time that slowly transforms it (Eisenstein, 2020), this apparently solid separation between things begins to dissolve. We are always part of something else: our identities and the identities of everything around us and entangled with

us are always shifting. It is this ambiguity and instability that I see embodied in the phenomenon of the drone, and which I seek to explore in the work presented herein.

### 1.1.2: Ontologies of sound

Much of my practice can be characterised as composition (the construction of musical works), and performance (of music, whether notated, pre-constructed, improvised, or a mixture of these). It expands beyond this, however, into broader areas of sonic and performance art.<sup>8</sup> I aim to explore ways of thinking in, about, and through sound that sit outside the normal parameters of these terms. The distinction between music and sound art for instance is a permeable one and not always easily demarcated.<sup>9</sup> '[T]here is no single and intercultural universal concept defining what music might be' (Nattiez, 1990, 55); this is also true of the emergent field of sonic art. Garrelfs summarises many of the debating points in the difference or congruence between the two, concluding that the plethora of disciplines, traditions and philosophies using variants of "sound art" means that 'what is meant by the term is

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<sup>8</sup> i.e. practice that is in some way performative but not presenting as music or theatre - although it may contain elements of both.

<sup>9</sup> and indeed some still dispute the validity of "sound art" as a distinct medium (Groth and Schulze, 2020, 10-16).

influenced, literally, by where one is coming from' (Garrelfs, 2015, 20). The question of what distinguishes them is vexed. Hamilton (2007) suggests a preponderance of tonal organisation as a distinguishing feature between musical and non-musical sound art, though this borderline is by no means firm or indisputable and he characterises it as a continuum rather than a solid distinction. "Sound Art" or "Sonic Art" as terms are relatively recent and are often defined in terms of what they are not (i.e. "music") than what they are. Licht (2019, 5-10) suggests some definitions relating to sound perceived spatially rather than temporally, also noting the category of visual artworks designed to produce sound, and the multiplicity of disciplines bearing on the area.<sup>10</sup> I shall use the term "sound art" specifically to mean art practice made with and/or about sound, in contradistinction to music; the two being subsets of a wider discipline of sonic arts.

This fuzziness of definition is a positive and generative phenomenon to be embraced, but also an inevitable property of a newer, emergent form that shares common ancestry with elements of 20th century experimental music centred around Cage and Fluxus. Cage opened up the potentiality of music to include any sound, an emancipatory act but also one that 'opened music up into an emancipatory endgame' which

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<sup>10</sup>'There's sound art, but no sound artists...' (Michael Schumacher, quoted in Licht, 2019, 9)

'left no sonorous (or potentially sonorous) place outside music, and left no more means to materially regenerate music' (Kahn, 1997).<sup>11</sup> Some 70 years after *4' 33"* (1952), to step back from an undifferentiated idea of all-sound-as-music offers opportunities to develop a more heterogeneous approach to sound as an aesthetic device.

### *Material (Cochlear) Sound*

The question of sound's materiality/ontology is a complex issue with a wide spectrum of opinion from arguments for sound as a Heideggerian *thing* (Döbereiner, 2019), through broader ideas of sonic materialism (Wanke, 2017), to denial that sound (and/or music) can be said to be in the realm of ontology at all (Ridley, 2003; Kane, 2015). Discussing enchantment, Bennett (2001, 160-166) suggests White's idea of weak ontology (2000) as a useful tool to circumnavigate the issues of necessarily contingent and contestable models of being [1.2.3; Postlude]. In that light I shall consider here some materialist and conceptual approaches to sound, and suggest "supracochlear" as a mode of listening that aims to embrace materiality whilst avoiding a cochlear-centric mentality. Through this I begin to map a field of

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<sup>11</sup>Feldman suggests that Cage made a curious misinterpretation of Buddhist thought in deciding conclusively that all sound is music (Feldman, 2000, 30).

phenomenological-conceptual sound encounter through which my practice moves.

*Hearing [unlike sight] does not offer a meta-position; there is no place where I am not simultaneous with the heard. (Voegelin, 2010, p.xii)*

*[T]he sonic arts are not more abstract than the visual, but rather more concrete... they require not a formalist analysis, but a materialist one. (Cox, 2018b, p.18)*

Cox and Voegelin articulate a materialist conception of sound, in a lineage which includes Oliveros's practice of Deep Listening (2005), and also in concepts of soundscape<sup>12</sup> derived from Schafer (1993).

Cox, drawing on Nietzsche and Deleuze, envisions a 'sonic flux' in which 'sound and the sonic arts are firmly embedded in the material world and in the powers, forces, intensities, and becomings that compose the world' (Cox, 2018b, 37). Cox's sonic materialism has been criticised by Kane (2015) and Thompson (2017) among others for its ontological approach to sound. In particular Thompson identifies racial and gendered assumptions embedded in Cox's concept of sound's *a priori* nature preceding cultural understanding, something refuted by Cox (Cox, 2018a), but also challenged by James (2018). Campbell (2020) provides a summary of the debate and suggests an alternative reading of Deleuze to Cox's, concluding that Deleuze's sonic materiality is conceived more practically and less doctrinally than Cox's, something that Sterne also suggests in his description of 'the audiovisual litany'

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<sup>12</sup>A term I intend to avoid [1.3.3].

(Sterne, 2003, 15). Oliveros's 'Deep Listening' can be characterised as the foremost exemplar of this mindset, which arguably replaces ocularcentric thinking (Devorah, 2017) with cochlearcentric thinking. 'The continuity of sonic materialism across space and time is characterized as much by disjunction and disruption as it is by resonance and reverberation' (Fairbairn, 2022, 18).

As the preceding paragraph suggests, this is a complex argument. There are strengths and weaknesses in all these competing viewpoints, and so I turn, following Bennett (2001) to White (White, 2000)'s 'weak ontology' as a pragmatic way to circumvent these debates and consider sound as a material entity, while not attempting to deny the contingent socialities that shape our perception of it.

Eshun (1998) proposes sound (specifically music) as not simply an object of thought but a mode of thinking in itself: a concept of *thinking sonically* rather than *about sound*. He shares an interest in sonic- and thought-fictions with Demers (2017) which are also useful strategies to be deployed contingently. The material-noncochlear sound continuum emerges from all these approaches. All of them are, ultimately, stories told to explore our own phenomenological experience.

### *Non-cochlear Sound*

Voegelin's conception of sound as intersubjective and simultaneous presence leads her to a consideration of physical works as conceptualised sound, for instance her discussion of Louise Bourgeois's

installation *Cells* (Voegelin, 2021, 55) as a conceptual sound work. This points the way to an alternative approach. I have already suggested *Finnegans Wake* as an example of non-cochlear sound art. This term is formulated by analogy with Duchamp's "non-retinal art" (Kim-Cohen, 2009, xxi). Kim-Cohen criticises the Cagean concept of the sound-in-itself as tending to ignore the structural prejudices that underline all our expressed experience:

*This "simply is" supplies the most common and most problematic precept for thinking about and working with sound. This "simply is", this self-evidence, is a fantasy.* (Kim-Cohen, 2016, 21)

Kim-Cohen sites non-cochlear sound in an expanded sound field, based on Krauss's expanded sculptural field:

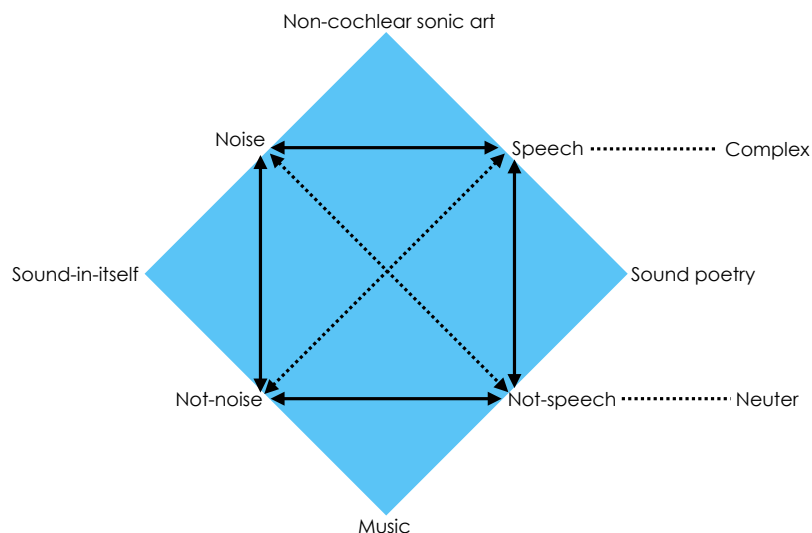


Fig. 4: The expanded sonic field, after Rosalind Krauss's expanded field of sculpture (Kim-Cohen, 2009, 155)

Kim-Cohen's difference with the sonic materialists is exemplified in his reading (Kim-Cohen, 2016, 152-155) of Voegelin's (2010, 88-90) hearing of Christoff Migone's *Soundings* (2001). Voegelin, Kim-Cohen argues, ignores the context of Migone's sound sources and privileges her own



silence over the social contexts of violence implicit in those sources.<sup>13</sup> This resonates with Kahn's critique of Cage: 'It was as though he could legitimately extend the bounds of musical materiality only by proving an unflinching fidelity to musical areferentiality on its own turf' (Kahn, 1997). Kim-Cohen suggests that both Cage's adherents and critics are guilty of gullibility in taking Cage at his word, suggesting that '[p]erhaps the fault lies with Cage for not imbuing his word and work with a sly Duchampian wink' (Kim-Cohen, 2009, 127). Perhaps so. But in the absence of such a wink, it is hard not to feel a need for some of the critical thinking that Rainer (1981) finds wanting in Cage's 'goofy naiveté'.<sup>14</sup> I therefore seek a materialist approach to sound tempered by critical reflection on the contexts in which we listen, to both conceptualise sound in terms of our reality, and vice versa. These processes may be identified as separate in certain contexts of analysis and reflection, but they are intimately bound up with and flowing back and forth between each other: this stew of perceptions is what creates the atmosphere of sound.

Voegelin and Kim-Cohen's respective viewpoints would appear to be fundamentally irreconcilable. Kane (2013) suggests that their apparently

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<sup>13</sup>This element is made explicit in Migone's contemporaneous essay 'Ricochets' (Migone, 2000).

<sup>14</sup>'The reintroduction of selectivity and control... is totally antithetical to the Cagean philosophy' (Rainer, 1981).

opposite articulations in fact hide a deeper shared 'musicophobia' manifested in contradictory ways. However, I see a possibility to find points of connection between them through my practice of shifting perspectives and unstable environments: it is possible to hear a sound for its own qualities as per Voegelin and also to hear it in the full spectrum of its sources and significances as per Kim-Cohen. The crucial point is that in deciding *how* we listen to a sound, we invoke and reflect privileges and consequences: the important thing is to be aware of this and how it impacts our experience. At the very least, if I cannot reconcile these two viewpoints, I aim to embrace the contradictions implicit in their juxtaposition.

Katie Paterson's *Earth-Moon-Earth* (2007) provides a useful model of material sound used to bring forth awareness of social and technological structures: in this case the fragility and imperfection of technology used to send signals from earth to the moon is revealed through a familiar sonic object, Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata, which in the act of being transformed to a data stream, transmitted to the moon and the signal as it bounces back to earth being reconstituted as music, reveals the limitations of the technology used to convert the transmission, as only fragments of the original signal are preserved (Alfrey, 2009).

I aim to build on this idea of conceptualising the world in terms of sound, in contradistinction to the visual paradigms and metaphors which dominate our experience of our environment. By conceiving in sonic terms – intersubjective and simultaneous — I begin a process of

reorienting perceptions, away from the distancing visual paradigm of “landscape” that separates us from our environment, to a perspective that places us *within* it. This may manifest in an experience of material environment [3.3] or of social structure/atmosphere [2.3].

*Concept art, concept music, concept sound*

Although artists had previously used sound as the basis for work (e.g. Russolo, 1913; Klein, 1947), it is with the emergence of Fluxus that a comprehensive cross-fertilisation between visual and sonic avant-garde aesthetics begins to emerge. One example is Flynt's *Work Such That No One Knows What's Going On* (1961) (hereafter *WSTNOKWGO*):

*One just has to guess whether this work exists and if it does what it is like.*

and Young's response *Realization of Henry Flynt's Work Such That No One Knows What's Going On* (1961):

*My guess is that this work exists and it is of such a nature that one just has to guess whether this work exists and if it does, what it is like.*

(Flynt, 2009, 69)

Flynt defines concept art as ‘first of all an art of which the material is “concepts”, as the material for ex. music is sound’ (Flynt, 1963). He specifies that ‘concept art is a kind of art of which the material is *language*’ [emphasis mine] (Ibid.). This is reflected in the way that *WSTNOKWGO* is embodied: it exists as text that semantically defines an idea that then exists in the reader's head, thereby completing the work (unless the reader concludes that the work does not exist – in which case the work paradoxically still exists in their mind, but in a kind of antimatter

state). This work is conceived in terms of language, but its embodiment is in the subject's conceptualisation in their own mind.

Flynt's work is conceived as pure linguistic concept. However, by presenting it and his own response in a concert programme,<sup>15</sup> Young brings it into the sphere of music, and in his own involvement as a composer, brings to it a sonic significance. Young's early text scores, particularly the *Compositions 1960*, clearly emerge from comparable concerns such as Flynt explores in *WSTNOKWGO*. In some ways these remain identifiable as music, albeit very much in a post-Cagean paradigm. Even his most outré instructions, whether to feed a piano a bale of hay or to release butterflies into a room, if followed have the potential to produce sound. In *Lecture 1960* Young recalls a discussion with Diane Wakowski on the audibility or not of a butterfly: 'I said that this was the usual attitude of human beings that everything in the world should exist for them and that I disagreed' (Young, 1965). This critique of what we would now call anthropocentrism foreshadows several strands of recent thought [1.2.3].

Although Young's text scores demonstrate a significantly conceptual approach to sound, they do not go so far as some of his fellow Fluxus

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<sup>15</sup>Although Flynt saw the response in 1963, he did not realise that Young had presented both texts in the context of a concert until much later, in 1995 (Flynt, 2009).

artists: Dick Higgins's *Danger Musics* instruct the performer to undertake actions with variable degrees of achievability.<sup>16</sup> Here we see the beginnings of what would later become delineated as performance art. For Young, 'in the hands of [Fluxus founder George] Macunias, the influence of my ideas quickly degenerated into slapstick vaudeville... it distorted the intention of my works' (Lely and Saunders, 2012, 436). His move towards music based on frequency relationships can be seen as a movement away from concept art to a more immanent conception of sound. An interesting comparison can be made between Young's text scores and Stockhausen's *Aus Den Sieben Tagen* (1968): Stockhausen's concerns seem to be very much with inducing a certain state of mind in his performers, but the result he intends is firmly in the conventional parameters of musical performance. Young's scores are more concerned with a conceptual exploration of what music is.

*Box with the Sound of its Own Making* (Morris, 1961) offers a potential for a different fusion of material-conceptual affect: the tape element of the work embodies the process of creation of the physical box itself, and in being drawn into this conversation between the fact of the work's existence and the process of its creation we are simultaneously present to the work in sound, removed from it in sight and connected to the

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<sup>16</sup>The most notorious, No.5's instruction to crawl up the vagina of a whale, was actually written by Nam June Paik (Nyman, 1999, 86).

concept of its creation and the implications of the process of its making. The physical existence of the tape, meanwhile, confers a material existence to the sound; but also a conceptual one, as the recording must be played for the sound to be manifest.

Morris was impressed, when he invited him to his studio in 1961, that Cage sat and listened to the entire tape as a 'private concert' (Joseph, 2011, 117). From my perspective however, this represents another example of Cage's inability to consider sound beyond the conceptual framework of music.

*The Sound of Silence* (Marclay, 1988), a photograph of a copy of the record of the same name by Simon and Garfunkel, plays with this idea of sound and embodiment: as a visual artwork it produces no sound, but its title and the image of a vinyl record produces an internal sense of hearing the song in the mind, a complex interplay of the materialities of recording technology, memory and conceptualisation (Norman, 2010). *Guitar Drag* (Marclay, 1999) offers another perspective on these interplays: the materiality of the sound produced reflects the referents of the location of its staging (Kase, 2008). Returning to the visual representation of sound, *To Be Continued* (Marclay, 2016) is a collage of images and effects from comics: it is presented as a form of graphic score to be realised as material sound, but also catalogues an array of visual representations of sound.

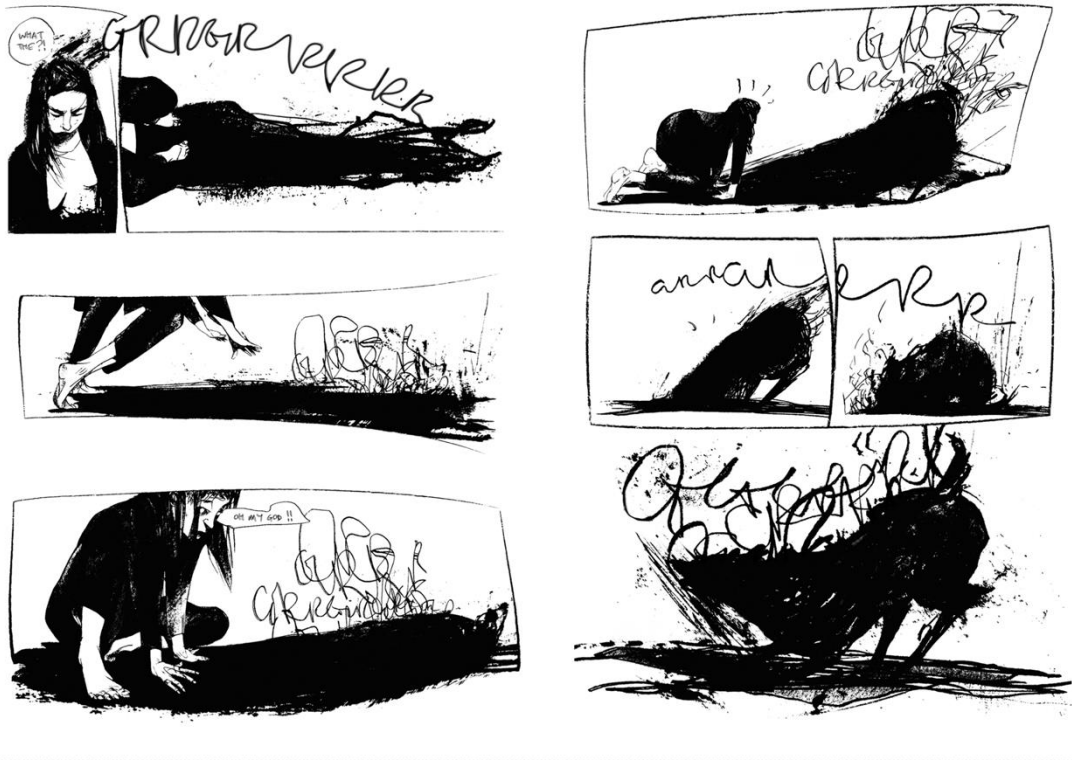


Fig. 5: Barking (pages 23, 24, 66, 72) © 2018 by Lucy Sullivan. Used by permission of the author.

McCloud (1993) discusses the role of sound in comics with an underlying assumption that the sonic can only be represented, not present in the medium. However, the potential exists for comics to embody a form of noncochlear sound beyond the representational. *Barking* (Sullivan, 2020), an exploration of grief and mental health, evokes a viscerally sonic aesthetic in its construction and design (Fig. 5). The “scratchy” art style evokes not simply the sense of texture, but the sound of the process of scratching. The amorphous, imaginary “black dog” that pursues the protagonist constructs itself from scribbled words, or rather, sounds rendered in text abstracted to the point of illegibility, which only serves to reinforce the sense of them as sound. Letterings frequently escape their balloons, overlapping and fracturing, creating impressions of a multiplicity of voices: coherent conversation with simultaneous internal monologue and “off-stage” voices. In contrast with such elements, the sequences of coherent dialogue seem quiet or even silent. The overall impression is of a work in conceptual sound in which visual presentation embodies the sonic, in contradistinction to “visual music” artworks which tend to provide straightforward visual re-presentations<sup>17</sup> of sonic or musical sources (Miller, 2018), or pictorial/graphic scores which elicit their

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<sup>17</sup>often referencing aspects of notated scores in their visual language.

‘music visualisers that merely map the most elemental characteristics of one sensory mode to another create at best a naïve and predictable synesthesia’ (Alves, 2012).



own complex relations between the seen and sounded (Smith and Smith, 1981). Most of these seem concerned with bringing the aural arts into the visual realm; *Barking* suggests a visual language that thinks sonically: not *sounds that one sees* but *pictures that one hears*.

### *Supracochlear sound*

*Hearing is basically a specialized form of touch.* (Glennie, 2015)

While written from a very specific perspective, this observation is highly relevant to my own sonic practice. Beyond the cochlea that dominates our conception of hearing, we feel vibrations through the skin and flesh, particularly in the case of low frequencies whose pitch is too low for our ears to register effectively. The feeling of sound is also a vital aspect of the experience of high-volume sound: part of what makes attending a concert by Sunn O))) or Swans potentially transcendent is that the extreme volumes (and often, low frequencies) create a viscerally physical encounter (Nancy, 2007, 14); sound experienced through the vibrations felt on the skin and throughout the body. This kind of sensation is often present in the drone, and this is a factor in why such musics tend toward the drone as a motivating strategy: it is also part of what contributes to the sense of drone as a sound that is breaking free of its status as a time-based process to become a physical *thing* present in the world. In a society where music is increasingly mediated and mediated via headphones (Stankievech, 2007) it is easy to forget that this *supracochlear* aspect of sound encounter exists, which is perhaps another reason why loud, drone-based music attracts a crowd that may

accurately be described as the faithful. It is not that a divine presence manifests in such situations; it is more that the removal of that experience from much of our everyday aesthetic life creates a sense akin to revelation when we do encounter it.

In an attempt to find some common ground between the poles of material and non-cochlear conceptions of sound, I introduce here the idea of *supracochlear* sound: this is in some ways a reversion to a consideration of sound in its material affect, but picks up a commonality between them: namely, sound perception as a function of the ear/cochlea. This turns Kim-Cohen's concern with how we conceive sound beyond its immanent materiality back to the act of physical listening itself. Kim-Cohen's "non-cochlear" formulation is intended to provoke a conceptual approach to sound, but it is also worth considering that our material experience of sound does not travel exclusively via the ear. In order to distinguish this from Kim-Cohen's idea of the non-cochlear, I shall use the term "supracochlear".

As an improvising musician working frequently with dance artists, whose interests orbit around the idea of a sonic conceptualisation of perceiving the world, I am fascinated by the idea of hearing as touch, and begin to consider the possibility of touch, or more widely physical contact and interaction, as therefore conceivable as a form of listening or sonic perception. The question of the relationship between dance and music (or as I shall prefer, moving and sounding) is complex and ever-evolving; this connection between touch and hearing suggests to me possibilities

for a more radically integrated relationship between sound and movement. The exploration of this idea is one element motivating *Where Does a Body End?* [3.2].<sup>18</sup>

### *Sonic attention*

*The sense of hearing cannot be closed off at will. There are no earlids. When we go to sleep, our perception of sound is the last door to close and it is also the first to open when we awaken. These facts have prompted McLuhan to write: "Terror is the normal state of any oral society for in it everything affects everything all the time." (Schafer, 1993, 11)*

The idea that while we can avert our eyes or close them, we cannot close our ears, is often raised as an explanation for why contemporary music is received less well than contemporary art (Stubbs, 2009, 113-117). While it is true that we cannot physically shut our ears as our eyes, there is plenty of evidence of our ability to filter out sound: the ability to focus on one particular voice in a party, the constant background hum of the national grid, traffic and so on (Horowitz, 2012, 94-131). The very existence of the concept "background noise" is a testament to this ability. Likewise, one does not need to physically close one's eyelids to fail to see, or to 'un-see' (Miéville, 2009) things that are right in front of us, as any cyclist swerving to avoid a pedestrian walking straight out in front of them can attest. Likewise the spelling error that stubbornly resists our attention. To see requires the attention of looking, and likewise to hear

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<sup>18</sup>The title of this project is taken from a documentary about Swans and Michael Gira (Porsia, 2020)

requires the attention of listening (Nancy, 2007, 12). What is true is that we cannot turn away from sound as we can from sight: if I am in a gallery and I avert my gaze from a painting I can no longer see it, but there is no equivalent physical action I can make to avert my hearing from sound in the same similar situation. Only by focusing my consciousness away from it can I un-hear it. I must likewise avert my attention from the painting even if it is behind me<sup>19</sup> to un-see it. This is where ideas of non-retinal and non-cochlear art come into play.

### 1.1.3 Objects, events and things

In considering the possibility of encountering sound as object or event, context becomes a key consideration. I discuss object-oriented ontology and its relation to my practice below [1.2.2], but here I want to consider some works that I believe demonstrate some aspects of this ambiguity of encounter that I make use of in my own practice.

In *The Forty Part Motet* (Cardiff, 2001), voices are abstracted but also individualised, the subject is placed “within” the choir rather than in a traditional audience-performer configuration, creating a constantly shifting perspective as different voices through each speaker become more present as the listener changes position. However, my strongest

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<sup>19</sup>‘present precisely as absent’ (Noë, 2012, 18).

reaction when I visited the installation at Tate Modern in 2018 was not to the singing, but to the few minutes that occur before the Tallis work begins, in which one can wander around between the speakers and hear the sounds of each singer preparing for the performance: some warm up, some chat with their neighbours, others sit quietly or fidget. The mediatization and abstraction of the singers paradoxically enables a more forceful engagement with them as individuals: by being placed in an intimate position with their voices, one has a visceral sense of each singer in a way that would never be conveyed in the atmosphere of a live performance, in which the audience is distanced from the performers and the generalised mass presence of the choir dominates. The installation provides a material sense of being “inside” the choir: the social unit that makes the work is revealed to us and is with us. This mediated empathy with the people making the performance carries over into the Tallis performance that follows. The fact that this sequence of sounds repeats as a loop, as well as the physical presence of the circle of speakers through which it is heard, begins to give this repeated temporal sequence a sense of object.

Cardiff's *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* (1999) offers another perspective on this use of dislocation as an agent of empathy: in this case, a soundwalk recorded around an area of Whitechapel, framed within a fictional noirish narrative, places the listener in a juxtaposition between the location as recorded, as fictionalised and as encountered while following the soundwalk's route; this effect becomes more

powerful through time as development of the area creates a greater schism between what the ear hears through headphones and the environment as encountered (LaBelle, 2015, 223-224).

Viv Corringham's *Arrivals* (2012) offers a variant of this experience. A geolocationary app designed to facilitate a soundwalk along the Rondout Creek in Kingston, NY, it can also be followed in any other location: the result is a disrupted sense of place as one attempts to reconcile the route prescribed by the app with the realities of the actual place one is in.<sup>20</sup> *Purposeful Listening in Complex States of Time* (Dunn, 1998) offers a different way to disrupt one's experience of one's location by offering a complex graphic notational instruction for listening.

The examples above all centre on the idea of the listener as a peripatetic, proprioceptive body encountering sounds as positional objects, which informs *Congregation* [2.3.2], *Where Does a Body End?* [3.2] and *Ouroboros* [3.3] in particular. Sound producing means that engage with their site of manifestation offer an alternative perspective on sound as geographically located object. Fullman (2012) and Byrne (2005) have both created work that uses specific sites as resonant bodies. This approach, though not identical, finds some parallels with my approach to site-specificity in *Ouroboros* [3.3].

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<sup>20</sup>See fixed media for a documented example of this strategy.

## 1.2 Strategies

Here I discuss some motivating concepts and ideas. I synthesise from the preceding discussion a schema for a continuum of sound encounter between material and noncochlear. I suggest this in terms of atmospheres; object-oriented ontology; hyperobjects; and some perspectives of vibrant matter, postphenomenology and embodied knowledge.

### 1.2.1: Atmospheres, entanglements and sites

Böhme (2018) defines atmosphere as that which mediates between the physical reality of something and our subjective reaction to it.

Atmospheres are 'characteristic manifestations of the co-presence of subject and object' (Ibid., 26), with both a subjective existence – they do not exist until we perceive them – but also a quasi-objective dimension: we may deliberately create atmosphere by the observation and manipulation of space. Böhme describes this as 'scenography' by analogy with theatrical staging designed to evoke a particular mood. Böhme considers all space mediated by human activity to be in some sense 'staged' (Ibid., 3).

The intersubjectivity of atmospheres makes them a useful tool with which to consider aesthetics from the point of view of both reception and generation. In particular, we enter a new form of discourse about the politics of art – to acknowledge that a work of art is staged is to

acknowledge the power dynamics at play between artist and audience (Ibid., 27).

Böhme touches directly upon sound as aesthetic experience only briefly, noting that the notion of atmosphere 'always contains a spatial sense of ambience' (Ibid., 25). He claims music as 'the fundamental atmospheric art form' (Ibid., 170) and notes developments via electronics and projects such as Schafer's World Soundscape project to assert the spatial aspect of music over the temporal: music as 'the transformation of physically sensed space' (Ibid., 171).<sup>21</sup> He also suggests that as atmospheres emphasise perception as the source of aesthetic value, music as an art of hearing may potentially apply to any situation in which our primary perception is aural (for instance in field recording as an aesthetic activity, and also in sampling as an enabler of musical potentiality in any sound). If hearing becomes the primary motivation, rather than hearing "something", then '[m]usic most certainly does not have to be man-made anymore' (Böhme, 2018, 173). This has a connection with the Cagean sound-as-immanence with its problematic anthropocentrism of all sound as music. Nevertheless, Böhme's characterisation of music as a fundamental atmospheric art form and his emphasis on the spatial dimension of sound are two ideas that I find

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<sup>21</sup>Although we should not forget that there are neither purely spatial arts nor purely time-based arts' (Rebentisch, 2012, 215).



useful as I explore the notion of sound as an ambiguous player between object and event. These ideas also find resonance with concepts of presence (Gumbrecht, 2004; Noë, 2012) as a mode of aesthetics not limited to hermeneutic or semiotic interpretation. They are similarly echoed in LaBelle's view that 'sound and space in particular have a dynamic relationship' and of sound art as 'the activation of the existing relation between sound and space' (LaBelle, 2015, ix).

### *Site-Specificities*

When considering atmosphere as staging, the role of site also comes into consideration; not simply physical areas of activity, but social sites (e.g. the concert hall as not only a physical, architectural entity but also a site of socio-political affect [2.1; 2.2; 2.3]), and what Kwon calls 'discursive site-specificity':

*[T]he definition of site-specificity is being reconfigured to imply not the permanence and immobility of work but its impermanence and transience. (Kwon, 2004, 4)*

Kwon identifies three modes of site specificity. *Two Rooms* [Prelude; 2.1] exists largely in the realm of *phenomenological* site-specificity, in which the material encounter between sound and site is dominant. In the case of *societal* site-specificity, 'the techniques and effects of the art institution as they circumscribe and delimit the definition, production, presentation, and dissemination of art... become the sites of critical intervention' (Ibid., 21). This mode can be seen at work in my treatment of the concert atmosphere in *The Fade in Time* [2.3.1] and *Congregation*

[2.3.2]. The move towards a mobile state of being leads towards Kwon's idea of *discursive site-specificity*, in which

*the art work's relationship to the actuality of a location (as site) and the social conditions of the institutional frame (as site) are both subordinate to a discursively determined site that is delineated as a field of knowledge, intellectual exchange, or cultural debate. Furthermore, unlike in the previous models, this site is not defined as a precondition. Rather, it is generated by the work (often as "content"), and then verified by its convergence with an existing discursive formation. (Ibid., 26)*

Lockdown projects such as *Fifty Breaths* and *Under Eastern Way* [2.1]

arguably traverse all three of these modes, being both

phenomenological explorations of site, but also informed by the social

and discursive circumstances of the pandemic. In the case of a work like

*Where Does a Body End?* [3.2], the site exists in the bodies that form the

object rather than the room in which they are set, while in *Ouroboros*

[3.3], creative practice drawing on ideas of home sits in discussion with

the phenomenological and social structures present in the specific

location used.

*Dreamachine* (Collective Act et al., 2022) is an example of work that is

site-specific in terms of the technology assembled to produce it. An

architecturally neutral structure contains a circular arrangement of seats.

The presentation, given in "deep listening" and "high intensity" variants,

stages an atmosphere of sound and light. The soundtrack sits in the

tradition of 90s ambient/chill-out music, with origins in Brian Eno's 70s

ambient albums (e.g. Eno, 1979). The "deep listening" presentation

features gentle and slowly changing coloured light. The "high intensity"

presentation requires the attendee to close their eyes: strobe lighting is

employed throughout the hour or so of the experience. The effect of the strobes through closed eyelids creates a psychedelic display of colour and shape. Use of varying speeds of strobe with occasional stable light or darkness adds to the variety of visual stimulation, and the music takes on a more prominent stimulant role as subtle variations of volume, rate of change, rhythm, sub bass and binaural beats act on our perception. This affords an experience of seeing that is closer to our experience of hearing, in that we are not “looking at” anything as such but being immersed in an environment of light that is with us and within us rather than a way of illuminating objects at a distance from us. This is presented as a sound/light-in-itself experience, but is inevitably enabled and mediated through the technology used to create it, and the societal assumptions that lie behind the aesthetics of architecture and music that inform its construction.

### 1.2.2 Hyperobjects, hyposubjects and the Age of Asymmetry

Having introduced the idea that sound, especially in the atmosphere of drone, may present ambiguously as object or event[1.1.1], here I shall briefly introduce some concepts deriving from object-oriented ontology (OOO). This school of philosophy originates with Graham Harman whose ideas I shall discuss briefly first before turning to Timothy Morton who more directly influences my own practice.

### *Object-oriented ontology*

Harman characterises everything as objects (Harman, 2018): a pen, a dragon and the American Civil War are all objects, regardless of their temporal position or reality. I find any claim to a “theory of everything” inherently suspicious, but there are useful tools to be found in his ideas, such as his Heidegger-derived conception of the quadruple object [3.1.3]. OOO has an interest in conceiving the world in terms beyond the anthropocentric. Harman suggests that

*if the being of things lies veiled behind all theory and practice, this is not due to some precious merit or defect of human Dasein, but to the fact that all relations translate or distort that to which they relate: even inanimate relations. (Harman, 2011, 44)*

This idea finds resonance with ideas of Jane Bennett and Don Ihde [1.2.3] and is a particular focus for Timothy Morton, whose approach to OOO I find more poetic and less dogmatic than Harman's.

### *Hyperobjects*

Morton describes *hyperobjects* (2013) as vast entities that we are unable to perceive in their entirety, but in which we are inescapably enmeshed and by which we are affected: climate change is one such entity. This raises the possibility of considering artistic creation in ways less anthropocentric than usual. Morton's concepts of 'the zone' (Ibid., 143-144) and the 'mesh' (Ibid., 83) resonate with that of atmospheres: this atmosphere of uncertainty makes itself felt throughout my practice.

## *Hyposubjects*

As a counterpart to hyperobjects, Morton and Boyer suggest the

*hyposubject*:

*Could one say that instead of transcending you could... [become] more susceptible to a larger variety of the things that aren't you. most of which are nonhumans — including your own body to an extent... Trans- usually signals overcoming, going beyond. But sub- is about being close to, beneath, within, less than. (Morton and Boyer, 2021, 64/70)*

These concepts have an explicitly ecological agenda: Morton wishes to use them to reconfigure humans' relationship with the biosphere we inhabit, from which we have conceptually othered ourselves with disastrous results for the habitability of our planet. The term biosphere is used here in preference to "environment" or "nature" because Morton contends that those terms derive from this very othering (Morton, 2017, 63-67).

## *The Age of Asymmetry*

Morton sees a vital role for art-making in this reconfiguration of our conception of our relationship with the biosphere:

*Art becomes a collaboration between humans and nonhumans, or as Negarestani (2008) puts it, "complicity with anonymous materials." (Morton, 2013, 174)*

This is not a question of making art *about climate change* or *about nature*. '[T]he art that emerges at the inception of the Anthropocene is not fully capable of addressing it' (Ibid., 188). Rather, it is about embodying these ideas of a new interrelation in the essence of the art we make:

*[B]eauty must be fringed with some kind of disgust, something that normative aesthetic theories are constantly trying to wipe off. There needs to be this ambiguous space between art and kitsch, beauty and disgust. (Morton, 2017, 51)*

Elsewhere, Morton characterises this as symptomatic of a post-Romantic “Age of Asymmetry” (Morton, 2012). Connections can be made between these ideas and Ingold’s conceptions of lines and wayfaring [1.3.3]. My project has at its heart an idea of questioning and dissolving of preconceived self- and other- identities and binaries. Molitor (2021) suggests the idea of composition as hyperobject, drawing from both Morton and Haraway (2016). I follow a similar path, but identify not simply, as she describes, a gap between composing and listening, but a more fundamental gap between composing and making, in which roles such as “composer” start to break down as one’s practice becomes entangled with others’ [3; 4].

As a flat ontology, OOO dispenses with Heidegger’s distinction between object and “thing”. I wish to retain this distinction, albeit with a slightly different emphasis. In asserting that whether one perceives something as being an object or an event is essentially a matter of perspective and context of encounter, I retain the special category of *thing* for a particular state of multidimensional awareness: in a certain situation in which one becomes aware of something’s potentiality as both *simultaneously*, an object-event becomes experienced as a *Thing*.

### 1.2.3 Materialities, postphenomenology and the nonhuman

Morton's articulation of human-nonhuman collaboration finds parallels with a number of recent philosophical trends. Ihde's postphenomenology frames perception as an active phenomenon in which:

*considerations of the materiality of the technologies, the bodily techniques of use, and the cultural context of the practice are all taken into account and demonstrate again the importance of variational theory with its outcome in multistability, the role of embodiment, now in trained practice, and the appearance of differently structured lifeworlds relative to historical cultures and environments. (Ihde, 2009, 18-19)*

Human-nonhuman relationships are also a concern in much recent artistic work. *The Garden of Forking Paths* (McLaughlin, 2019) [3.1.4; 3.2.1] takes cues from Bennett's idea of vibrant matter (2010). It considers the clarinet as an active body with agency in performance rather than a passive tool manipulated by the musician.<sup>22</sup> This conception of the player-instrument relationship as a symbiotic collaboration of bodies has become increasingly important to my thinking over the course of this project, and finds its most direct expression in *Where Does a Body End?* [3.2].

These ideas connect with a posthumanism articulated by, among others, Braidotti (2019) and Barad (2007, 33). Braidotti, like Ihde, identifies

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<sup>22</sup>See also McLaughlin, 2022.

technological materialities as an influence on contemporary human knowledge and argues for a more critical engagement with their social, political and environmental consequences. Building on a feminist and environmental framework she argues for a shift away from traditional epistemologies which she frames as anthropocentric, binary and hierarchical towards a mode of diversity, multiplicity and relationality in which the human subject is decanted. The difficulty of this aim is perhaps illustrated by Tomlinson's critique:

*Braidotti, despite warning us of the anthropocentric tendencies of much trans-speciesism (Braidotti, 2011, 81-97), relies on commonplaces about human musical effects to drive her consideration of insect "music" (98-110). And affect theorists dabbling in music offer an unsophisticated conception of human musical expression to model a realm of intensities and emotions that they then enlarge to include animals, plants, microbes, and even inorganic objects (see Tomlinson, 2016; Leys, 2011).*  
(Tomlinson, 2020, 420)

Ultimately, music is a human activity and phenomenologically we can only perceive the world as humans. There is a fine line to be trodden between empathic acknowledgement of the existence of nonhuman experience and solipsism (Nagel, 1974).

Barad builds on ideas from Bohr to develop a concept of intra-action which '*signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies... agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements*' (Barad, 2007, emphasis in original). This sits in flat contradiction to OOO, and as an idea deriving from quantum mechanics is arguably a more evidential model; in an artistic context I take both as useful contingent stories in the spirit of Bennett (2001, 160-166), who suggests "enchantment" as a weak ontology (White, 2000):



that is to say, a 'necessarily speculative and contestable... onto-story ... [that] does not try to demonstrate its truth in any strong sense' (Bennett, 2001, 161).

#### 1.2.4 Rituals and the enchantment of everyday life

In a visually oriented society, sound, a phenomenon that is present but not visible, naturally attracts a sense of the transcendent. This is perhaps why music of all art forms seems to hover most between entertainment and ritual. The ritualistic atmospheres of drone [1.1.1] inevitably find their way into the work under discussion here. This is not to position my practice as theological in any way, but rather ritual as an avatar of connection and community. There are several strands to this: symbols, actions I have on occasion in the work documented here employed symbols and archetypes as part of the framing of actions. In the case of an instance such as *Where Does a Body End?* [3.2], the use of tarot cards as part of the iconography of the work is a means of explicating some concepts implicit in the fourfold framework, and to elucidate the map of shifting interrelationships across the performance area.

In the spirit of weak ontology, I suggest here a contingent definition of ritual as it pertains to the practice documented herein: that of *simple actions performed with care* [2.3.1]. This does not preclude ritualistic complexity. Koster (2003) delineates three modes of ritual: simple ritual acts are 'non-utilitarian acts that are conventional and constitutive of

the identity of some group,' which may be ordered and sequenced into more complex forms. He goes on to consider ritual performance as:

*a community's symbolic demarcation of a territory in space and time by complex ritual acts and techniques affecting the experience of identity of the participants away from individuality (Ibid.).*

Koster defines ritual as 'a "technology" with a very clear purpose...: the reduction of the sense of individual self of the participants in order to achieve a sense of *communitas* with respect to a territorial model' (Ibid.), in contradistinction to the assertion of Staal (2013)'s assertion that '[r]itual is pure activity, without meaning or goal'. I position ritual within my own practice somewhere between these two viewpoints: the enactment of ritualistic action is not intended as having preconceived significance but rather as a generator of emergent presence. It also acts as a generator of *communitas*: this may manifest in terms of a group of people sited in a particular situation, such as in *Congregation* or *Ouroboros*, or it may be an engine of a transdisciplinary mindset between collaborators. The process of rehearsal for *Where Does a Body End?* [3.2] is a particular exemplar of this mode.

I would like to suggest another purpose of these ritualistic elements: that of anchorage. The nature of this work is that it is ambiguous and frequently chaotic and confusing. Rituals, or simple actions performed with care, can provide a support and a centre of stability as we find our way through this fog of uncertainty [1.3.3]. As we enter an atmosphere in which our identities and interrelations become fuzzy or even dissolve,

these actions provide something to hold onto. Brown, discussing ritual as performance, discusses the necessity of a script, in the sense of 'a predetermined or at least preconceived designation of form' (Brown, 2003). I might reframe this as an *intention to act*.

Schechner discusses ritual and performance in terms of an efficacy-entertainment dyad (1974) and selective inattention as a mode of theatre embodied in longer-form work, more loosely structured than the "short, intensely pay-attention-to-the piece" mode of conventional theatre (1976). I identify such processes in the work discussed herein, but wish to move away from the binary relationships such models suggest: in the case of selective inattention, of which Schechner observes that 'the full scope of performing, like living, involves not only the push of doing something, but the release of undoing' (Ibid), I consider attention to be distributed across not two but three modes, which I characterise as being, happening and doing: all these modes are potentially present in any situation, and which of them is in conscious presence is a matter of context and contingent interrelations. In the case of efficacy-entertainment, while I recognise both these elements in my practice, I do not seek to valorise one over another, nor to suggest that an increase in one necessitates a decrease in the other. I aim to take a more holistic view and see emphasis on any of these modes to be a contingent property of one's attention from moment to moment.

## 1.3 Methods

This being a heterogeneous practice, I adopt a magpie methodology (Carter, 2013) in which many different approaches may be adopted or discarded as seems appropriate to the task in hand. This, then, is a practice-as-research (PaR) [1.3.1] project conducted through a broadly phenomenological methodology. Practical doing, and the documentation thereof, forms the core method. This is combined with reflection, via discussion with collaborators, observation of documented events, and thought and writing processes. Theory and practice are entangled, not separate activities. Technique as embodied knowledge [1.3.2] is interrogated through practical activity, which is conducted in a spirit of wayfaring and mapping [1.3.3]. The aim is to reach towards a state of transdisciplinarity [1.3.4] less through the acquisition of new knowledge (although that acquisition is a result of the process) than by putting oneself into a position of radical uncertainty, of *not knowing what's going on*.

### 1.3.1 Practice as Research

PaR is an established methodology no longer needing justification.<sup>23</sup> That said, it is worth elaborating some specific approaches I take within the

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<sup>23</sup>See Nelson (2013); Barrett and Bolt (2007); Borgdorf (2012) and Haseman (2006) inter alia.

broader methodology. Some residual confusion remains in the realm of PaR and creative practice that I see as being largely a result of the field's borrowing of terminology from scientific research paradigms. This can be seen in the notion of the research question: one may formulate a question of scientific interest (will a particular approach help treatment of an illness? How did Neolithic people construct their buildings?) and then pursue a programme of research to answer it. Creative PaR, I argue, works differently: this is because creative research is to a degree a process not of accumulating knowledge but in actively seeking "unknowing in doing" (Challenger, 2022), or, rather than refining and paring down, opening ideas up to a state of multiplicity (Stone, 2020), an open-endedness articulated in Tony Wilson's definition of praxis as 'doing something, and then only afterwards, finding out why you did it' (New Order: Play at Home, 1983). In this way I hope to contribute to the identification of a native language of creative arts PaR, similar to that observed in the discourse of crafts practitioners (Gates, 2017).

Documentation is evidently necessary in a project such as this. The convention in western art music is to locate the work in the notated score. While notation does form an element of my practice [Appendix 2], it is rarely if ever the case that the score forms the focal point of the work in question. Audiovisual documentation provides a record of activity: the documentation of performance in such situations has itself a performative element (Auslander, 2006); in the case of documentation of a durational piece such as *Where Does a Body End* [3.2] or *Ouroboros* [3.3] I provide edited versions of the documentation for practical reasons

alongside the full documentation of the event. This serves in part to provide a more easily digestible record of the work, and the process of editing footage is in itself a form of reflection on the work: just as the act of writing about it serves to clarify one's own thoughts, so the viewing and editing of footage serves as a way to process the implications of what has been done. In another sense, however, this process creates further ambiguity, creating more loci of the work: the act of elucidation through editing creates another embodiment which further complicates its distributed nature. This reflects a consideration of the work as hyperobject, its existence distributed across multiple sites [1.3.5].

Wolfgang Stoerchle's last performance is an intriguing example of a work that undoubtedly exists as a strong and visceral concept, but has a weak material presence: it survives through knowledge of its having taken place, but this knowledge is transmitted via subjective and sometimes contradictory witness accounts and a couple of photos (Dusapin, 2022, 364-386).

### 1.3.2 Technique as embodied knowledge

The work-concept remains the dominant paradigm for discussing music (Goehr, 2007). This thesis constitutes a discussion of a portfolio the contents of which can certainly be described in these terms. However, following Spatz (2015), I wish to consider the techniques and strategies employed in my practice as the focus of reflection over works in themselves [1.3.5]. Stone (2020) articulates a concept of multiplicity in

which scores, performances, recordings etc., rather than being tokens of a notional work, exist as a network of interrelated but discrete entities. Therefore I characterise this portfolio as a collection not of *works per se*, but of *techniques* and *strategies*, the works produced in the course of this research acting as particular embodiments of these. I also draw here on Carter (2013)'s description of magpie methodology, in which:

*Arts/Humanities researchers frequently do not explain methodology overtly; instead, they perform it through their use of language, textual and historic cross-reference, and theory.*

She goes on to describe a contingent methodology in which whatever seems important and useful may be employed as the researcher's ends demand. Carter's context here is her own field of literary studies, but this characterisation fits well to a creative practice that is primarily embodied in performance. I therefore employ a multiplicitous approach to the framing of my practice, in the spirit of there being 'nothing, in religion, science, or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while' (Fort, 1998, 136).

Alan Moore's *Promethea* (1999-2005) provides an example of technique as embodied knowledge. Beginning ostensibly as a Wonder Woman-like superhero comic, it becomes a complex meta-fictional work essaying Moore's philosophy of magic, fiction and the imagination, culminating with the title character bringing about the end of the world: not a destructive but a transformative act that reconfigures reality.

The final issue (Moore et al., 2005a) acts as an epilogue, in which *Promethea* expounds a summation of the series's ideas, drawing on diverse references from Tarot symbolism to post-Einsteinian theories of quantum physics and time. It can be read as a standard 32-page comic book, or pulled apart and reconfigured as a giant two-sided poster: the text re-emerges as 'a network of hypertextual rhizomes that bound around the picture plane unfettered by either page-by-page reading order or the visual rhetoric of the *Promethea* portraits' (Craig Fischer, quoted in Hanegraaff, 2016). Moore and Williams make the reader complicit in literally deconstructing the comics medium, so that the issue embodies the very concepts that it expounds: the world pulled apart and reconfigured to something new and different.

This act of de-/re-construction is a powerful exemplar of 'knowing in doing' (Nelson, 2013, p.9) [3.3.5]. It also reflects a recurring idea in my own work: that of revelation by negation. The process of deconstructing *Promethea* No. 32 is not only a practical embodiment of the ideas presented within it: in deconstructing the physical object and reconstituting it into a new form and context, one becomes keenly aware of its materiality.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, *The Fade in Time* [2.3.1] and *Congregation* [2.3.2] both draw attention by negation to the physical

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<sup>24</sup>an experience which is lost when the issue is encountered in the form of the final pages of a trade paperback collection (Moore et al., 2005b).



and social structures of the concert hall, while *Where Does a Body End?* [3.2] and *Ouroboros*[3.3] explore the interrelations of musician-instrument and interacting human bodies through the disruption of the norms of those interactions. In the case of *Where Does a Body End?*, the distinction between theoretical and embodied knowledge is complicated by the introduction of a theoretical concept – Harman's quadruple object – which is then used as a means of delineating a site through which embodied actions and experiences take place.

### 1.3.3 Wayfaring, mapping, weather-worlds

Lakoff and Johnson (2003) have written extensively about metaphor and the part it plays in our perception and configuration of ourselves in the world. Many of our paradigms for understanding the world are ocularcentric. Even in music and sound studies this visual dominance persists: the term *soundscape*, popularised by Schafer (1993), derives from painting (*landscape*). Ingold (2011) argues against these terms, suggesting the concept of “weather-world”: a dynamic and fluid process-state through which we move as wayfarers rather than a static object-state which we observe. Terms such as “nature”, “landscape” and “soundscape” can be thought of as manifestations of a larger metaphor: *Humans are something other than the world*.

Fiordilino's concept of “mapping” as a practice-research method (2022) has some resonances with my own practice as well as Ingold's “wayfaring” as a metaphor for the process of finding one's way through

the sites of one's practice and embodied experience. These ideas of mapping and wayfaring connect with the concepts of atmospheres [1.2.1] and weather-worlds; atmospheres can be characterised as a fog of phenomenological affect (Tomkins, 1995).

I cite these approaches as articulations of and embodiments of an approach which I use and describe as a practice of *finding one's way through*. We can locate ourselves within the biosphere, but such location is always contingent and there is no "out" to go to, only other "ins." In this context the concept of atmospheres is useful: the situation we find ourselves in is less a tangle of lines (Ingold, 2016) and more a fog through which we move, a "weather-world" (Ingold, 2011). These different ways of conceptualising our site are all valid, all intersect and advance and withdraw according to the context of our focus. This is reflected in the methodological process of interflow [4.3]: as I venture away from my home territory of "music", I carry my own technique and knowledge as a support for my collaborators while placing myself in a position of *not knowing what's going on* and dependency on their equivalent technique and knowledge. The journey home again then marks an opportunity to consolidate experience with research and acquired knowledge from the perspective of the discipline with which I have

become entangled:<sup>25</sup> this leads to a new perspective on my own technique, and an altered sense of what my home territory is when the process begins again.

### 1.3.4 Transdisciplinarity

I shall discuss transdisciplinarity extensively later [3.2], but here it is useful to summarise Stember (1991)'s definitions, which align closely with my understandings and which I take as my reference point:

- Intradisciplinary: within disciplinary work
- Crossdisciplinary: a viewing of one discipline from the perspective of another.
- Multidisciplinary: involving multiple disciplines with different perspectives on a problem or issue.
- Interdisciplinary: integration of the contributions of several disciplines to a problem or issue is required.
- Transdisciplinary: concerned with the unity of intellectual frameworks beyond the disciplinary perspectives.

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<sup>25</sup> This research being an *outcome* of the work rather than a *precondition*, such sources are cited in this thesis in the context of the exegesis of the work (see Chapter 3 in particular).

While different disciplines might encounter each other within the same space, and even coordinate in such a way as to appear to be part of the same thing, it is rarely that one sees a genuine enmeshment of aesthetics and ideas: musicians remain musicians, dancers remain dancers, each leaves the arena with their own specialist identity unchanged by their experience. The aim of a truly transdisciplinary practice must be to attempt to break down these discrete identities and allow specialist techniques to infiltrate each other.<sup>26</sup>

Schütte (2021)'s view of the work of Kraftwerk as something partly analogous to Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* offers a model. Their 21st century practice has become the curation of what Schütte considers a completed body of work, in which design aesthetics originating from Warhol, and the development of cutting-edge visual presentations and spatialised audio environments, become the focus of Kraftwerk's innovation where the music once was. By expanding their focus beyond music and music technology, Kraftwerk have become purveyors of an interdisciplinary aesthetic, and arguably a transdisciplinary one.

Such a transformation occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic as creative practitioners were forced into contingent technological strategies to try and circumvent the loss of copresence [Interlude]. More

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<sup>26</sup>'Collaboration means contamination... Get your hands dirty' (Fraser, 2022).

generally, technology shapes our practices: e.g. musicians are also often programmers, bringing a cross- and multi-disciplinary aspect even to nominally intradisciplinary work.

I propose a mode of collaboration in which different specialists are brought together in a common cause, but rather than these specialisms being reified through self-valorisation, they are used to support the other parties to the collaboration in stepping outside their own technical boundaries, creating a situation in which these techniques are present, but, rather than delineated, entangled in a fully transdisciplinary mode. My claim in this work is less that I enter into another discipline – although there is an element of this, which can be then used as a springboard to theorise my own disciplinary techniques from a perspective influenced by such others<sup>27</sup> – and more that this practice of placing oneself in a state of radical unknowing reveals the borders between disciplines to be less firmly set than we might imagine. An example of this kind of unknowing is Schneemann's *Up To And Including Her Limits* [3.2.1], which evinces both cross- and trans-disciplinary aspects in its viewing of movement, the body and the marked canvas from and beyond each other's perspectives, and in her use of a tree surgeon's harness an act of

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<sup>27</sup> I touch on some choreological and theatrical aspects in *Where Does a Body End?* [3.2] and *Ouroboros* [3.3] in particular.

unknowing, her entanglement with that structure acting to subvert her own painter's technique.

This leads me to *entanglement*: the idea that these areas of discipline and knowledge do not exist as discrete areas but are entangled and enmeshed, and that the process of true transdisciplinary collaboration brings this entanglement into the forefront of practice [3.2]. I draw inspiration from the 'entangled life' (Sheldrake, 2020) of fungi and notions of the 'wood-wide web' (Simard et al., 1997). These symbiotic and entangled ecosystems find echoes in my approaches to collaboration and connect with Morton's ideas of 'being ecological' [1.2.2]. As I explore these ideas and approaches I shall formulate a concept of *interflow* as a process of radical transdisciplinary entanglement.

### 1.3.5 Work and Works

In the practice described in this thesis, process takes precedence over product. Nevertheless, it is the nature of a portfolio that it presents work undertaken as individuated works, and it is worth taking a moment to consider the nature of these identities, contingent as they may be.

The work-concept is a complex one and its nature is the subject of some debate (Goehr, 2007). It is, I argue, an inherently fuzzy [1.1.1] concept whose apparently firm edges become blurred on close examination.

Stone's concept of multiplicity (Stone, 2020) is formulated as a mean to

encompass the wildly diverging possible realisations of experiment tan music scores, but equally applies to more conventional notated musics: one could consider performances of a score in terms of multiplicity rather than as tokens, albeit with a narrower spectrum of variance than in the kind of experimental score she discusses. I would like to consider the idea of the work as a kind of hyperobject [1.2.2]: if we take a work such as Beethoven's fifth symphony, for example, we can see that it exists across many elements: its score, Beethoven's sketches, his thought processes, all the performances and recordings that have or will be made, its position in western aesthetic and political history and culture. We have a sense of it as a distinct object but cannot know all these facets of its distribution through spacetime, only through its effects on us as we encounter some of these elements. An opposite perspective on this is to be found in La Monte Young's *The Well-Tuned Piano*, which as an improvisatory based work is in perpetual evolution - for instance Young's delineation of its composition dates as "1964—1973—1981—Present" (Gann, 1993), reflecting shifts in its identity as its using evolved, or his even more radical assertion that '[e]ach realization is a separately titled and independent composition' (Young, 2024). This is further complicated by the fact that elements of the work form the basis of other works, whether the piece for Charles Curtis *Just Charles & Cello in the Romantic Chord* (2002-3) or various sound installations (Gann, 1993).

The dialectic between the auto- and allo-graphic modes is another source of ambiguity here; particularly in those instances where the

nature of the work in question is questioning these identities. In order to navigate across the ambiguities of object and event, the term *encounter* is useful: whether work represents as, e.g. installation or performance, is a specificity of the encounter with it.

Work-identities are therefore contingent upon context and manner of presentation. I suggest they exist across the following, intersecting but not consistently weighted elements:

- **Material (Being):** this may constitute composed/ notated musical materials, instructions for action, or the embodied beings present in the room along with their techniques and histories.
- **Strategies (Doing):** verbally or physically articulated strategies (e.g. improvisation frameworks)
- **Site (Happening):** this may constitute the physical arena of activity but also social and formal structures implicit in the context of presentation (e.g. concert hall, gallery). These may be consciously constructed or implicitly pre-existing and revealed through the course of the encounter.

The individual works in this portfolio therefore all exist in a state of distribution across multiple elements of embodiment – including the audiovisual documentation of actions and the written description and exegesis of them. In addition to this, they themselves form distributed elements of the hyperobject of my practice, i.e. not works (being), but *work (doing)*.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See also Molitor (2021).



## **2: Encounters, Disruptions, Transformations**

The works in this chapter begin with the idea of drone as an ambiguous identity. Extrapolating from the premise that something may be encountered as event or object, I ask the question: how may a perceptible transition between these states be effected? What are the implications for human aesthetic reception in the transition period when the sound object/event's identity has been undermined but its new identity not yet established? Or to put it another way: *What's going on when no-one knows what's going on?*

### **2.1 Encounters**

The idea of *encounters* forms the origin point of all the work discussed herein in some way or another. The motivating force behind the work is the question of the context in which these encounters take place. This applies to the work itself: in particular the question of how circumstance may affect whether one encounters sound as an event or an object is a recurring theme, as well as the possibility for these perceptions to shift in the course of that encounter.

Encounters happen not simply between object and subject though as in the relationship between audience and artistic work. The process of creation is also a network of encounters: between the creator and ideas, sounds, technologies and collaborators. These encounters may be an occasion for *disruption* and also for *transformation*.

### 2.1.1 Fifty Breaths/Under Eastern Way

Two pieces of work undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic illustrate some modes of encounter. *Fifty Breaths* was a field recording project undertaken at a time where the first lockdown was slowly lifting and limited travel beyond immediate environs again became possible.

Following an idea from *The River at Night* (Huizenga, 2019, 202) I visited a number of locations and recorded while counting 50 of my own breaths. This duration is remarkably consistent, but also points to a different conception of the passing of time, seeming longer than it is by the clock. This practice reconfigures one's engagement with place, by relocating the perception of time to an internal pulse rather than an external clock, and by focusing aural attention to the present atmosphere: sound as spatial as much as temporal agent (Böhme, 2018, 169). There is a meditative aspect that invites parallels with Deep Listening (Oliveros, 2005), but I frame this rather in terms of "shallow listening" (Kim-Cohen, 2016, 131-143): a focused engagement with the sonic atmosphere that rather than "diving down" stretches the attention outwards across the surface, and allows for the identity of sounds heard to be maintained and contextualised with each other and the listener.

In the course of a lockdown bike ride, I came across an underpass where a footpath passed under a road (Fig.7). I was struck by the ringing metallic sound that resonated through the space as traffic passed overhead. The underpass itself was not a pretty space. There was graffiti. it was a place where the homeless had clearly slept, or drunk, or pissed.

It was a liminal space: not simply in its physical existence as a space that existed only as the gap between other spaces, but as a gap between societal spaces.



Fig. 6: Eastern Way, May 2021.

Intending to create a response, I documented the space in sound and images over a period of months. I began to question my intentions: what could I add to this space that was not already there? Why does being a composer need always to consist of manipulating the materials one finds? I came to consider it as a *found installation*: rather than attempt to transform or mediate it, I could note the inherent aesthetic experience and contemplate the realities reflected in its embodiment. Whereas in *Fifty Breaths* documentation of an experience is the focus of the project, here the documentation is incidental, intended not as an abstracted

aesthetic experience to be presented, but as information that may enable another to travel to that place and experience that atmosphere for themselves. If performance is involved in this, it lies in the documentation (Auslander, 2006).

Context matters. These experiences grew out of a traumatic disruption that was imposed upon everyone by circumstance. I had already been playing with the idea of disruption and transformation; the pandemic represented a global-scale disruption of phenomenological awareness, but one that I found myself subjected to rather than one that I had constructed and applied to a situation. Transformation is a process that occurs as a result of an encounter and, necessarily, a disruption.

Disruption is not necessarily traumatic; it may be an experience to be embraced and enjoyed playfully. Transformation is enacted upon a situation and those entangled within it and leaves a lasting trace, a sense that the world has moved for us, in perspective or materiality.

These ideas of disruption and transformation become prominent in the main work discussed in this chapter.

### 2.1.2 Two Rooms

I have discussed the sense of physical presence in *Two Rooms* [Prelude]. Although I frame this work as an installation, it is also an iteration of an ongoing improvisational practice exploring boundaries between precomposed music and improvisation (Atkins, 2010), and between allo- and auto-graphic modes of sound encounter. An electric guitar or

cello<sup>29</sup> feeds through a set of effects pedals via a loop station to an amplifier. I began using this process in preparatory recordings and performances for my album *An Equal and Opposite Reaction* (Nagle, 2019), but the roots of it go back much further, to my interest in the experimental rock music of the late 60s and specifically the drone/feedback-based work of the Velvet Underground. *Metal Machine Music* (Reed, 1975) could be seen as a direct ancestor of this practice, in its use of feedback and looping to create an immersive environment. A point of difference in my practice here is in volume: even at a low volume sustained tones tend to permeate and come to dominate the rooms they are in — and adjacent rooms too, as I have experienced (Nagle, 2018). I am interested in the ambiguities of sound, presented with low volume and minimal activity, that nevertheless comes to present as foreground. Practically, this also offers a degree of control over the inherently unstable phenomenon of feedback.

The sense of sonic spatial presence was stronger than anticipated. There was a visceral quality to being in its presence. The sense of it existing in my body and also of multiple sources was remarkable. I was also surprised by the degree to which a short, relatively simple loop seemed to yield a complexity and diversity of sound beyond its actual

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<sup>29</sup>The decision as to which instrument to use is generally a practical one although aesthetic concerns do also play a part.

constituency. I had a strong sense of the sound evolving though space and time, and apparently getting louder, although the levels on my hand-held recorder demonstrated that this was not the case. Although it had a single sound source in the amp, the sound reverberated around the space in such a fashion that I had a distinct impression of multiple sound sources.

In this case, any element of performance is hidden: the acts which can be categorised as “musical”, i.e. the sounding of the instruments which is then captured in the loop station, occurs before the piece as such is extant. There is an ambiguity between the means of creation, the end result of an essentially static presence in the site, but also the sense of, if not motion, then life within the sound. In *The Fade In Time* [2.3.1] this initial setting up becomes part of the public presentation as a performative element, resulting in a present sonic object.

## **2.2 Disruptions**

Two further pandemic-era works offer other perspectives on encountering, both in the de-centring of the artist as sole progenitor of work, and in the tension between the encounter itself and its mediated articulation. The context of lockdown creation also serves to introduce the idea of *disruption*. Disruption is a tool with which we may draw attention to the nature of something by withdrawing it from access: the absence creates a greater awareness. This idea comes from Heidegger's notion of the “ready-at-hand” and his example of the

hammer that is not present in use until it is found to be inadequate to the task (Heidegger, 1967).<sup>30</sup> In these two examples, the disruption is that engendered by the pandemic in which our relationship with our own lives was disrupted; they act as satellites to the larger works discussed subsequently [2.3].

### 2.2.1 Live on Zoom: a performance strategy

Contingent circumstances offer opportunities for fresh insights. One such was the sudden disappearance of copresent performance in the pandemic lockdowns imposed in March 2020. The sudden, confusing and traumatic transition to almost entirely mediated interaction via online video conferencing tools resulted in an explosion of online performances, as musicians struggled with the strictures and peculiarities of online music-making, and an uneasy blend of contingency, ersatz liveness (Auslander, 2008) and rapid self-education in the techniques of filmmaking emerged. The return of copresent performance notwithstanding, online platforms remain part of everyday life (and essential for those whose lives are constrained by disability or clinical vulnerability). A performance strategy I developed in collaboration with

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<sup>30</sup>In introducing Heidegger here with all his problematic aspects I obliquely introduce the idea of *complicity* [4.2]

the clarinetist Emily Suzanne Shapiro uses Zoom as an interface in a context of in-the-room performance.



*Fig. 7: Live on Zoom, October 2020.*

The Hundred Years Gallery is a two-floor space, with a reception area upstairs and gallery space in the basement, the two areas joined by a staircase. We set up with Emily upstairs and me downstairs. We both have laptops and open a video call on Zoom. We each in turn broadcast a prerecorded solo to the other who improvises in response, before coming together and improvising live to conclude. We thus progress through several phases of interaction: first, each reacting to a mediated version of the other, then a live interaction, complicated by the fact that, as well as being in different spaces and thus only hearing, not seeing the other's material self, we are also reacting to the mediated version of each other arriving via Zoom. This creates layers of recursion and echo between our "live" and "broadcast" selves on top of our direct aural connection. By bringing this technology into a live situation we come face to face with the fact that what we assume is happening in an improvised encounter (two people responding in the moment to each other) is not what is actually happening on a remote platform: instead we are both reacting to a past version of the other.



Moreover, the precise point of that past is different for each of us, depending on such factors as connection speed and the specific equipment we each use, factors determined at least in part by capital and privilege. We are placed in a state of co-existence over true collaboration, and a state of *complicity* [4.2] in our mutual construction of a fiction of copresent interaction. The juxtaposition of these realities lays bare this fiction and exposes the ways in which such technologies disrupt our interrelations and our self-identity.

### 2.2.2 Rising of the Lights

Rising of the Lights is a collaboration that also explores the juxtaposition of the live, copresent and mediatised, but in a more accumulative way. Its origins lie in an improvised set in which I performed using a variant of the *Two Rooms* setup. In a group context my microphone picks up elements of other players' performances, particularly if they are playing with a penetrating or loud tone. These fragments of other sound become enmeshed, layered and played back through my loop pedal. The result is that sounds heard live repeat as a liminal element of recorded, looped sound played back into the room. What exactly is recorded is a result of chance and unpredictable; this produces a disorienting effect as sounds are layered to the point where it can become hard to discern where what one is hearing at any given moment is coming from. The duo with flugelhornist Jonny Martin aims to explore and expand upon this process.



*Fig. 8: Rising of the Lights, October 2021.*

The setup (Fig. 9) is simple: as well as my cello-pedals-amplification setup, I periodically play prerecorded sounds from my phone into my cello's microphone: fragments of them are absorbed into the overall sound.<sup>31</sup> As well as playing both apart from and into my microphone to a similar purpose, Jonny is also miked up and also relays ambient sound via an

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<sup>31</sup> As our process has developed our use and manipulation of pre-selected samples has become a more prominent feature of our sets. In order to maintain a sense of surprise and uncertainty we generally choose such materials independently of each other without prior discussion. The sounds we bring become reflections of whatever aesthetic, cultural or political concerns have recently caught our attention; while a performance on one level presents as a self-contained, our entanglements with the world nevertheless permeate and destabilise the contingent boundaries of the set.

iPad app which loops and processes the resultant samples through granular synthesis.

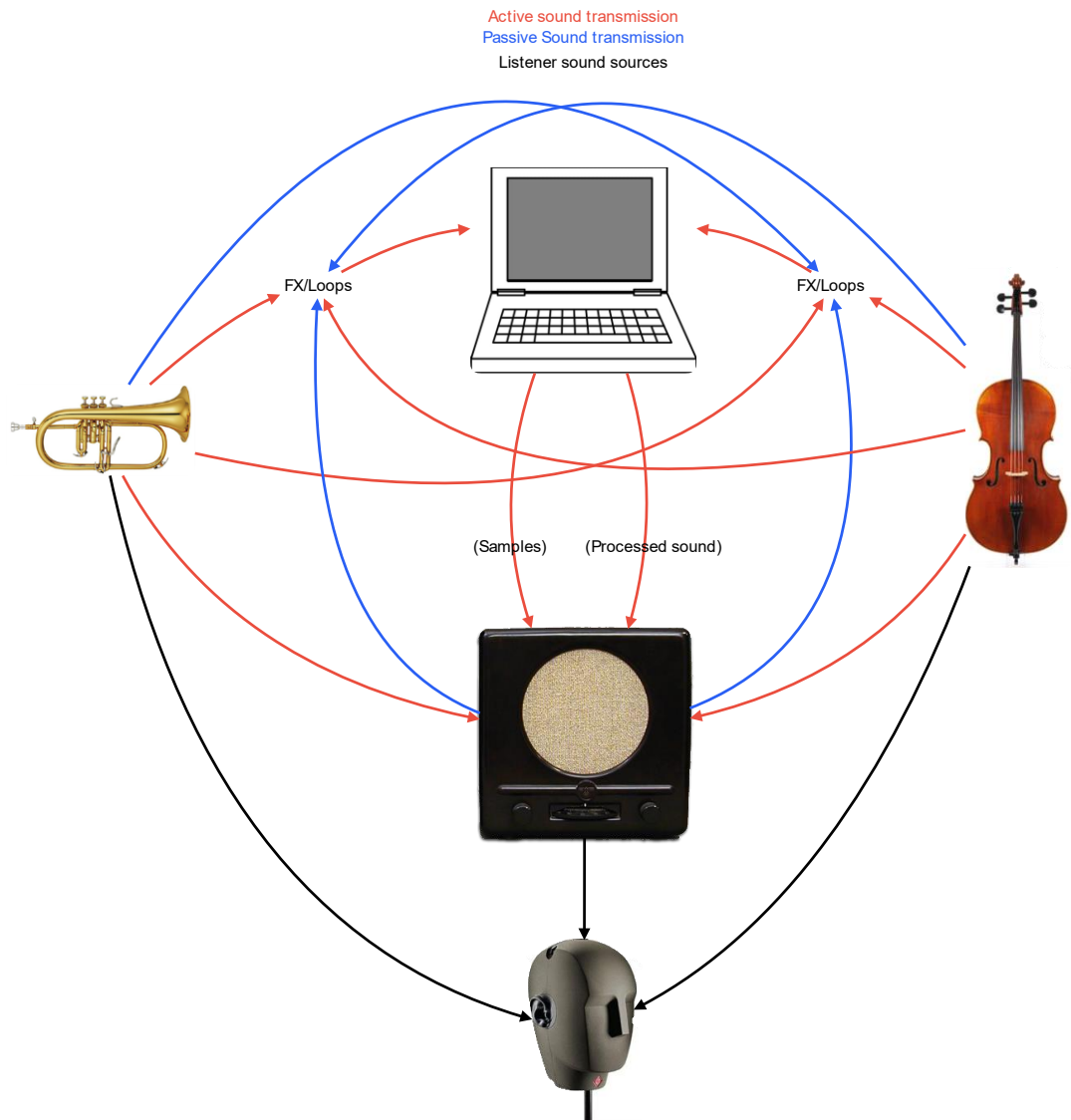


Fig. 9: RoTL network of sound transmission

By reducing the number of performers to two and focusing explicitly on this process we create an atmosphere in which the uncertainties of perception between live, looped, and processed sounds are amplified. In a context of free improvisation this means we are reacting to what we hear, but we are unsure what it is that we are hearing. This means we never reach a state of predictability or stability and must continue

listening, feeding back into the ambient textures. A simple setup leads to a complex result.<sup>32</sup>

The use of technology to create multistable and unstable composites of live and mediated sound is a consciously and deliberately undertaken act. The result is a process of sound-sculpture not dissimilar to *Two Rooms*: the creation of sound, its absorption into a technologically mediated system, the use of listening and sonic manipulation to evolve the resultant atmosphere.

*Process* here takes precedence over *result*. Most compositional research places emphasis on *works* (Goehr, 2007), these being positioned as the research outputs. Following Spatz (2015) [2.3.2] however, I see the description of technique and process as the primary focus of output rather than any specific work – the works I produce<sup>33</sup> are in one sense a by-product, exemplars of the techniques that I develop in my practice rather than objects of study or veneration in their own right.

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<sup>32</sup>In later performances I also employ a variant of the Max patch used elsewhere in this project [3.1; 3.3].

<sup>33</sup>A questionable concept in improvisatory practices - I dispute whether a documentation of an improvised performance can really be satisfactorily characterised as a "work".

## 2.3 Transformations

### 2.3.1 The Fade in Time

The situation of mediatised encounters in the context of a global pandemic is of course an extreme one; but disruptions may be encountered in copresent atmospheres as well. In *The Fade in Time* the situation creates certain expectations of the encounter: these are disrupted as the atmosphere shifts from performative to installative. An interim state emerges in which the audience's expectations lag behind the actuality of their site and they become *unsure of what's going on*. How this plays out in practice is unpredictable: this uncertainty becomes as much my experience as the instigator as it is of those present as audience.

The piece<sup>34</sup> was created specifically for a concert of miniatures responding to Michael Finnissy's *The History of Photography In Sound* (2004). Building on the idea that the process of creating the work to some degree *is* the work [2.1], the performance element consists of the setup of an installative environment, which then continues beyond the performance as such.

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<sup>34</sup>This section and the following one are based on a paper given in 2021 (Nagle, 2021a)

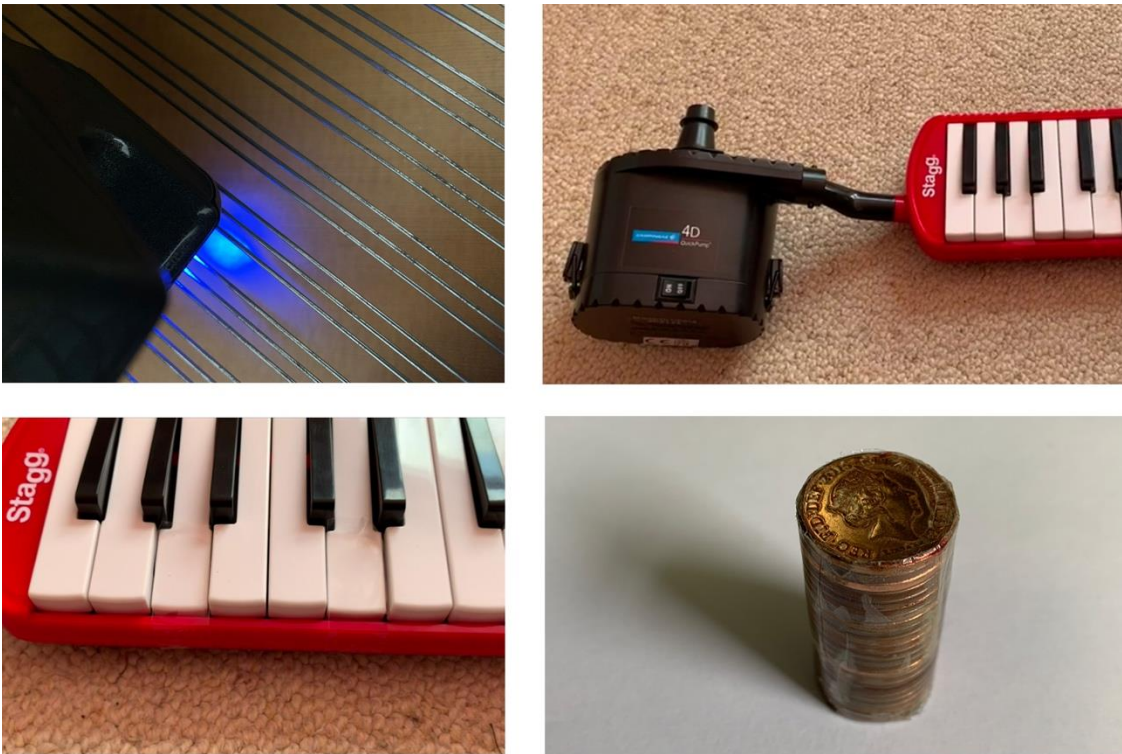


Fig. 10: Elements of the preparation: E-bow, air pump, taped keys, pile of coins.

The use of an e-bow on a piano string to create a sustained tone has precedence in the work of Alvin Lucier (e.g. Lucier, 1995) among others, and connects with the setups employed in *Two Rooms*. Having established the idea of a keyboard instrument adapted to produce continuous tone, I expanded the palette by using an electric air pump to operate a melodica. The combination of these two sound sources provided the basis for the work. Some experimentation established that a pile of 23 pennies provided enough weight to hold down a piano key, and also that Sellotape, as well as effectively holding down melodica keys, would also in itself provide an interesting sound texture in the performance element. I wanted to avoid any sense of emotional catharsis being played out as performance. The theatre would consist of simple actions performed with care.

I intended that once this was set up I would leave the auditorium as a signal that the performance was over, and the audience would, after a period of ambiguity, realise this and begin to leave, but this is not what happened: instead, the audience remained in the room listening to the sounds; after a while they started to move, not towards the exit, but towards the instruments. Having created a situation in which I performatively set up what was in a sense a sound installation rather than a conventional piece of music, I found that the audience's relationship with that situation changed: after a while they treated the presence of the instrument as that of an installed object and no longer as a performance. This can be seen in the way people draw round the piano and melodica and look at and inside the piano, and even sit down to play, interacting with the setup in a way I did not anticipate.

What happened can be characterised as a change of atmosphere, something that would conventionally be achieved by the observer moving from one space to another (Böhme, 2018, 168) but in this case happened within a single situation. The atmosphere *transformed* as the audience members reconfigured their relationship with the situation in which they found themselves. What began as a performance became an object, and the audience's behaviour modulated to that which might be seen in a gallery rather than a concert hall. This also exemplifies a challenge to 'the opposition between viewing and acting' (Rancière, 2021, 13) which precipitates the emancipation of the spectator [3.3].

### 2.3.2 Congregation

The opportunity to pursue these ideas in a larger-scale and more complex context arose in the form of an invitation to write for Trinity Laban's Contemporary Music Group for a concert in October 2019. The event that this work was to be included in featured two performing groups, between them playing a familiar classical concert format of mixed repertoire: my work, *The Harmonic Canon* (Murcott, 2017) and works by Haydn and Britten.

The idea of a collaboration with Soosan Lolavar arose from my concern that the event should not feature exclusively male-composed work. Her recently premièred cello concerto *Tradition-Hybrid-Survival* (2019) deals with themes of transformation and distortion in the context of the relationship between a culture, its diaspora and its encounters with outsider influences. These ideas seemed naturally to relate to my ideas on transformation of atmosphere and creating transient ambiguity in the identity of the work and its audience, and so the idea of a reworking of material from that work developed. Conversations with Soosan helped to solidify the concept, in particular the potentially problematic aspect of a female Anglo-Iranian composer's work being appropriated by a male European. I was already familiar with her analysis of the cultural hierarchies at work in remix culture as exemplified by Nonclassical (Lolavar, 2011). This led me to the idea of pushing this concept further and emphasising rather than mitigating the issue of cultural appropriation. The discussion around these ideas and Soosan's writing



also eventually led to the idea of incorporating a DJ set as part of the performance, a mediatisation of the appropriation process that would provide a further push beyond the boundaries of conventional classical performance practice. During one of these conversations we subjected the title *Tradition-Hybrid-Survival* to a process of repeated translation in Google Translate through the filters of Farsi, Arabic and English. What emerged from this process was the title of my work: *The Congregation Between the Induction of My Divine Impulse is Exalted* (hereafter abbreviated to *Congregation*).

*Congregation* consists of several elements:

- a recognisable “work” presented in the context of the concert and featuring performing musicians;
- an installation: a 4-channel drone field based on samples of the Lolavar, with visual elements positioned around the performance area;
- a process of transformation from the performed element to the installation element, reconfiguring the audience’s relationship with its environment;
- a mobile unit of musicians moving through the anterior spaces of the hall before the performance;
- a DJ set in the interval featuring tracks built on further distortions of the Lolavar source material as well as other music featured in the concert;

- a drone installation placed in the anterior area, based on the quadrophonic harmonic field, using similar processes to *Two Rooms* [2.1.2];
- interventions in the liminal spaces of the performance occurring between movements and during stage shifts.

This multiplicity aims to create a sense of a hyperobjective presence extending throughout and beyond both the extended site of the performance and the limits of its duration.

The drone texture forming the main element of the installation component derives from a recurring two-chord motif from the *Lolavar* (Fig. 11), while the visual element consisted of images made from ripped up parts from *Lolavar*'s score: a literal deconstruction (Fig. 12)

Outsiders: from L play at any (very slow) tempo, once through only.

**L**  
**Very slow, uncondacted**

Vln. I (O) con sord., sul tasto  
 Vln. II (O) con sord., sul tasto  
 Vc. (O) con sord., sul tasto

“Tradition-Hybrid-Survival” © 2018 by Soosan Lolavar.

Fig. 11: Excerpt from *Lolavar*, *Tradition-Hybrid-Survival*.

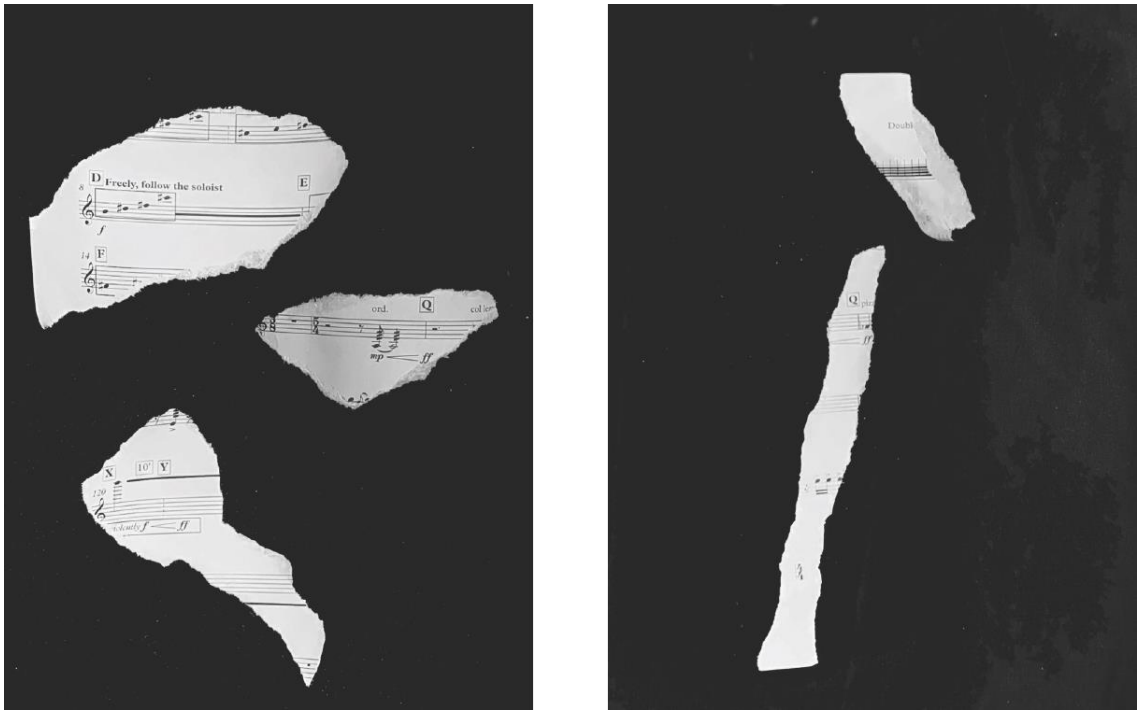


Fig. 12: Examples of score fragments

These are placed around the hall (Fig. 13) and act as staging posts for the moving musicians. The conductor, meanwhile, conducts from an adapted Lolavar score, a hauntological presence of the original work. Lolavar's work features several passages of free, uncoordinated lines; here I add figures whose pose the conductor adopts (Fig. 14), a nod to the conductor's cadenza in Gubaidulina's *Stimmen Verstummen* (1986).

Before the concert begins a string group play the two-chord Lolavar motif that underlies much of the work in the bar and anterior areas of the venue as well as the hall itself, establishing it in the minds of the audience. When the orchestra comes on stage, the players are concealed "within" the Haydn ensemble. Following the first movement of the Haydn comes the first intervention which begins the process of destabilising the atmosphere of the concert. Here, the players "silently"

echo the end of the Haydn using breath tones and prominent key tapping.

A further intervention follows the second movement, this time based on the two-chord motif; the transition from third to fourth movement proceeds uninterrupted. After applause following the end of the symphony, the musicians remain in situ as the Haydn conductor leaves and the conductor of *Congregation* enters.

His downbeat is the cue for the Haydn players to leave the stage as the CMG players begin playing a distorted arrangement of the Haydn slow movement recently heard. In this way, as well as my music invading Haydn's, Haydn's invades mine, and the boundaries of the concert format begin to collapse. The players are instructed to lose synchronicity with each other; as the Haydn falls apart they leave their positions and begin to move around the auditorium.

Each player moves from station to station, improvising from the fragments of score wherever they are. Meanwhile, the act of clearing the stage for the next work in the program is theatricalised: a procedure that would normally happen as a liminal activity between works or during the interval while the audience is out of the hall becomes a part of the performance.

At this point all transformative acts have been carried out. However, the sense of a transformation from a concert to an installation does not seem

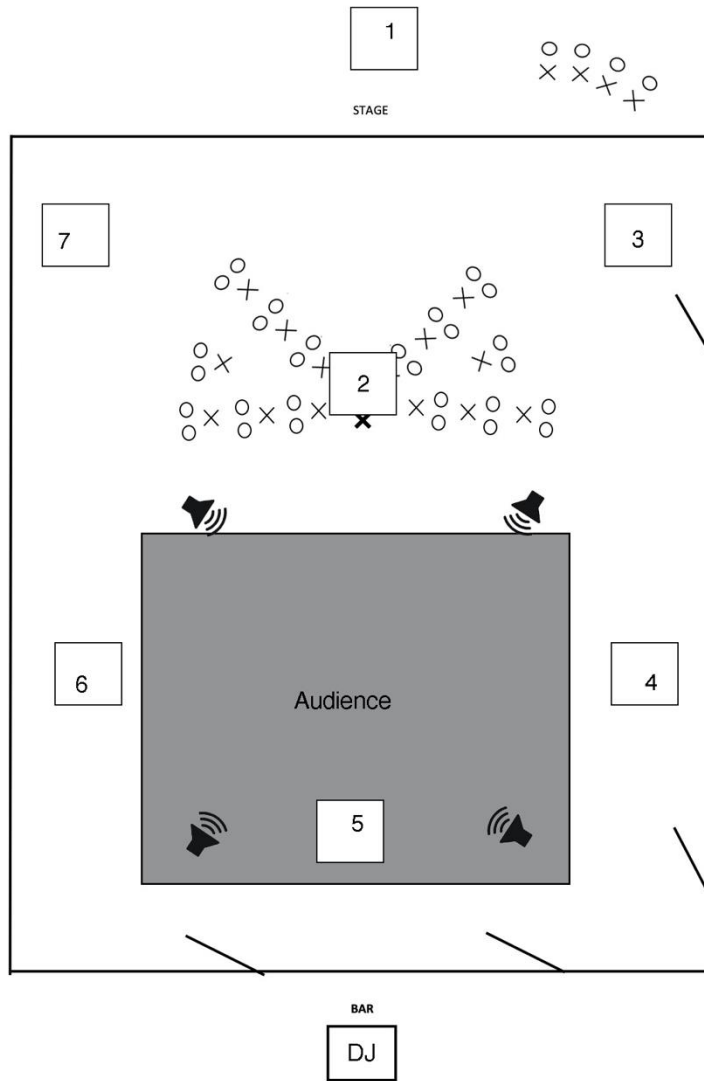


Fig. 13: Staging diagram for Congregation. The numbered points represent staging posts with deconstructed score elements between which the players navigate.

Local: continue playing as previously directed until you reach new cue after rehearsal G. Conductor will cue each of the letters, signalling directed players to change to ord. and play one of rhythms A-F (see formation one) on the same note they were last playing. When a letter is cued, players must start together on that downbeat but at their own tempo. Keep repeating a rhythmic cell until direction for new cell is given.

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1st Vln. I (L)    G    H    I    J    45

2nd Vln. I (L)

1st Vln. II (L)

2nd Vln. II (L)

Fig. 14: Adapted conductor's score

to manifest fully until the audience reconfigure their relationship with their environment and begin to leave their seats and move around the auditorium.<sup>35</sup> The introduction of a beat driven track from the DJ set in the bar is a signal that the interval has begun. This is the cue for the musicians to begin to leave the space, leaving only the 4-channel sound element and visual elements: the piece now moves from being a performed installation to a straightforward sound installation. From this point the audience begin to drift away slowly. When the concert reconvenes the stage has been reset for the next piece.

During a further reset for the final piece comes a callback: along with an ambient drone, the musicians can be heard off-stage playing the two-chord motif, until the orchestra returns to perform the final work of the concert.

This complex assemblage of main piece, interventions and bookends creates a sense of the work as something not contained within one particular score or period of time, but something that exists beyond the immediately sensible aspects, a potential hyperobject or perhaps a

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<sup>35</sup>See Radigue's idea of 'this slow changing where we don't even know that it is changing, and when we hear that it has changed, in fact it has taken place long before' (Lentjes, 2017). Although the process Radigue describes here is different there are resonances of phenomenological perception with the work under discussion.

parallel reality that has temporarily made an incursion into ours. The multiplicity of elements reflects a multiplicity of transformations: transformation of material, of situation, and of understanding and phenomenological experience. Atmospheres are usually most readily perceived on entering or moving between environments (Böhme, 2018, 73). In this situation, however, rather than the subject moving from one to another to perceive atmospheric transformation, the transformation is enacted *in situ*.

Our emphasis tends to be on that which we have encountered, but I suggest the leaving of an atmosphere can be as affecting as the entering of it: in creating an atmospheric shift away from the social site of the concert hall atmosphere we refocus attention on it, and structures and ways of being that are normally not consciously noticed become more present.<sup>36</sup> By staging an atmosphere of ambiguous identities and relationships in sound I hope to stimulate a reconsideration of the situations in which we encounter sound and how those situations may transform, and transform us with them; not in order necessarily to destroy or make redundant those situations, but to critique them and bring their functions and structures into more conscious awareness so that we may have a more measured and less subservient relationship with them. The

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<sup>36</sup>Parallels can be drawn with the 'aesthetics of absence' (Goebbels, 2015).

processes at work here emancipate the spectator (Rancière, 2021) into a state of 'active interpretation' (Harries, 2013).



## **Interlude: Lockdown, Mediatiation, Multidisciplinarity**

Lockdown in March 2020 removed at a stroke the possibility of live copresent performance and interaction. The contingent methodologies that then emerged inevitably left their imprint. I want to consider this, not as an apologia for work uncompleted or thwarted, but to describe how it acted as the catalyst for new perspectives, and to frame the pandemic itself as an example of the kind of disruption and transformation that I had been exploring, which would shape how my focus would shift in subsequent practice. The purpose here is not mitigation but contextualisation.

Demers (2015) discusses drone as an avatar of apocalypse. This may manifest in the sense of the “end of the world” atmosphere of doom metal or dystopian science fiction, but also in the other sense of the word, as revelation. The disruption of the pandemic came to seem an *embodiment of the ideas already being explored*. Where the pre-March 2020 work is concerned with the manufacture of disruptive and transformative situations, the pandemic represented a situation in which rather than the creator of disruption, I, along with everybody else, was subjected to such a state by the world itself. In the face of the hyperobject (Morton, 2013) of the pandemic we are forced into a state of hyposubjectivity (Morton and Boyer, 2021).

As the concert hall atmosphere and structure is brought to the foreground by its disruption in *Congregation*, so the imposition of lockdown, in removing the possibility of copresent interaction, brought

that copresence to the foreground as an object of focus (Dolezal, 2020). The removal of the ability to collaborate in copresent ways produces not a withdrawal from ideas of collaboration but, in the contingent methods adopted (e.g. Waeckerlé and Montgomery, 2021), a renewed focus on the question of what it is to collaborate: not simply between me and other humans but between me and the nonhuman bodies that I interact with. My cello is a focus in the next chapter, but also involved are communications platforms, computers, their manufacturers, etc. There are uneasy aspects to these relationships in terms of the proximity they bring between me and the ecological damage wrought by industrial capitalism. Because of this, and also as 'collaboration means contamination' (Fraser, 2022) – I begin to consider *complicity* as an aspect of the collaborative process.

### 3 Being, Happening, Doing

The disruptive experiences of the pandemic lockdown suggest a new interpretation of object-event ambiguity: not a shifting of actual ontology, but rather a shifting of *perspective*. That is to say, a sonic encounter presents as object or event dependent on how we encounter it. Buildings are designed and built to fulfil the identities of “concert hall” or “gallery”, but the atmosphere of such places may be created in any location that fulfils basic needs for such a social structure to be realised. Staging a concert in a car park in Peckham (Haferkom, 2018) tends to remain, for all the superficial novelty of its site, a concert-hall experience in essence. The work discussed in this chapter takes these ambiguities and shifting contexts of identity further: not only the fuzzy boundary between music and sound art, but also between modes of performance, and between the domestic and public. *Where Does A Body End?* [3.2] represents the furthest point in this portfolio of dissolving musician and dancer identities into an entangled practice of sounding-moving. A discussion of domestic installations created during lockdown raises issues of music-sound art, the privilege of site and complicity with media, explored in the context of *Rising of the Lights* [2.2.2] and *Ouroboros* [3.3].

In this chapter the site of focus moves from the stage of action to the bodies of action, while the interrelational focus shifts from one of fission (disruption) to one of fusion, or *entanglement*. Questions of mediatised/copresent encounter expand out from contingent lockdown

forms to entanglement of practice, but also entanglement of media, and the way in which mediated encounter shapes our view of the world. In bringing this to the forefront of conscious thought I aim to construct a philosophy of *entanglement*, *complicity*, and *interflow*: entanglement with other beings, entanglement with the material world, complicity between us, these entanglements and the technologies that mediate these complicities, and a state of interflow in which awareness of this complex web of relations becomes a conscious tool of praxis. The works discussed in this chapter all aim, to varying degrees, to reconfigure the relationship between the disciplines of sounding and moving. This leads towards the concept of *Interflow* [4.3].

### **3.1 Once up on a cube**

*Once up on a cube* is a collaborative dance work created with Irene Fiordilino. Irene has her own phenomenological and aesthetic reference points rooted in ideas of transient architecture and the articulation of space (Fiordilino, 2023), which intersect with my own interests, but here I discuss this project in terms of my own contribution in sound, and my specific influences, in particular atmospheres (Böhme, 2018) and social-discursive site-specificities (Kwon, 2004), as well as the continuum of sound encounter between material and conceptual sound [1.1]. This collaboration is the first we embarked upon (and by circumstance also one of the last in this body of work), and as such it perhaps cleaves most to the traditional roles of musician/ dancer in such a collaboration: Irene

assembled a sequence of movement through a process of choreography and improvisation with a group of dancers, while my task was to provide a soundtrack: as I shall discuss below, my aim in this was not to provide a preconceived score to which movement would be choreographed, nor to create an independent sound strand parallel to but independent of the movement, but, through a process of assemblage and improvisation analogous to the choreographic processes at work, to create a dynamic sonic element that was capable of reacting and responding to the dancers' movements, and also the materiality of the object at the centre of the work.

### 3.1.1 Beginnings

When I first met Irene in autumn 2019 she had already conceived the essential idea of the project and with Aidan Good built the prop that forms its focus. An infinity cube is a child's puzzle toy consisting of eight cubes connected hinge-ways to form a larger cube. This object can be manipulated and reconfigured into various shapes by moving the cubes across their hinges over multiple planes. Irene and Aidan built an infinity cube at greatly expanded scale, 1.5m in height/breadth/depth. This expanded scale also expands the object's contorting articulation of space. In early studio rehearsals I was struck not only by the force of its physical presence as a large object which needed several people to manipulate it, but also by how its shifting form created a sense of structural and environmental mutability throughout the room: a

progenitor of atmosphere in the sense of being scenography deployed to create a specific effect, while the way it articulated the environment of the studio pointed towards a discursive site-specificity [1.2.1].

### 3.1.2 Strategies

Our early discussions quickly revealed a common interest in avoiding the usual relationship of music and dance, where dancers are expected to move to music. We did not want, however, to pursue a Cage-Cunningham approach of creating entirely separate work occurring independently but concurrently. I aimed to create something which would reflect and interact with the cube's presence as a generator of atmosphere, and find an analogy with its particular positional mutability. I was immediately struck by the sounds produced by manipulation of the cube – the rubbing, tapping, knocking and banging as it moved in the studio. Small slots had been cut into the cubes to assist with manipulation; small pieces of wood fell irretrievably inside them, creating a distinctive rattling sound as the cubes turned and moved. I exploited this unintended sonic property<sup>37</sup> not as an inconvenience, but rather a distinctive quality of the cube, and an embodiment of aspects of the object's history. In this I find resonance with Robert Morris's *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961) which likewise combines object and

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<sup>37</sup>or "material indeterminacy" (McLaughlin, 2022).

sound as a comment on provisionality and process through the evocation of its own means of production [1.1.2].

Having settled on these diegetic sounds as a source for my soundtrack, I recorded them in the course of rehearsals in February 2020. I then created a routine in Supercollider which would randomly select, loop and pan sounds across the speaker field. I categorised sounds according to several types: rattles, knocks, taps and scrapes. This process created an overall stable sonic atmosphere which nevertheless was not entirely predictable in the details of its sounding. A further insight came in rehearsals when I had the idea of capturing and relaying sound live within the studio – this was done by a simple means of capturing ambient sound through my laptop's microphone and playing it back with a small delay and reverb added. By doing this I began to create feedback loops in which the dancers in the room were both creating and reacting to the sounds heard.

We were discussing further possible developments of these ideas – in particular the idea that as well as the ambient atmosphere described above there should be a point where I would become a more active participant and move to a mode of active creation rather than reticent curation of sound, when the pandemic hit the UK and we were put into lockdown in March 2020. This marked the sudden cessation of the project: the cube was placed in storage and no further rehearsals were possible to develop the project. In an informal presentation in June 2020 we discussed the project, in terms of our frustrated plans, our experience

of creating materials to present using extant sound files and rehearsal footage, and speculating how it might change if we reached a point in the future where we were able to resume work on it. We worked on other projects, both separately and together, as best we could in lockdown conditions.

### 3.1.3 Materials

By the time we were able to reconvene and realise the project, some aspects had changed. On a technical level, I had rebuilt the sample processor as a Max patch (Fig. 13). Irene's conception of the project had meanwhile evolved considerably, not least through the influence of other work she had made in the interim, in which ideas of home, safety and mutual support had become more important. The performance was now to be an outdoor one. We originally envisioned a park, but eventually settled on the arena formed by artificial hillocks outside the Laban Building in Deptford. The cube, which was originally to have been rendered in bright colours, instead acquired a coat of astroturf. In the context of the environment where we performed this created a tension between artifice of construction, and the "natural" affect of grass and pseudo-grass. Although an outdoor site does not have the same acoustical resonance as an indoor one, the presence of glass and steel high-rise buildings in the vicinity meant that the arena carried a distinctive acoustic character of sound reflection. Our initial plan was to have a multi-speaker setup and peripatetic audience, but practical



considerations meant we had to have seated rows in a theatrical configuration and a stereo sound system. However, the highly reverberant properties of the environment acted such that the effect of a surround-sound environment remained.

Discussing the cube as an active agent in the arena to be collaborated with, rather than a passive object to be manipulated, we briefly considered having radio microphones inside the cube as a live sound source that could be integrated into my setup. This proved impractical so I returned to my idea of manipulated samples of sounds produced by the cube. My thinking on how to approach this as a live performance had meanwhile evolved. I wanted the sound to be not a leader or director of the dancers' movements, but a follower and supporter – the movement directing the sound rather than the other way around. In the patch, containing multiple means of manipulating and layering sounds, I created an instrument for improvisation with sampled sounds which would enable me to react in real time to what the dancers and the cube were doing.

The core of the patch was a system to trigger and manipulate the cube-derived sounds. From a preloaded folder of sound files, random numbers determined which sounds would be played, with arguments in place to randomly assign looping, and variable slide controls to enable me manually to control pitch and trigger rate, as well as trigger samples manually. These sounds were fed through a pair of circuits adding reverb and panning the sound randomly in a stereo field. There were four

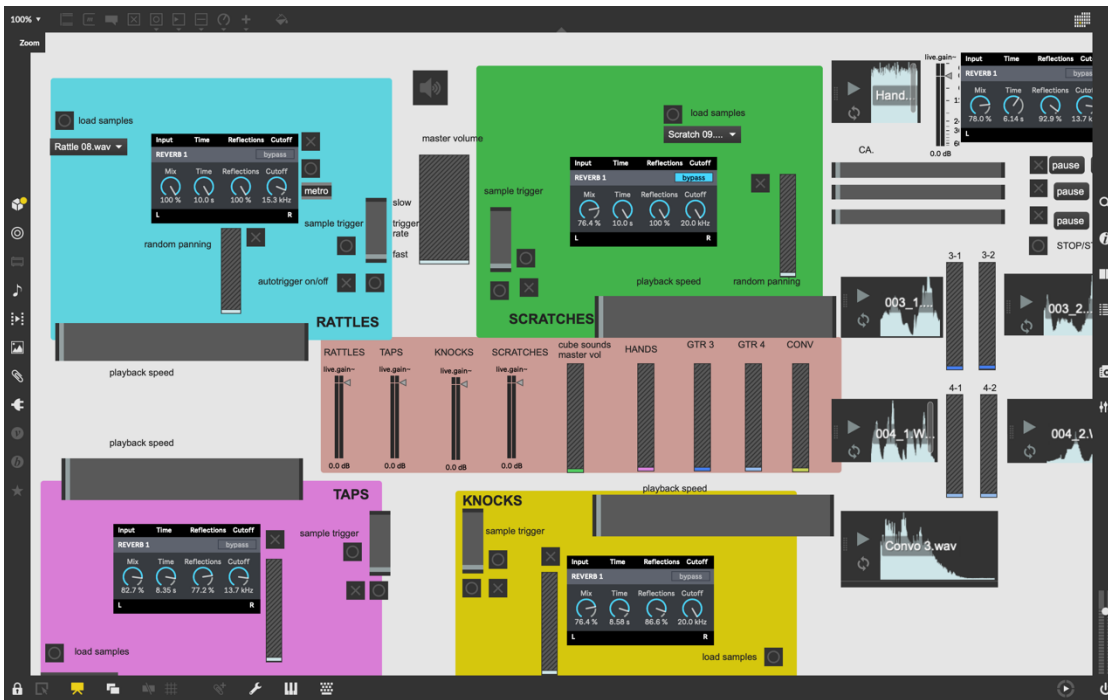


Fig. 15: Max patch used for the performance (presentation view)

iterations of this system, one for each of the sound categories: taps, knocks, rattles, scratches. The ability to alter the rate of triggering of these sounds offered a possibility of moving between sparse and isolated percussive sounds, and a more dynamically rhythmic texture by increasing the density and modifying the pitch. Although the overall sound would be essentially random, by working on the sounds in this way it was possible to create a sense of abstract groove for those sections of the choreography where more overt energy was presented.

I wanted another sound which would be suitable for the latter part of the performance in which the affect of the movement moves towards one of tenderness and support. A series of guitar loops that I had retained from a previous project, and also used as soundtrack material for the presentation on the cube in 2020, was a natural element to introduce here. As I wanted these to be elements of stability in contradistinction to

the more chaotic cube sounds, these were included in the patch as simple playlist objects which could be looped. Similarly I also included an extract from a drone track that I had already used in a previous collaboration with Irene which offered a suitably mysterious atmosphere to draw on.

### 3.1.4 Processes

In the course of rehearsals, I experimented with improvising with these elements in order to find a general scheme that would fit with the overall choreography while remaining open enough to allow spontaneity. I also experimented with making sketches of the movements of the cube so as to better understand its ways of being (Fig. 16), which led eventually to the creation of a “map” of cube movements which I would use as a kind of score (or perhaps more accurately lead-sheet) as a guide for performances (Fig. 17).

I felt a need for one more sound texture, and found inspiration in a hand-wiping gesture that was a recurrent motif in the emerging choreography. I recorded myself brushing my hands together in a similar manner, and fed this sample through three playback circuits, each with its own independent pitch and speed controls. This made possible a range of rhythmic effects from the very straightforward to much more complex, quasi-stochastic rhythms.

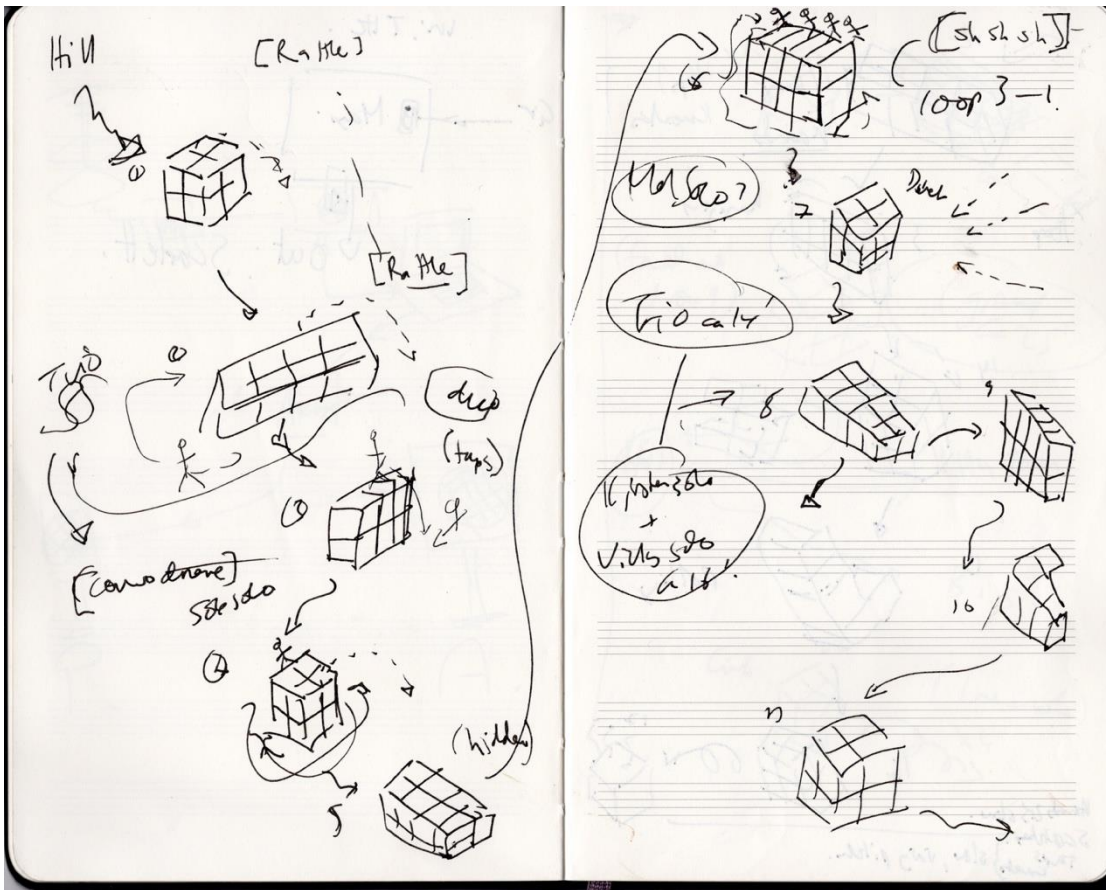


Fig. 16: Rehearsal sketches mapping cube movements.

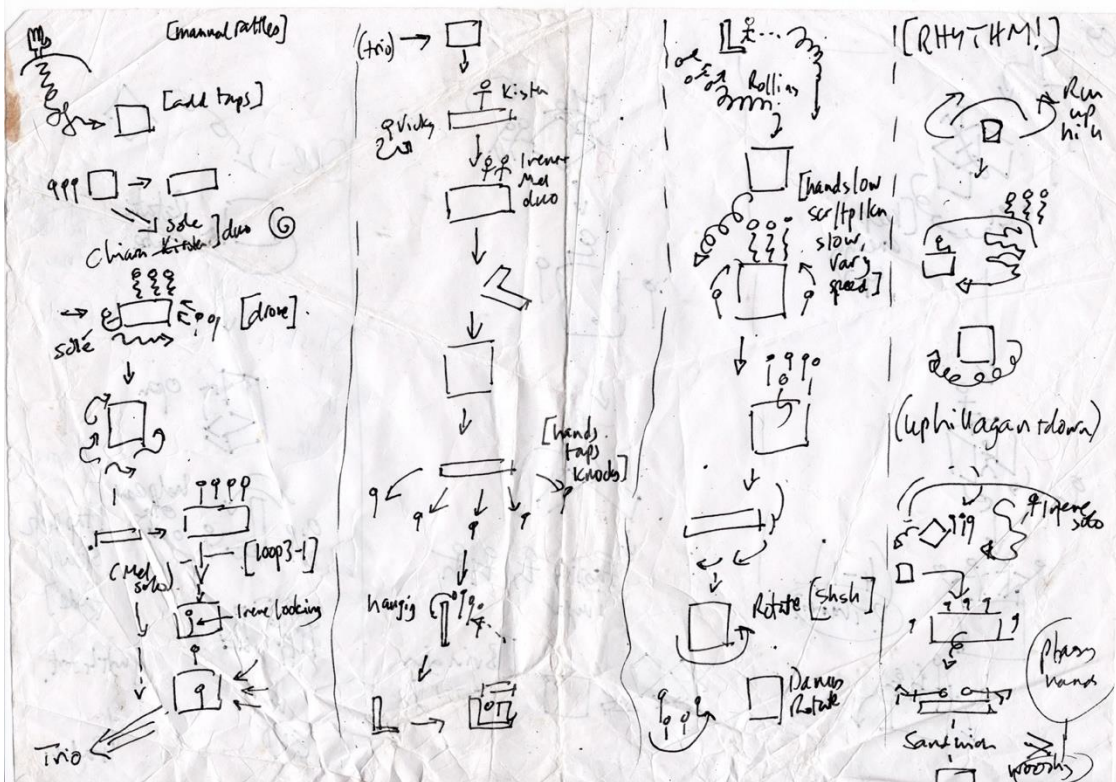


Fig. 17: Performance map used in a performance in September 2022.

All these four devices could be combined and mixed in various combinations, to create a sound element in which, as well as most of the sounds involved being either directly connected to and deriving from actions in the arena or connected through past association, I was in the position of creating sound *in reaction to and in support of* the dancers rather than providing a soundtrack which they must either submit to or ignore.

Another aspect which had changed for me since March 2020 was my understanding of the cube itself. Having become more interested in ideas of instruments as bodies with agency in an entangled relation with players rather than tools [1.2.3; 3.2.1], I began to see the cube not as an object to be manipulated by people, but as a body with its own agency, input and character, interacting with the dancers it moved with. It was

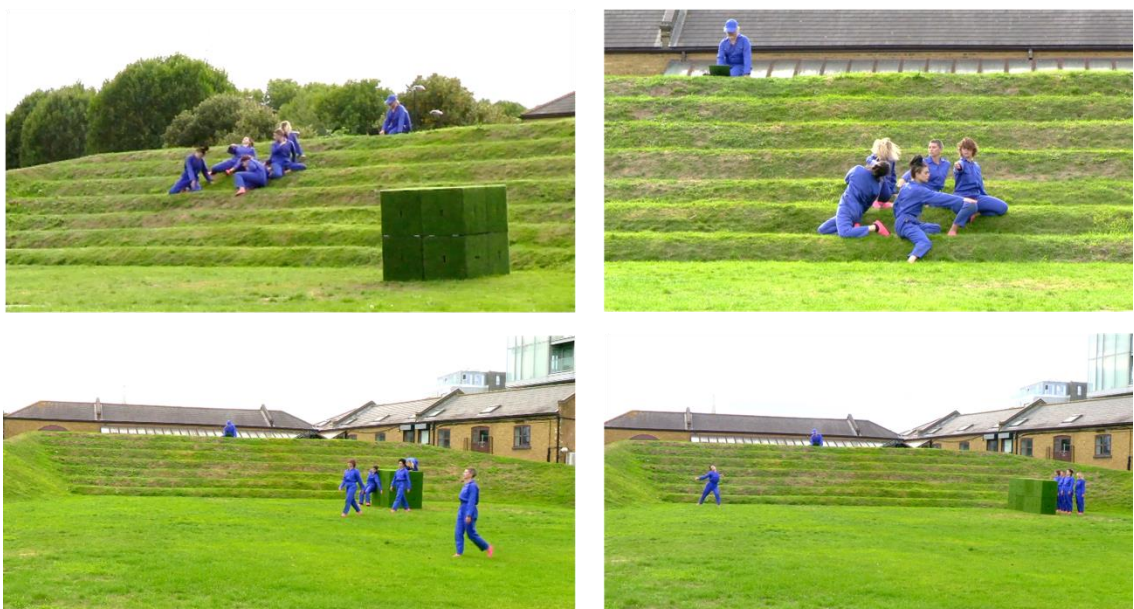


Fig. 18: Once up on a cube, September 2022

thus necessary to try and hold back on my own sound production in order to allow the cube's own live sounding to be heard as part of the

performance, which in turn allowed the recorded versions of these sounds to take their place as an integrated part of the performance atmosphere rather than a simple background noise or soundtrack. My physical presence in the arena became an important element as well: by being placed high and centrally, rather than being an invisible figure in the way musicians often are in classical performances<sup>38</sup> I became a point of conjunction between the visual and sonic elements of the piece (Fiordilino, 2023, 59).

Thinking about all these aspects brings me back to the idea of discursive site-specificity. The work was site-specific in the narrow sense of being configured for a particular site, but it is not tied to that location: it could be manifest in other locations with different results.<sup>39</sup> Rather, its movement and articulation of the site through its transitory architecture, coupled with the accompanying sound's reflection of its material being and articulation of the specific sonic properties of the location, create a site in reflexive dialogue with the material realities of the arena in which it takes place. In this, those involved – the cube, the dancers, me, the

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<sup>38</sup>We often talk about "violins" but less often about "violinists"; 'In spite of the ubiquity of the body in our involvement with music... little emphasis has been placed on the input of *the body proper* to cognition' (Doğantan-Dack, 2006).

<sup>39</sup>Further performances have been staged at Syon House in Brentford.

hauntological presence of different dancers involved in the rehearsals from which I acquired the sound samples, the architectural and atmospheric properties of the site where we were and its articulation of the site we created and articulated within it, the audience present at the event – became an entangled, mutually dependent and supportive symbiotic entity.

Multidisciplinary modes of performance exist through a number of traditions (musical theatre and music hall are two such) and the role of the actor-musician has been discussed by Harrison (2018). Performing groups such as the Gogmagogs have greatly expanded the physical and movement aspect of classical musical performance, although they generally remain musicians in presentation despite the theatricality of their approach: reviews often valorise the players' ability to maintain a virtuosic *musical* performance while executing ambitious physical movement (Walters, 2004; Callery, 2000). Orchestral performance as theatre is a recurring site of discussion (e.g. Roesner and Rebstock, 2012; Curtin, 2019; Small, 1998). My own presence in the arena of *Once up on a cube* reflects this to some degree; ultimately though, while the nature of the relationship between sound and music is interrogated and made one more of mutual support than one being subservient to the other, the collaborative dynamic remains that my identity in the work was as sound specialist, and Irene and the other dancers were movement specialists. There were practical elements to this: while all of us involved in rehearsals engaged in reflection and discussion on the developing schema, the

limitations of what equipment could be available to make my sonic contribution audible in rehearsal was limited. This was not an issue as by the time we reached the stage of the final rehearsals and the realising of the work my collaborative relationship with Irene was firmly enough established and the range of discussion we had had across this and other projects extensive enough that we enjoyed a degree of trust which mitigated this lack of immediate attention to the aural in the way the kinaesthetic element enjoyed. It did however perhaps contribute to the maintenance of the sounder/mover role separation in that I inevitably had to assume full control of the sonic aspect. Nevertheless, reflections with the dancers afterwards established a sense for them of the sound in performance as something more fluid and responsive to their movements than would have been the case with a pre-composed soundtrack, and that my physical presence in the arena also provided a stronger connection with the sound as a productive and reactive element rather than mere accompaniment. The next work under discussion takes a theatricalising, deconstructive approach to my material presence and identity as a performing musician, and aims to dissolve these boundaries of role much more extensively.



## 3.2 Where Does a Body End?

*Where Does a Body End?* arose from the inward turn of the pandemic, and represents a turning out of that inwardness. Its roots lie in a desire as I returned to live performance to reconsider my relationship with my cello.

This is in part inspired by Radigue and Moorman:

*I've always thought of performers and their instruments as one. They form a dual personality. No two performers, playing the same instrument, have the same relationship with that instrument – the same intimate relationship. (Radigue, 2022)*

*A journalist once asked [Charlotte Moorman] why she always performed with her cello even though she did not always play it. 'I'm a cellist, and I must always bear that in mind' she told him. (Rothfuss, 2017, 235)*

### 3.2.1 Human and nonhuman bodies

Questions of the interrelationships of human and nonhuman bodies (Bennett, 2010), and OOO [1.2.2], in particular the concept of the quadruple object (2011), also fed into this project. I became interested in exploring not only the relationship between me and my cello, but between me and my regular collaborator Irene Fiordilino, and in particular the experience of working with the infinity cube as a nonhuman agent in performance [3.1]. I envisaged a performed installation in which human and cello bodies would interact on a map whose coordinates reflected aspects of Harman's fourfold model: four bodies interacting and entangling, but also becoming four aspects of a greater body, a kind of hyperobject (Morton, 2013). I also saw parallels between this schema and concepts of entangled life and the 'wood-

wide web' (Sheldrake, 2020; Simard et al., 1997), an underlying concern towards a reconfiguration of our understanding of our relationship with our environment that is urgently necessary as we negotiate the developing climate crisis. I draw upon my experience of drone to characterise this reconfigured relationship as one in which our metaphors and conceptualisations move from being sight-oriented to a more sonic dimension: rather than the world being an observed phenomenon separate from our own existence, it is something with which we are intimately connected and entangled, an intersubjective (or interobjective, in Morton's terms) relationship. These concerns have something in common with those explored by McLaughlin in *The Garden of Forking Paths* (2019) [1.2.3]; the idea that the instrument is not simply a tool that I make use of, but a body with its own qualities and agencies, its own histories of interaction between its maker and the wood which forms most of its physical being (Ingold, 2013, 20-22) with which I interact, and which "plays" me as much as I play it in an entanglement of biology, technology, material properties and techniques.

This represents an evolution from my initial impulse in the ontological ambiguity of drone, through a process of enacting transformative environments in which one is made conscious of the instability and multilayered reality of one's physical and social situation, to a state in which these instabilities and shifting identities are not imposed upon a subject but rather emerge from within: from a state of realisation of forces imposing inwards and defining one's being, to forces opening out

from within and affording an awareness of the ways in which one's own being radiates outwards, entangling with and eliding into the material world which is around us *and of which we are inextricably a part*.

There is also a common thread running between these post-pandemic projects of a concern with process as the focus of interest rather than work. I see this as something not necessarily created by the circumstances of the pandemic, but certainly one that was exacerbated and foregrounded by necessity of circumstance. This initially manifested as a process of considering anew what the worth or significance was of work interrupted or cancelled: trying to extract positive value from fragments that in themselves fell far short of their envisaged final form. But this process of reconsideration also marked a shift of focus from those unrealised, work-focused ambitions to a consideration of: *what is going on in these fragments?*. The emphasis inevitably shifted from production to attempting simply to keep going, and to try and maintain fracturing and distorting community. This is not to deny the position of discrete works as part of my practice; <sup>40</sup> it is simply a reorientation away from works as the locus of practice, towards the

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<sup>40</sup>I think here of the work-concept as elaborated by Goehr (2007) but also more generally simply in the sense of things that can be perceived as existing, whether this is performance-based events, installation-based objects, anything in-between, or recordings or other documentation of such events.

doing itself: the work that results from working is a byproduct or illustration of an ongoing exploratory practice. In this I emphasise making over the thing that is made. An analogy may be drawn with work such as Schneemann's *Up To And Including Her Limits* in which the body 'becomes the agency of visual traces, vestige of the body's energy in motion' (Schneemann, quoted in Johnson and Bayley, 2022, 248). Schneemann's example becomes more directly analogous as our practice here moves outside normal music/dance practice towards performance/body art.

### 3.2.2 Bodies in and as site

Having established an ongoing practice in previous projects, we wanted to work towards a presentation in which the roles of "music" and "dance" were subjected to a critical deconstruction. Our aim is to question such notions of specialism and separation of roles, and present work in which these roles are made ambiguous and it cannot be said with certainty who did what.

The impetus for me to take a decisive step over the boundary between conventional ideas of music and dance practice, or as I shall prefer, sound and movement/sounding and moving, was not simply in a return to copresent working methods: it was also rooted in my experiences of physical and mental trauma as a result of the lockdowns. The disruption of my capacity to move through injury sparked a greater self-consciousness of my own embodied being.

As opportunities for limited copresent action returned (albeit sporadically) from summer 2020, Irene and I worked on a number of projects. Some of these were large-scale intentional work intended to lead eventually to fully realised performances,<sup>41</sup> while others were contingencies embarked upon simply to do something.<sup>42</sup> As we worked on these small projects, we discussed my ideas about the relationship between a cellist and their cello as a kind of symbiotic entity, the idea of playing the cello as a kind of movement practice, and our experiences of music and dance collaborations in which, we both felt, there lay a potential for a much more radically entangled approach to the combination of disciplines. From these conversations, and also from conversations about how the lockdowns had affected our health and the need for physical action, the idea began to emerge of a work based in the idea of the cello as a participant in a form of contact improvisation.

The experience of working with practitioners versed in a dance-derived praxis has led me towards a consideration of musical activity as an embodied physical interaction of human and non-human bodies (Spatz,

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<sup>41</sup> e.g. *Invisible Cities (2021)*, for which I supplied a recorded soundtrack.

<sup>42</sup> e.g. *On Mute*, a short horror-style film we made with limited resources and locations available at the time as a comment on the dehumanising effects of video calls.

2015). Early rehearsals emphasised for us the fact that the cello's size and shape makes it an instrument particularly suited to taking part in an activity focused more normally on the human body. We also found some potential in the idea of moments where we would be physically distant but the cello might move in a reflection of Irene's movements, and vice versa. As we developed these ideas through improvisation, conversation and reflection, we began to consider the potential for the cello to be an agent in a situation of full contact. My cello being a valuable and potentially vulnerable object, we gradually developed the idea of using a "stunt" cello which we could handle and bring into situations of close contact without worrying too much about any damage that might occur. We began to use a damaged cello borrowed from a colleague.<sup>43</sup> In this situation, we also experimented with the potential for the cello to sound: exploring the possibilities of attempting to play it in some way as we moved with it in increasingly complex bodily entanglements, but also noting the potential for it to sound incidentally as we moved with it. This idea of incidental sound being a focus of attention also extended to our

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<sup>43</sup> This was later substituted by a cheap cello purchased specifically for the project. In the course of rehearsals the soundpost came loose inside this, creating a rattling sound reminiscent of that created by the pieces of wood inside the infinity cube [3.1.2]. Rather than fix this we decided to leave the post loose, an unintended but satisfying echo of the other project.

human body-movements: we began to move against the idea of dance as a “silent” activity (Vass, 2023; Aviv, 2023) and to embrace the sounds that result from bodily movement in a site as a sound-making practice, just as we were considering the sound-making practice of cello playing as a movement practice. The bow as an integral part of the cellist persona played a role here: as one of the most evident coded movements of cello playing, the gestures and bodily positions derived from bowing technique became one of the earliest focuses of a de- and re-construction of cello-movement to dance-movement. As we began to experiment with using these gestures as a contact device, “bowing” each other as well as the cello, we began to blur further the distinction between the human and nonhuman bodies in the room.

The emergent idea of four bodies – two human and two cello – began to suggest a framework inspired by Harman’s quadruple object (2018), a conceptualisation of objects developed from Heidegger’s ideas of the real and sensual object (Fig. 19). This seemed a good model with which to explore these relationships, specifically that between me and my cello as a performer and the degree to which those two entities embody as intra-acting individuals, or can be said to exist in symbiosis. Analogies can be drawn between the four aspects of the quadruple object (González, 2014) and the suits of a deck of playing cards; this naturally extends to the equivalent cards on the Tarot, which begins to suggest a field of emotional relations which may guide our actions and interrelations as we move through it (Fig. 19). These structures mark out an atmosphere of

efficacy over entertainment (Schechner, 1974):<sup>44</sup> in doing so we decentre the notion of performativity, and the work becomes for us a process of simple actions performed with care, and for any observers who enter the room an object rather than a performance. This can be framed a kind of kinetic sculpture akin to the work of an artists such as Takis (Takis, 2019) with moving bodies as components, or alternatively in terms of what Jones terms, in contradistinction to “performance art”, “body art” (Jones, 1998, 12-14).

We thus arrive at a configuration of four bodies: two human bodies (myself and Irene), my cello, and a second, damaged or broken cello. The quadruple object model acts as a map, using which we establish an environment of four coexisting bodies: two human and two cellos. One of the cellos (my own instrument) is a fully functioning instrument, while the other is damaged and flawed. These embody the schism between the real object, inaccessible to us, and the sensual object – the object as we encounter, perceive and experience it. The first cello being a conspicuous non-participant in movement, the secondary cello would

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<sup>44</sup> It should be noted that, as with Heidegger, in evoking Schechner here I place myself in complicity [4.2] with problematic aspects of his work (Bottoms, 2003).



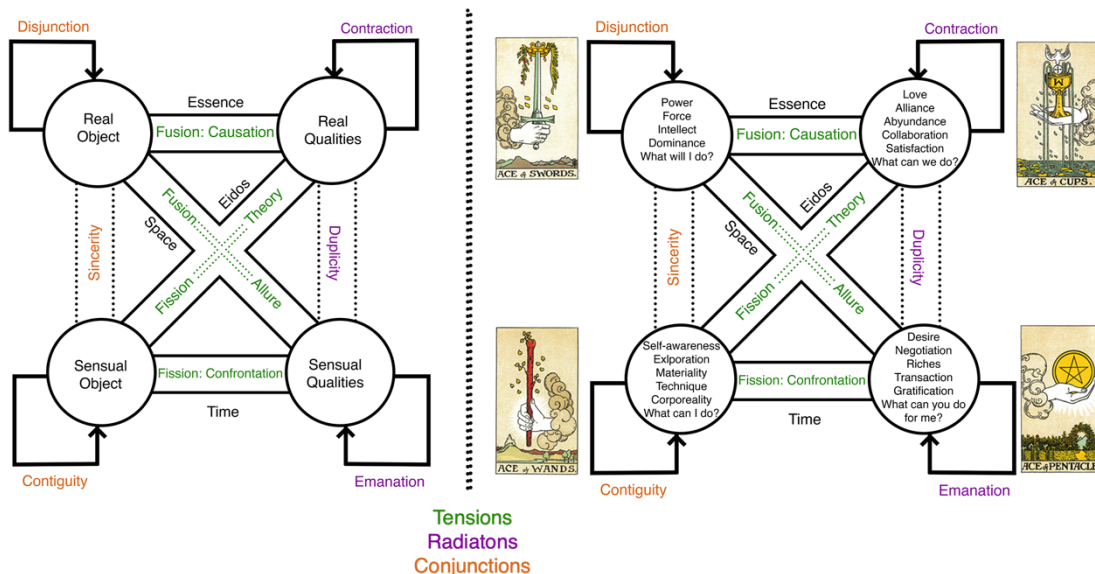


Fig. 19: The quadruple object structure and conceptual associations.

be fully and radically immersed in it: our basis for our rehearsals being contact improvisation, we wanted to develop a way off working in which the second cello would in effect be a full participant in this. Although not a sentient entity, the cello nevertheless possesses its own agency and ways of being.<sup>45</sup> '[T]o begin to experience the relationship between persons and other materialities more horizontally, is to take a step toward a more ecological sensibility' (Bennett, 2010, 10).

The human bodies meanwhile begin in positions representing real and sensual qualities. By conceiving our environment as a kind of map of this quadruple object we create the possibility that each body may, as it moves or is moved around the room, embody any of these aspects. We are four separate bodies but also at times four aspects of a single

<sup>45</sup> See Jane Bennett's example of the relationship between a bicycle and its rider (Bennett, 2010, 38).

hyperobject or symbiotic entity. Our distinct roles of musician, dancer, instrument are blurred and interchanged so that the role of musician becomes one considered in terms of movement; that of dancer in terms of sound production, objects generally regarded as inanimate and passive may become active agents while human roles likewise move between active and passive states of agency and subjugation to the actions of others. The aim is that rather than acting as specialists contributing our own praxis, we become transdisciplinary beings equally concerned with all the aesthetic elements we each bring into the room.

My own cello sits in the corner designated as the "Real Object" (RO): this is, following Heidegger, inaccessible and withdraws from us. It remains in this place throughout and takes no active role in the piece other than simply being there. The other three bodies move around the rest of the site, and in doing so change their interrelationships. The starting points are as follows: I am in the corner of the "Sensual Object" (SO) – that is to say, the object as it manifests materially; Irene in the corner of "Real Qualities" (RQ), and the second cello in the corner of "Sensual Qualities" (SQ). There is thus both a human and nonhuman representation in the Real and Sensual domains, and the domains of objects and qualities. This already creates potentialities for creative entanglement between the four bodies involved.

From very early on we intended this to be a durational work, or rather a performed installation. An opportunity to present some work in progress at an internal colloquium at Trinity Laban in December 2022 however

temporarily focused our minds on the idea of producing a defined 15-minute sequence that could be presented in this context. Although in some ways a distraction from the aim of producing an essentially nonlinear work, the process of devising this sequence gave us an insight into ideas of pacing which would help us move toward a longer-form version. The following edited process diary entry describes this:

*2 November 2022 - Rehearsal 7*

*As we begin this rehearsal we are planning to present work-in-progress... for the coming weeks we will focus our energies on one particular path through the environment. This will result both in a short presentable piece of work that will demonstrate succinctly the ideas behind the piece, and all give us an opportunity, in narrowing our focus to a particular, defined sequence, to familiarise ourselves with the changing interrelationships as we move through the room and establish some patterns of movement and being that will form a solid basis for the later, more extended and more fluidly progressive-static iteration.*

*We agree that a trajectory of Sensual object - real qualities - sensual qualities will [establish] the fundamental ideas of individuated being, entangled/ symbiotic being and transactional interdependence between which we are moving. Moving in this sequence will also give an*

*unexpected shift from symbiotic to transactional interaction; we feel this route in which the state which might be seen as our ultimate "goal" is undermined will draw the contrasts between states more vividly than the more obvious progression from individual through interrelation to symbiosis...*

*Our initial attempt is to time each section and build up towards a 15' sequence, but it rapidly becomes clear that this is not working: the initial movement requires proportionally more time than its importance in the schema might imply, and so we decide simply to work on the path and see how long it takes us to complete the sequence. This proves effective, and after a couple of aborted attempts our first full run through the sequence results in a timing of just over the intended duration. We are able then to reflect on which parts we feel need to progress quicker and which we need to take more time over. The part spent with all three in the RQ quadrant needs more stillness, we agree, to establish our three bodies as a single entangled entity.*

Early on in the process I had suggested the possibility of both of us vocalising: Irene was initially resistant to this idea, partly due to a lack of confidence about her technical ability to undertake this. This lies at the core of the idea of Interflow [4.3]: one must put

oneself into a position of radical not-knowing, a position of vulnerability where one is dependent on the technique and knowledge of others. This can only be achieved willingly though. I did not pressure her to undertake this, but gradually began to introduce my own vocalisations into our improvisations. Through this process she came to understand that conventionally “good” classical vocal technique was not what was required, and became not only a willing participant in this element but an instigator, just as I gradually gained the confidence to become an instigator of movement ideas. Our roles in the creation of the piece cannot be neatly divided into “music” and “dance” roles.

### 3.2.3 Bodies and techniques

*[I]nstallation art... almost always entails a heightened awareness of the movement of our own bodies in space. (Rebentisch, 2012, 248)*

There is a source of movement in this schema that comes from a position of expertise in the form of Irene’s dance training. But there is also another movement-technique element in the gestures and movements that I embody as a performing musician. Similarly, although it is my technique which is most obviously the generator of sound, Irene’s movement is also a generator of sound – both in a literal sense, but also in a potential for conceptualising our spatial experience in sonic terms over visual ones. A supracochlear sonic mode may be found when we consider hearing as ‘a specialized form of touch’ (Glennie, 2015) and begin to frame the physical contact between bodies as a noncochlear sonic experience.

Our bodies in this situation become a collective 'system of possible actions' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 260).

Material sound is also present in the room: as well as the sound produced by us and our movements, pre-prepared loops of my own cello are relayed into the room: the voice of the instrument present but disembodied from its corporeal source. A microphone connected to a loop pedal is periodically activated and picks up sound in the room. Sometimes this is the sound consequent from movement, or sometimes sound produced consciously, whether as vocalising or movement focused specifically to the production of sound. This trail of looped sound acts against any sense of a progressive musical *telos* by 'accumulating suspended time' (Baumgartel, 2023, 203). This element of live vocal looping developed not at my instigation, but emerged mutually through our rehearsals and discussions. It was not the product of one or the other of us, but both, functioning in symbiosis of imagination and technique.

In this arena, there is specialist technique at work on both our parts, but its role is not to draw attention to itself but to support the other in its attempt to carry out actions in a manner that phases into the nature of the other specialism.<sup>46</sup> Our movings and soundings may be awkward or clumsy, but this creates a desirable vulnerability in our actions and a

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<sup>46</sup> or 'interpenetrates' (Clark, 2019).

greater capacity to transform our understanding of what we are doing. In placing ourselves in this position we embrace our shortcomings, but also turn our points of failure into points of learning and self-awareness. We are people, trying to do the best we can in the situation we find ourselves in, analogous to Stoerchle's aesthetic of 'success in failure' (Dusapin, 2022).<sup>47</sup> While our soundings and movings are contextualised in a network of symbolisms and techniques, they also remain aspects of our straightforward material being: 'the performing body is always both a vehicle for representation and, simply, itself' (Auslander, 1990).

The example sequence we presented in December 2022 proceeds thus: in the RO corner I am aware of my own being and potential as a moving body (one could characterise this area with the question, "what can I do?"). As I move towards the cello I become influenced by the SQ domain, characterisable as a transactional, contingent relationship: I become aware of the cello not simply as another body in my presence, but a potential source of action and gratification for me ("what can you do for me?"). Having established this transactional relationship, I return with the cello to the RO domain – in doing so I enter a new sense of self-awareness as the cello and I start to exist as a single symbiotic entity, a "cellist". Irene has now moved from her position nearer to the RO area

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<sup>47</sup> See Zakiewicz (2022) for another perspective on failure as aesthetic device.

and we are aware of each other as copresent bodies. As we all begin to move towards the RQ corner we begin to interact in a more entangled way, and as we reach that corner we begin to function in a highly codependent, entangled and symbiotic way ("what can we do?"). As we move on down to the SQ domain our interaction loses its sense of a single codependent and entangled entity and becomes a transactional and even competitive interplay of three separate bodies.

This is just one of many possible routes through the room. As we work towards a durational mode of performance we gain greater scope to explore a variety of modulations between these states. The point is not to valorise Harman's philosophy [1.2.2] but, by using it as a way to delineate the site where we act, to provide a means to negotiate our way through a complex and ever-shifting set of interrelationships.

One question raised by working in this way is the role of audience: this is a practice centred on the doing of the practitioner rather than the reception of the audience.<sup>48</sup> How a performative installation differs from a long-form musical or theatrical performance may lie in the expectation of the audience or spectator. There is an ambiguity here: if the spectator is emancipated to find their own agency in such a situation (Rancière, 2021) then whether it presents as installation or performance is a matter

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<sup>48</sup> A similar approach is described in Glover (2018).





Fig. 20: Where Does a Body End?, May 2023.

of their phenomenological experience.

*Performance studies is “inter”—in between. It is intergeneric, interdisciplinary, intercultural—and therefore inherently unstable. Performance studies resists or rejects definition. As a discipline, PS cannot be mapped effectively because it transgresses boundaries, it goes where it is not expected to be. It is inherently “in between” and therefore cannot be pinned down or located exactly. This indecision (if that’s what it is) or multidirectionality drives some people crazy. For others, it’s the pungent and defining flavor of the meat. (Schechner, 1998, 360)*

Schechner’s idea of the efficacy-entertainment dyad (1974) is also relevant here: it may be that the ritualistic aspects of the movement practice in this work act to dampen its sense as performance and create an atmosphere more akin to kinetic sculpture. For my part as practitioner this work clearly steps outside musical performance parameters; but this

does not preclude the possibility of other experiences, and this multiplicity of possible perspectives is to be welcomed [Postlude].

### 3.3 Ouroboros

In *Ouroboros* I return to the idea first explored in *The Fade in Time* [2.3.1] and *Congregation* [2.3.2] of ambiguity between object and event, but manifested in the opposite direction: in this practice an object – that is to say, an audiovisual installation – coalesces into a performance. This is a specific event taking place at a specific site, but in making sounds available as a recording to be used as a domestic installation I expand it beyond its locus into the domestic area.

***Uroboros***[sic] – A SERPENT (or occasionally one or two dragons or — rarely—one or two long-necked birds) biting its own tail; it is a symbol of infinity, of eternal recurrence, of the descent of the spirit into the physical world and its return. In alchemy, it is often a symbol of changing matter. (Becker, 2000, 316)

The roots of this project go back a decade: attending a contrabass flute performance by Carla Rees it occurred to me that the instrument was such an extraordinary object and presence in the room that it seemed unnecessary to actually play it: one could happily simply stare at it. Although intended jokingly, this thought stayed with me, and the idea of a piece focussed on a specific instrument that never sounds remained at the back of my mind. The idea of a JAMs-esque cult<sup>49</sup> built around the

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<sup>49</sup>The Justified Ancients of Mu Mu (Higgs, 2013, 147-161).

worship of a (possibly unplayed) contrabass flute is hinted at in the iconography of my multimedia work *Exit Music* (Nagle, 2017) and installation *The Convalescent* (Nagle, 2018). This idea emerges in other work in this portfolio, in particular *Where Does a Body End?* [3.2], in which the deconstruction of the cello-cellist relationship includes a cello that is never played (or rather, only heard in prerecorded sounds, despite its physical presence in the room). It also resonates with ideas of absence (Goebbels, 2015) explored in *Congregation*, where the concert hall atmosphere is emphasised by the act of removing it. It can be characterised as an open work in which 'musical arguments are replaced by processes that result in "music," and the writing of music is supplanted by the creation of situations' (LaBelle, 2015, 7).

On one level this is a straightforward piece: a sound installation the techniques of which enable it to exist in multiplicitous realisations. On another, however, it becomes a messier, more entangled object: it considers the corporeality of the musicians through its removal and deconstruction, it shifts between states of object and event, and nonlinearity. It brings together themes that thread through all the work in this project. It takes on Rebentisch's conception of the sound installation as a 'dialectic of meaningless meaningfulness and meaningful meaninglessness... [occurring] between the sound and the concrete space in which it is installed', where the site of presentation acquires significance as 'there is no performance; there is only the occurrence of

sound in space' (Rebentisch, 2012, 214), but also questions and muddies it by introducing performative elements into the scene.

### 3.3.1 Domestic installations and lockdown contingencies

The other, more recent origin point lies in a concept of domestic installations that arose during the lockdowns of 2020, partly as a counterpart to the "found installation" [2.1.1]. Performances in the domestic environment broadcast live or as-live had become a feature of the lockdown world, but many seemed to me to be, as with much activity at the time, predicated on trying to achieve an ersatz copresence that was, if not actively in denial of the reality of the situation, at least attempting to minimise the focus of attention on it. I wanted to create something that emphasised the environment rather than ignoring it, and entered into a dialogue with its site. This led me to a schema in which I distributed a number of sound-producing methods around my living room. In keeping with the ideas of my feedback drone-looping practice, and also the form of *The Fade in Time* [2.3.1], I determined that the initiation of these sounds would form part of the work. For *Drone Sweet Drone* I moved around with my camera and initiated each in turn to create the sound environment. This setup could easily have been left to sound indefinitely, but by then moving to my cello I brought it back within the realm of performance. Having taken this step, a conclusion was clear: that I should reverse the initial process and switch off each sound one by one. This movement with the camera

created a shifting perspective in the recorded sound which helped to convey the sense of space that obviously cannot be directly experienced by someone watching a film rather than being there.

*Corridor Drone* uses similar methods, but in this case there the only performance element is my act of moving through the site recording it. The film thus functions as a quasi-performance as well as documentation of a presence installed in the domestic environment (Auslander, 2006). A transitional space in the home is transformed to a site of being and exploration.

The direct beginning of *Ouroboros* as a project lies in sound files that Carla and I exchanged during 2020. I had already created a series of recordings in remote collaboration, in which I would send recordings to other musicians for them to create improvised duets with, all of which were then edited together without the original recordings they had in common present (Nagle et al., 2021). I began a similar process with Carla in which I sent her recordings of myself playing drones on cello, over which she recorded her contrabass flute. Once I received these recording back, rather than combine them into tracks as with *Nexus*, I split them into short excerpts and processed them with a variant of the Max patch used in *Rising of the Lights* and *Once up on a cube* [2.2.2; 3.1]. The result felt more like a sound sculpture than a piece of music: it manifested less as temporal progression than texture existing in the room – moving, but nonlinearly. It seems to move beyond the idea of being either/or performance/installation: here, I move my thinking beyond the

object-event binary and start to consider a third category. The emphasis moves away from which identity is presenting at any moment and towards the idea that *both may be present at once*. It is this conscious awareness of multiplicity of identity and presence that creates the conditions for an object/event to be considered a *Thing* [1.2.2].

### 3.3.2 Recorded and live iterations

Max being a specialist tool of contemporary composition, to exist as a domestic installation *Ouroboros* needs to be available in a format that has wide access: that is to say, a fixed-media stereo recording, which may be played as files or from a disc. While fixed media lacks the mutability of an active processing patch, by configuring a number of tracks so that each plausibly leads from and to any of the others, enough unpredictability is present for it to function as a quasi-generative experience in the home, the number of possible combinations being sufficiently large to reduce the predictability of what order tracks on shuffle will play in. The aim here is to create a sense of constancy rather than the discontinuity characteristic of the kind of open work where multiplicitous elements are presented to be sounded in any order (e.g. Wright and Redgate, 2015; Stockhausen, 1956).<sup>50</sup> A practical

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<sup>50</sup>An instructive comparison can be made between the editing of *The Clock* (Marclay, 2010) and *Doors* (Marclay, 2022): the former creates a

consideration is silence: while it would be technically possible to create a series of tracks which could feed into each other seamlessly, the mechanisms of shuffle mode on a CD player or in a media player make small gaps between tracks difficult to avoid. Rather than try to mitigate this I decided to make periodic silence a feature: this is achieved partly by making most of the tracks relatively short, and also by inserting silences within some of the longer tracks: this decouples the experience of pause from the transition between tracks and so embeds these silences as an aesthetic choice.

The place the recorded iteration has in the home is ambiguous: its nature as a nonlinear, non-teleological but located sound work gives it a sense of presence of a qualitatively different nature to a piece of music (Rebentisch, 2012, 214). Its low volume and tendency to avoid overt event gives it some connection to Eno's idea of ambient music being 'as ignorable as it is interesting' (Eno, 1979). Listening to an early mix in my own home I had the impression of it as situated in an ambiguous relationship with concepts of music and sound art. A need to leave the house to go shopping led me to put the sound files on my phone and take it out with me: this creates further ambiguity in suggesting the idea

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sense of open ended narrative, while the latter creates a more closed sense of folding in on itself.

of home as something situated in a psychological as much as a physical space.

The creation of a physical medium for this work emphasises the manifestation of *Ouroboros* as object. It must also be acknowledged, however, that in creating this physical object I also emphasise my complicity with a problematic political ecology entangled with the petrochemical industry (Devine, 2019). The CD as an available presence (Noë, 2012) embodies this forcefully, but this complicity remains present even without its existence, through the technologies used in the creation and dissemination of the work.

### 3.3.4 A place to be and to do

*We do not know what hospitality is. Not yet. (Derrida, 2007, 247)*

The event described here took place at Safehouse 1, a derelict terrace house located in Peckham. This fit with the domestic aspect of the piece while also providing a distinctive environment to present the multichannel version of the installation. As well as the resonance between the ideas of home embodied in the concept of a “domestic installation” and the site's original identity as a residential building, practical considerations of installing in this site create a discursive relationship. Questions of upstairs/downstairs, the varieties of presence: physical-sonic, social and hauntological, the staging as a peripatetic experience for the audience: all conspire to create the final embodied experience of the work in dialogue with the site of this specific



realisation. Are we guests here, or intruders? As Derrida (Ibid.) notes, “host” and “hostage” share a root. The house embodies both a *potential for* and a *loss of domesticity*. It is therefore an ideal place to daydream about such notions (Bachelard, 2014, 28). This event is a performance of home (Andrews, 2021), both in the influence its site has on the events and objects within it, and also in a sense of a return home, to my identity as cellist and maker of drones where this project began.

A house is a coherent single site, but it is also a network of delineated sites in its division into rooms. This immediately creates a sense of occlusion (Vass, 2023, 65-71): although sound permeates the entire site, one’s position at any one time favours some sounds over others. The visitor must maintain a sense of the whole sonic field as they move around the space and find themselves in encounter with elements of it, just as the audience of a choreographical piece must maintain a stable sense of bodies in movement even when some of them are obscured (Ibid., 69).

The contrabass flute sits upstairs in the house: not inaccessible but not immediately present. Discussion about a potentially dusty environment led to the idea of shrouding the flute in semi-translucent sheeting. This lends to the idea of it as an object present-not present, but also led us to the conclusion that there was a need to provide closure at the end of the evening by revealing and sounding it.

### Speaker placement

In this instance *Ouroboros* presents as an 8-channel sound installation made from contrabass flute and cello samples. Each speaker is a discrete entity: The sound consists of an array of asynchronous, randomly panned stereo signals from Max [2.2.2; 3.1] with each stereo pair divided between floors to maximise the spread of different sounds through the building (Fig. 21).

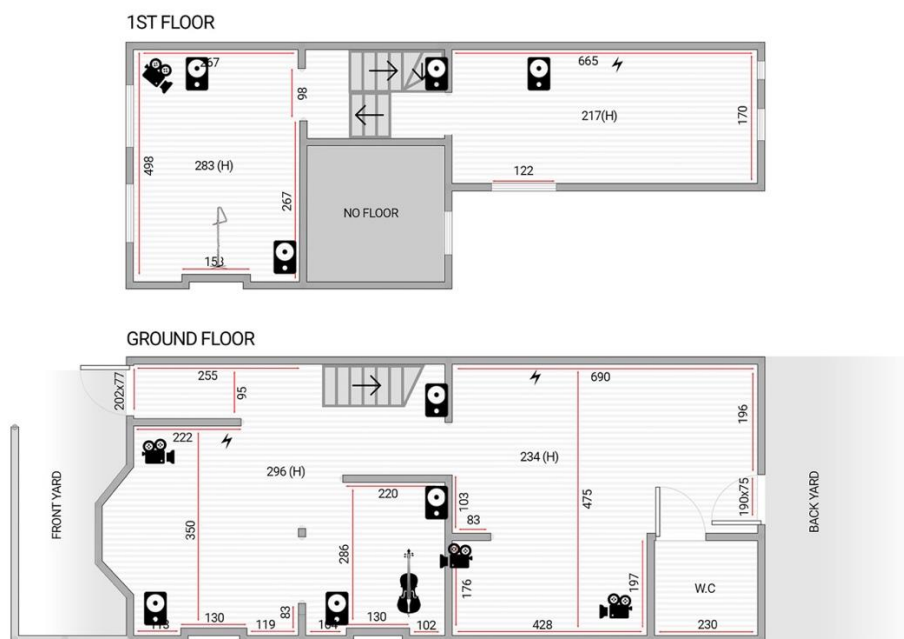


Fig. 21 Speaker placement in Safehouse 1

### Visual elements

The main visual element was the house itself; following from my lockdown experiences [2.1.1] the finding and experiencing of it became a focus of the event. I added little: some fairy and tea lights, which both gave a simple but effective colouring to sections of the house, and some printed images around the house. I devised a logo which functions as a marker for the event as well as the cover for the CD release.

Carla and I spent the afternoon in this environment, sometimes simply listening, sometimes talking and sometimes improvising along with it. This practice of improvisation within/with the installation would become a feature of the evening event.

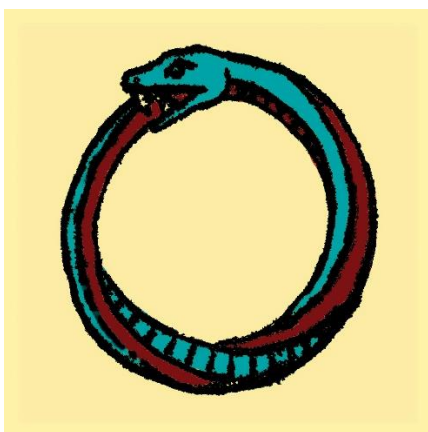


Fig. 22 Ouroboros logo/album cover

### 3.3.5 From installation to performance (and back again)

In the evening the atmosphere shifts towards *event* as performers become involved. The first of these were me and a trio of dancers: me playing drone-based improvisation in response to the installation while they improvise to preconceived strategies of reflecting my bodily movements as a cellist, and also direct interaction with me as another moving body. This relates to the work in *Where Does a Body End?* [3.2], but here, rather than deconstructing the role of cellist I was concerned to preserve that identity and continue playing in a relatively conventional fashion, thus bringing the insights of the more extreme treatment of cello-playing as a movement practice back into a relatively conventional context. Just as Tufnell and Crickmay (1990) treat the

printed page as a choreological site (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2010, 61), so here my embodied presence as cellist is not only as performer engaged in movement practice, but as a choreological site for my collaborators to respond to. This sequence is already in progress as the audience arrives.

A chorus of flutes, led by Carla on alto flute, slowly begin playing long held tones along with the installation, moving around the house so that there is no single centre of attention. After a while Carla leads a call and response of notated lines, played independently in the manner of Gaelic psalm singing (Traditional, 2018).<sup>51</sup>

Once this ends, I stand and make a welcome speech. This is partly to explain how the evening works, but also to introduce text as a resource in preparation for the next section, “Here Comes Everybody”.<sup>52</sup> This uses a quotation from the architect Lina Bo Bardi:

*Linear time is a western invention; time is not linear, it is a marvellous entanglement where, at any moment, points can be chosen and solutions invented, without beginning or end.* (quoted in Julien, 2019)

I begin by reciting this text, and move on to begin deconstructing it, speaking words randomly. The audience have on entering each been

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<sup>51</sup>A practice I explored in a lockdown project (Nagle, 2021b).

<sup>52</sup>The title derives from *Finnegans Wake* (Joyce, 2000), itself an ouroboros in construction.



Fig. 23 Ouroboros performance stills, April 2024

given a card with words from this text, and from hereon are encouraged to move around the house, speaking the words on their cards.

As well as a process of knowing-in-doing similar to that employed in *Promethea #32* [1.3.2] in which the collective deconstruction of the text

embodies its message, this is an *unknowing-in-doing* (Challenger, 2022), dissolving the distinction between the roles of audience and performer: the work is made together with and by all participants (Eco, 1989, 21). In this dissolution of an atmosphere of performance into one of participation, '[a]udience participation expands the field of what a performance is, because *audience participation takes place precisely at the point where the performance breaks down and becomes a social event*' (Schechner, 1994, 40, emphasis in original).

The flutes gradually re-enter, this time led by the contra, moving from lines towards sustained tones. As I begin to play again they drop out, leaving only me, Carla and the installation sounding. Eventually we stop playing and the installation sounds alone once more before the venue closes.

Periodically throughout the day while this has all occurred, a series of tracks has been published on YouTube: this takes the event beyond its immediate site and potentially into any place where internet access is available. The simultaneous publication of the album as a download on Bandcamp and streaming services widens the installation's potential reach still further, as a potential agent of continuation and *community* [Postlude].

This final project in the portfolio re-presents themes of transformation, entanglement and multiplicity that have been developed through the whole period of this research project. In some ways it also represents a

return: having deconstructed my cellist-composer identity through the process of interflow, I return to a more conventional mode of cellist-being; but with fresh insight and a transformed sense of what it means to occupy that identity.

## 4: Entanglement, Complicity, Interflow

In this final chapter I summarise interflow as a creative process in this portfolio and make a case for it as a tool with which to examine critically the nature of collaborative processes, with practitioners in other art forms but also with technologies, environments and nonhuman bodies. I suggest this approach as a valuable way to appraise the nature of entanglement and complicity within a collaborative situation, but also as a modality of being: one that has applications not simply in creative practice but more broadly as a way of reconsidering the nature of our existence as an inseparable part of the biosphere we inhabit. Art does not exist in a vacuum,<sup>53</sup> and feeding this mode of thinking and being is an existentially necessary project in an age of mass extinction. The aim is not to make art “about” the climate crisis or any other topic: it is rather a process of developing a mode of being that rather than enabling us to *become ecological* enables us to realise that we already *are*. (Morton, 2017, 215)

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<sup>53</sup> 'In every century, the way that artistic forms are structured reflects the way in which science or contemporary culture views reality' (Eco, 1989, 13).



## 4.1: Entanglement

For some, composition remains an essentially solitary activity (Croft, 2017). 'Collaboration is not compulsory' (Fraser, 2022) and there will always be many different approaches to creative practice within and between disciplines. Collaboration is however fundamental to the work presented in this portfolio; I also suggest that in any given situation collaboration is inevitable in an entangled world: even if I exclude other humans from my process I remain in collaboration<sup>54</sup> with social and pedagogical structures which have contributed to the development of my artistic identity, with nonhuman bodies, with technologies of sound making, writing, recording, and so on.

Questions of collaboration between composer and performer are a growing area of research. These range from analysis of the composer-performer working relationship (Hayden and Windsor, 2007) to deeper levels of cooperation between composer and performer (Roche, 2011), the possibility of transformation through collaboration (Kanga, 2011) and radically non-hierarchical working methods such as the latter-day practice of Radigue (Nickel, 2016). My practice may be sited in this area of research: where it departs from these models is in applying a radically non-hierarchical and technically unbounded approach across

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<sup>54</sup>or perhaps rather *complicity* [4.2].

disciplines beyond music, and in approaching involvement with the nonhuman, technology and social structures as a form of collaboration.

Stone (2020) suggests “multiplicity” as a framing for experimental music practices in which the realisation of a notated work (whether music notation, graphic, text, etc.) may result in performances that perceptually differ wildly from each other while still remaining the same work. The work presented in this thesis presents its own aspect of multiplicity. This manifests not within an individual work but across a heterogeneous sound-oriented practice. Thinking about and with sound is the commonality across a wide variety of techniques and strategies, whether that sound presents as material, non-cochlear, supracochlear, societal agent, or a combination.

Our wholes are less than the sums of our parts (Morton and Boyer, 2021, 41). Beauvoir (2018) discusses the ambiguity of identity: that a person shifts identity depending on context and that these identities do not clearly delineate from each other. Interflow [4.3] pushes this ambiguity and fluidity further: the subject is ambiguous not only within their own identity but in their many entangled identities in collaboration with others - other people, other objects, other events. In creative practice, the implication is a weakening of the hypersubjective notion of artist-creator and a move to a more hyposubjective mode, one of contingent and ever-shifting identities created in complicity with other humans, but also other non-humans and anonymous materials (Negarestani, 2008). Fraser (2022) argues for the necessity of danger in collaboration, of getting

one's hands dirty. Interflow is an inherently and necessarily dangerous process: we push ourselves beyond the limits of our own embodied technical expertise and place ourselves in a position of doing things that we find difficult, uncomfortable and awkward, whether physically, conceptually or emotionally. Failure is a possibility, even a probability.

*To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating. (Barad, 2007, ix)*

## **4.2: Complicity**

I use the term “complicity” in reference to Negarestani (2008). In a world of entanglements, it is impossible that all of our own are innocent<sup>55</sup>.

Acknowledgement of complicity is a first step towards acceptance of responsibility.

Complicity is a form of collaboration, which may be with or between humans and nonhumans, in which one or both (or more) parties may lack control or agency. One's only options are submission or rejection. Escape may be unachievable, or contingent.

In citing Heidegger within this thesis I must acknowledge my own complicity: in using ideas of his I find to be useful I cannot disentangle

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<sup>55</sup>‘No Sound is Innocent’ (Prévost, 1995).

myself with his more problematic aspects. Morton (2017, 48) elegantly attempts to resolve the issues with Heidegger by casting him in his less worthy statements as *insufficiently Heideggerian*. This makes it possible to refer to his work without endorsing his less palatable aspects, but without attempting to ignore or whitewash them.

Haraway(2016)'s attempt to disassociate her term "Chthulucene" from Lovecraftian associations is understandable but ultimately impossible. As beings entangled in our world we are inextricably complicit in the less pleasant aspects of it. We have to deal with the reality of 'staying with the trouble,' and accept that this means troubling things will always be there. Perhaps, in a manner similar to Morton's dealing with Heidegger, we need to acknowledge that Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos embodies a sense of dread and fear of the unknown, and the racism and misogyny present in his writing simply reflects the fact that people who are not white men are what scared Lovecraft most. It does not excuse his views, but it enables us to begin to deal with them, to realise that his hate was the product of fear. His failure to overcome his fear does not disoblige us from facing our own. This is an uncomfortable but essential core of the idea of complicity. Complicity requires us to open ourselves to our own vulnerability, a vital step towards the state that I call *interflow*.

### **4.3: Interflow**

I define *Interflow* as a state of intense and conscious transdisciplinary collaboration. In this state, there is a conscious movement between

identities and states: composer, improviser, performer, mover, sounder. These identities (or 'ways of being' (Beauvoir, 2018)) form an ever-shifting, plastic network in which my practice is sited. Practitioners from different disciplines work together in such a way that they move beyond parallel deployment of their own techniques and beyond a state of entanglement of those techniques: specialisms are deployed not as self-valorising mechanisms but as supportive tools to enable each collaborator to step outside the boundary of their own specialism. This is most clearly illustrated in the case of *Where Does a Body End?*. The roles of "musician" and "dancer" become blurred to the point that we are each both and neither: specialist techniques of sounding and moving are present in the room, but deployed beyond the bodies of those who bring them. We are both practitioners of sound and movement in this situation: sounding becomes a product of movement and movement is likewise reconfigured as a generator of sound. Sound and movement are also present in non/supra-cochlear and non/supra-somatic forms. We are entangled and we transgress our own specialist identities to the point that it cannot be said who is responsible for what element of the work. It exists through and beyond us as the practitioners. A form of discursive site-specificity emerges, whereby the work forms a site in which entangled disciplines and techniques converge.

Interflow can encompass collaboration – it *must* do so – but it goes beyond the conventional notion of collaboration towards complicity [4.2]. I collaborate with other humans, whose techniques fall within

boundaries that define my musician-identity, my sound art- identity, my academic identity, etc. but I also collaborate with my cello, with the biosphere, with hyperobjects. The idea of collaboration becomes inadequate, because it implies a continued otherness, and I am inextricably entangled with and transformed by everything and everyone that I encounter: the differences lie only in contexts and degrees of intimacy of encounter.

Just as in individual creative practice one may find oneself in a state of flow (Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi, 2014), in which the ego is subsumed to the embodied actions of practice, so in collaborative practice one may find oneself in a state of interflow, in which individual identities are subsumed to the entangled actions of complicit practice.

Interflow is a radical form of empathy.

#### **4.4 Avenues for further research**

This thesis has largely focused on interflow as a praxis between sound and movement practices. There is scope to expand to other disciplines: I am engaged in an ongoing collaboration with the artist Claire Zakiewicz focused on image making as a performative act. Both our practices have become informed by our experience of working with dancers and it is a natural progression to begin to find areas of fuzziness between our practices, using those we already identify as intersecting with movement practices. What does it mean to entangle moving, sounding and visual practices? What are the discursive sites between bodies, images, sounds, materials? The outputs of this practice generally sit in the form of audiovisual documentation and marks on canvas. What avenues exist to break down the barriers between these? The strategy of placing oneself in a situation of radical not-knowing inevitably leads to an expansion of knowledge; the process of interflow is therefore a continuing and developing technique which requires repeated placing of the self outside its familiar patterns, patterns which continually change and expand.

One crucial insight from this process for me has been a renewed sense of being a musician as a somatic/movement practice: western art music traditions tend to minimise any emphasis on the embodied being of musicians in favour of affects of ineffability: beyond the aesthetic potential of reconfiguring this, there are potentialities for these ideas as teaching strategies: a renewed emphasis on the embodied musician has

potential to be of great benefit to the artform of music and to the musicians who practise it: I certainly feel I am enriched, both aesthetically and technically, as a performer and as a cellist as a result of undertaking this work, and this exploration of my sounding practice as a movement practice and a choreological site will continue. A choreological<sup>56</sup> lens also has great potential as a means to interrogate the (composer-)performer-audience dynamic in musical performance. Interflow has a value beyond contingent affects of a particular art form or practice though: it can be a way to encourage a sense of our interconnectedness, our entanglement and complicity with the world in which we live. Lakoff and Johnson advocate 'a *dialogue* between philosophy and cognitive science. Ideally, they should co-evolve and mutually enrich each other' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, 552). Questions of the mind and the nature of intelligence are prominent now with the emergence of generative algorithms.<sup>57</sup> In particular, at a time when the existential threat of climate breakdown and the rise of large language models among other techno-phenomena force us to focus on the questions of what it means to be sentient beings, to continue to explore

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<sup>56</sup> As distinct from the choreomusicological: the aim is not simply to consider sound and movement as two interacting phenomena, but sound as movement, and vice versa.

<sup>57</sup> Popularly although inaccurately termed "artificial intelligence" (Narayanan and Kapoor, 2024; Weizenbaum, 1976).



the material entanglements of being an embodied performer, can offer insights as part of the process of reconfiguring our sense of ourselves and our hyposubjective place in the world.

## Postlude: Hyposubjectivity, Kinship, Enchantment

### The fiction of authorship

All the work presented here is concerned with collaboration: collaboration with humans, but also with nonhumans and with situations. Sometimes this collaboration is premeditated, sometimes unexpected, sometimes delineated and sometimes open-ended. The work presented is presented as mine, in the sense that it originates in ideas I have had and enacted both by myself and in conjunction with others. It is also a contingent necessity to present it as such in the context of a PhD thesis. But authorship proves to be another fuzzy-edged concept. Whereas *The Fade in Time* [2.3.1] presents unproblematically as a work conceived and realised by me and *Congregation* [2.3.2] as a work by me that appropriates work of Soosan Lolavar, other work is less clearly so described: *Where Does a Body End?* [3.2] in particular is in the manner of its creation and realisation as an ongoing practice an entirely collaborative work: while the impetus for it may have come from me, the nature of its creation means that authorship of its sonic and kinetic elements cannot be ascribed to one or the other of its creators. But even in the apparently more straightforwardly attributable work, there is still a network of creation and complicity. Tony Conrad's long-running feud with La Monte Young over questions of authorship in the Theatre of Eternal Music is worth reflecting on here: this is discussed extensively by Joseph (2011, 39-40, 104-105, 203-204, etc.). Young asserts his position as

sole author of the work created in the group (Young, 2000) while Conrad not only sees the group's work as a collaborative effort (Conrad, 2015, 302-10, 320-336, 350-369) but asserts a more radical aim of dispensing with the notion of authorship altogether:

*[P]eople like Phil Glass, Steve Reich and La Monte Young – they studied music composition, and wanted to be big composers! I didn't want to be – y'know, I wanted to end composition! Get rid of it. I wanted it to die out. (Conrad, interviewed in Hubby, 2016)*

These questions of authorship and ownership are becoming a more present issue, both in specific reference to the 60s minimalist composers (Nickleson, 2023) and also more generally. Even if I were presenting here a body of composed works authored and notated solely by me, I would be inextricably entangled with the work of others: with those people whose ideas I take as precedent and influence, with the technologies that mediate the passage of thought into fixed form, with the musicians who realise such work in performance. The author may be dead (Barthes, 1977, 142-148), but their ghost seems reluctant to leave. The idea of the sole author can be characterised as a kind of thought-fiction (Demers, 2017), the dominance of which in discourse about art and other forms of creation needs to be questioned and challenged. The rise of collectives in recent years suggests that this is a turn whose time has come. To expand upon Morton and Boyer (2021), the time of hypersubjective ownership and authorship is perhaps ending, and the time of hyposubjective complicity and interflow beginning.

## Audiences, Performers, Communities

The role of the audience is something I have only briefly addressed in this thesis [3.2.3]. In part this is simply because this is a focus on my own process as a creative practitioner. Questions of authorship and reception are entangled though, so a few thoughts in conclusion seem appropriate. Discussing Gormley's *One and Other*, Claire Bishop asserts that '[i]n a world where everyone can air their views to everyone we are faced not with mass empowerment but with an endless stream of egos levelled to banality. Far from being oppositional to spectacle, participation has now entirely merged with it' (Bishop, 2012, 277). This is perhaps a function of scaling and maximisation, a subject that Ben Grosser has explored extensively in relation to social media (e.g. Grosser, 2021). *The 17* (Drummond, 2008) addresses this by making the performers also the audience: for each iteration of the 17 closure comes when the participants listen to a recording of the work they have just made, which is then destroyed to preserve the event as a singular experience. In *Build a Chord Workshop* (Glover, 2018) the experience of the musicians is explicitly prioritised over any audience; an approach shared by *Amalgamations* (Stone, 2019).<sup>58</sup> One might perhaps call this, in extension of the idea of the primacy of the performer or the listener, the primacy of the *participant*: non-participating listeners are possible but not required:

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<sup>58</sup>A work I have performed and recorded myself (Stone, 2022).

communal participation takes priority. This extends the English experimental tradition embodied in Cardew's *The Great Learning* (1971), and a return to the aesthetics of music not as a product for passive consumption, but as an activity to be engaged in (Small, 1998). This connects with the concept of the "No-Audience Underground" (Hayler, 2012) and finds reflection in *Ouroboros* [3.3], where roles of audience and performer dissolve into an atmosphere of community, kinship (Haraway, 2016) and enchantment (Bennett, 2001). I characterise this as something distinct from the social turn critiqued by Bishop (2006): she describes a context of the artist as outside agent brought into or imposed on a community for purposes of validation or social engineering. But the artist, the art, the community, the rituals and doings which create these: these are not separable things. They are entangled and emergent from each other. We are tangled up and complicit. Comfort and unease are products of different perspectives of the same reality. We cannot be separated; but we are not alone.

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For the purposes of this list and in the spirit that PaR intends to embrace forms of knowledge beyond the semiotic, all sources are treated equivalently, whether textual, visual, audial or experiential.

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## Appendix 1: Chronology

The table below presents a chronological overview of the project.

| <b>Date</b>              | <b>Work</b>  | <b>Research focus</b>  |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| January 2019             | Start of research project  | Atmospheres<br>Drones and their ambiguity of identity between allo- and autographic states.  |
| March 2019               | <i>Two Rooms</i>   | The idea of what is a work (Goehr); the idea that setting up is the performance and the sounding is an object  |
| June 2019                | <i>The Fade in Time</i>  | Focus shifts to enacting a change of identity between object and event   |
| October 2019             | <i>Congregation</i>  |  |
| November / December 2019 | First discussions on Cube project  |  |
| January/ February 2020   | First rehearsals with Infinity Cube  |  |
| March 2020               |  | Lockdown. Focus forcibly shifted from external actions to inward experiences   |
| April/May 2020           | Domestic installations   | Consideration of <i>Finnegans Wake</i> as non-cochlear sound art   |
| June- September 2020     | Nexus remote duets project<br>First exchange of sound files with Caral Rees that will eventually become <i>Ouroboros</i> | Focus shifts to nature of collaboration and phenomenology of entirely mediated communication. Lockdown and decline of wellbeing brings visceral sense of corporeality through its removal. |

| <b>Date</b>                    | <b>Work</b>   | <b>Research focus</b>   |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| October 2020                   | <i>Live on Zoom</i><br>performance, Hundred<br>Years Gallery  | Physical-mental injuries<br>force a focus on the<br>somatic experience of<br>musicianship/creative<br>practice in isolation   |
| September-<br>November<br>2020 | <i>Fifty Breaths</i><br><i>Under Eastern Way</i><br>Tentative plans for a<br>GPS-based project<br>using field recordings<br>geolocated in the site<br>of their making | The idea of mediatisation<br>revealing multiplicitous<br>versions of the self.  |
| January 2021                   | Presentation at BFE-<br>RMA students'<br>conference on <i>The</i><br><i>Fade in Time</i> and<br><i>Congregation</i>   | OOO/ hyperobjects<br>become a guiding idea  |
| May 2021                       | <i>On Mute</i><br><i>The Thing With Feathers</i><br>(presentation at<br><i>Parallax 15:</i><br><i>Performance in a</i><br><i>Pandemic</i> )                           |   |
| Summer 2021                    | First RoTL rehearsals   |   |
| September<br>2021              | First sound/art<br>improvisations sessions<br>with Claire Zakiewicz.  | Return to copresent<br>performance moves focus<br>to corporeality of my<br>practice as a musician: the<br>idea of cellist as a<br>movement practice   |
| October-<br>December<br>2021   | First RoTL performances<br>First rehearsals for<br><i>Where Does a Body</i><br><i>End?</i>  | The idea of musicking as a<br>movement practice leads<br>to a consideration of<br>identities in collaboration,<br>and the possibility of a<br>radically transdisciplinary<br>praxis.<br>Spatz and technique as<br>embodied knowledge. |



| <b>Date</b>             | <b>Work</b>  | <b>Research focus</b>  |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| January-<br>August 2022 | Rehearsals continue for WDABE;<br>Further RoTL performances  | Idea of "Success in Failure" (Stoerchle);<br>Karen Barad, agential realism<br>Jane Bennett, Vibrant Matter   |
| September 2022          | Rehearsals and performance of <i>Ince up on a cube</i>   | Themes of the domestic have entered this project and begin to emerge in my other work  |
| December 2022           | Presentation of work in progress for WDABE at <i>Sounding Moves   Moving Sound</i>                                 | WDABE and Ouroboros decided as final work for portfolio.   |
| March 2023              | Presentation at Trinity Laban RDP week   | Performative presentation frames ideas of embodied identity in reference to Stoerchle, Schneemann, Flynt, JAMs                                     |
| May 2023                | WDABE full sharing   | Lina Bo Bardi and nonlinear time   |
| June 2023               | Here Comes Everybody at Fourth Portal, Gravesend   | Derrida and "hostipitality"<br>Bachelard and the poetics of home   |
| July 2023               | Presentation of <i>Live on Zoom</i> at Music and/as Process: Making Music together, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire |  |
| September 2023          | Further performances of <i>Once up on a Cube</i> at Totally Thames festival  | Weak Ontology and enchantment<br>Magpie Methodology as a framing of my praxis  |
| April 2024              | <i>Ouroboros</i> installation/performance at Safehouse 1, Peckham  | Emergence of community from ambiguity.<br>Bringing embodied knowledge from Interflow "home".<br>Embodied knowledge as discursive site-specificity. |

## Appendix 2: scores

### The Fade in Time

This work is either a performance or an installation, depending on the circumstances in which it is presented.

The instruments and objects required for the realisation of this work are:

- A piano (not an upright)
- A melodica
- An e-bow
- A battery-powered electric air pump
- A roll of tape (width no greater than the width of one of the melodica's white keys)
- Some weights with which to hold down the piano's pedals and one of its keys.

#### Acts of preparation & execution

If it is a *performance*, then the acts of preparation form part of the performance.

If it is an *installation* then the preparation may take place before the exhibit is opened.

In either event, the acts of preparation and execution should be performed reverently and solemnly.

1. Place the e-bow over the middle F4 string of the piano. Hold down the F4 key. Una corda and sustain pedals may be deployed ad lib. Key and pedals may be held down either by a player or by weights.
2. Tape down the keys A3, D4 and A4 on the melodica.
3. Position the air pump so that its output will operate the melodica (the melodica mouthpiece may be inserted into the pump or simply place near it, depending on what volume is suitable for the context) and switch it on. The air from the pump should cause the depressed keys to sound.
4. If this is a *performance* presentation:
  - a. After a while the doors of the performance space should be opened and the audience allowed to leave at their own pace.
  - b. When all the audience is outside the performance space allow the sound to continue.
  - c. After a while, close the doors. The sound may continue, barely audible outside the space.
  - d. After a while, turn off the air pump. This may happen while audience members are still in the vicinity or after everyone has left the building.

e. Allow the e-bowed piano to continue to sound for a while. Then remove the e-bow. When all sound has ceased, the weights may be removed from the piano. The piece is now over.

5. If this is an *installation* presentation:

a. Leave all this to run until the batteries in the pump and e-bow die.

b. Everything should be left in place, silent until the exhibition space closes at the end of the day.

c. Batteries may be replaced for the next day if the installation is being presented over a period of time.

PN May 2019

Musical score for Piano and Melodica. The score is in common time (C) and consists of two staves. The Piano staff has a treble clef and the Melodica staff has a soprano clef. The score includes the following performance instructions:

- Place elbow on string
- Hold down key
- Tape down keys
- (Attach pump)
- Pump on

Musical score for Pno and Mel. The score is in common time (C) and consists of two staves. The Pno staff has a treble clef and the Mel. staff has a soprano clef. The score includes the following performance instructions:

- Open doors
- Audience leaves
- Close doors
- Remove elbow
- Pump off

## **Congregation**

There are seven sections to this work:

### **1: Mobile Music**

This happens before the concert begins. Players with music in this section wander around or sit in the areas outside the hall - e.g. bar, outside the main entrance, in the lobby - and play these small motifs either alone or in small groups of two or three as they please. That should aim to be as unobtrusive as possible. This should end before the doors to the performance space open so as to allow time for players to go to their positions in the hall (strings at the back of the stage, almost but not quite off-stage, wind players hidden within the Shapeshifter setup.

### **2: Intervention 1**

This happens as the audience enters the performance space. Wind players should synchronise and so should strings, but the two groups can play independently of each other. Again, this should be unobtrusive. This ceases when the hosts enter to speak to the audience.

### **3: Intervention 2**

This occurs at the end of the first movement of the Haydn. Players should begin before the movement ends and carry on through the gap between movements. This must be as quiet as possible, barely audible. The audience should be left unsure if they are actually hearing anything.

### **4: Intervention 3**

This occurs after the second movement, in a similar fashion to Intervention 2.

NB There is no intervention between the third and fourth movements.

## **5: Main section**

This is the piece “proper”.

Shapeshifter players will remain in situ until the piece begins.

CMG Wind players begin at the conductor's downbeat, although they do not follow him thereafter, or synchronise with each other.

When the CMG players have begun, the Shapeshifter players will quietly leave the auditorium.

Each wind player independently finishes and then begins to move around the hall. There are seven possible stations around the hall, each with its own notated fragments. Each player makes their own way around the hall, stopping when they reach station and playing/ extemporising on the material presented there. Transposing instruments should treat pitches as though written for their transposition. Each wind player is tracked by one of the string players who changes the material they play depending on where that wind player is in the auditorium.

The exception to this is the Horn player, who moves as the others but is entirely independent. At each station is a crook and a motif written in the appropriate transposition for that crook. The horn player inserts the crook and plays and extemporises on the motif there. When he feels it right to move on, he removes the crook and leaves it there, moving on to another station to repeat the process.

Players may visit any station as many times as they like or not at all.

Certain restrictions have been placed on the string players that do not always allow them to follow their mind player's path precisely. Do not

concern yourself with this, but enjoy hearing how your movement affects the strings' materials.

At the point where all wind players are moving around, the environment has effectively ceased to act as a performance and become something more like an installation. This will continue for a while as the audience reinterpret their relation with the space. They may begin to move around. try not to get in their way, but do not pay attention to or interact with them.

Eventually music will sound from the bar into the hall. This is an indicator that the interval has started. Do not rush to finish, but when it feels right to do so, begin to move out of the hall and into the peripheral areas - as you do so, move towards playing the "Mobile Music" again as before the concert.

#### **6: Callback**

After the performance of *The Harmonic Canon* there may be a callback while the stage is reset for the final piece. This will be the Mobile Music - possibly performed just off-stage. This will end as the Shapeshifter players return to the stage.

#### **7: Post-concert**

After the concert is over, there may be a recurrence of the Mobile music as the audience leaves.

The Congregation between the Induction of  
my Divine Impulse is Exalted

Peter Nagle

1. Mobile Music

The musical score is written for a variety of instruments. The upper staves include Flute 1, Flute 2, Clarinet in Bb, Alto Saxophone, and Tenor Saxophone. The lower staves include Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of 12 measures. The first measure is in 4/4 time, the second in 6/4, the third in 5/4, the fourth in 3/8, and the fifth in 6/4. The lower strings (Violoncello and Double Bass) are marked TACET throughout the piece.

Mobile Music

6

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Cl. in Bb

A. Sax.

T. Sax.

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

D. B.



Very slowly 2. Entrance Music

TACET

Flute 1

Flute 2

Clarinet in Bb

Alto Saxophone

Tenor Saxophone

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

Begin before audience begins to enter

*ppp*

Entrance Music

5

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Cl. in Bb

A. Sax.

T. Sax.

Repeat until audience applauds entry of Haydn conductor

Vln 1

Vln 2

Repeat until audience applauds entry of Haydn conductor

Vla

Repeat until audience applauds entry of Haydn conductor

Vc.

D. B.

3. Intervention 1  
Allegro (play independently, do not synchronise)

The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes woodwind parts: Flute 1, Flute 2, Clarinet in Bb, Alto Saxophone, and Tenor Saxophone. The second system includes string parts: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The woodwinds play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with trills and grace notes. The strings play a long, sustained note in 7/4 time, which changes to 6/4 time in the second measure.

Flute 1: no tone, *tr*

Flute 2: no tone

Clarinet in Bb: no tone, *tr*

Alto Saxophone: no tone, *tr*

Tenor Saxophone: no tone

Violin 1: *ppp*, Begin before Haydn mvt 1 ends

Violin 2: -

Viola: *ppp*

Violoncello: *ppp*

Double Bass: -

Intervention 1

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Cl. in Bb

A. Sax.

T. Sax.

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

D. B.

The score is for a woodwind quintet and string quartet. The woodwinds (Flutes 1 & 2, Clarinet in Bb, Alto Saxophone, Tenor Saxophone) play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with various accidentals and slurs. The strings (Violins 1 & 2, Viola, Violoncello, Double Bass) play a simple harmonic accompaniment consisting of quarter notes and half notes, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 5/4 time signature. The score is divided into measures, with a double bar line and repeat sign at the end of the section.

Intervention 1

repeat ad lib.

The musical score is arranged in a vertical system with the following parts from top to bottom:

- Fl. 1**: Flute 1, Treble clef, starting with a first ending bracket [10].
- Fl. 2**: Flute 2, Treble clef.
- Cl. in Bb**: Clarinet in B-flat, Treble clef.
- A. Sax.**: Alto Saxophone, Treble clef.
- T. Sax.**: Tenor Saxophone, Treble clef.
- Vln 1**: Violin 1, Treble clef, 7/4 time signature, playing a long note with a fermata.
- Vln 2**: Violin 2, Treble clef, empty staff.
- Vla**: Viola, Bass clef, 7/4 time signature, playing a long note with a fermata.
- Vc.**: Violoncello, Bass clef, 7/4 time signature, playing a long note with a fermata.
- D. B.**: Double Bass, Bass clef, empty staff.

The score includes first and second endings for the woodwinds and strings, with repeat signs and fermatas. The woodwinds and strings parts end with repeat signs and first/second endings. The string parts (Vln 1, Vla, Vc.) have long notes with fermatas. The woodwinds (Fl. 1, Fl. 2, Cl. in Bb, A. Sax., T. Sax.) have first and second endings. The woodwinds and strings parts end with repeat signs and first/second endings. The woodwinds and strings parts end with repeat signs and first/second endings.

## 4. Intervention 2

As quietly as possible - on the edge of toneless.

The musical score is arranged in a system of ten staves. The instruments are listed on the left: Flute 1, Flute 2, Clarinet in Bb, Alto Saxophone, Tenor Saxophone, Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The score is written in 4/4 time and consists of four measures. The first measure is in 4/4 time, the second in 6/4, the third in 5/4, and the fourth in 6/4. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings. The Flute 1 part starts with a whole note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a quarter note B4. The Flute 2 part starts with a whole note F#4, followed by a half note G4, and then a quarter note A4. The Clarinet in Bb part starts with a whole note E4, followed by a half note F#4, and then a quarter note G4. The Alto Saxophone part starts with a whole note D4, followed by a half note E4, and then a quarter note F#4. The Tenor Saxophone part starts with a whole note C4, followed by a half note D4, and then a quarter note E4. The Violin 1 part starts with a whole note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a quarter note B4. The Violin 2 part starts with a whole note F#4, followed by a half note G4, and then a quarter note A4. The Viola part starts with a whole note D3, followed by a half note E3, and then a quarter note F#3. The Violoncello part starts with a whole note G2, followed by a half note A2, and then a quarter note B2. The Double Bass part starts with a whole note G2, followed by a half note A2, and then a quarter note B2. The score is written in a clean, professional style with clear notation and dynamic markings.

Intervention 2

6

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Cl. in B $\flat$

A. Sax.

T. Sax.

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

D. B.

### 5. Main section start

Start slightly slow; gradually gain tempo

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. The woodwind section includes Flute 1 and Flute 2, Clarinet in Bb, Alto Saxophone, and Tenor Saxophone. The string section includes Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The score is in 4/4 time and begins with a *pp* dynamic. The woodwinds have specific tempo markings: Flutes and Clarinet start slightly slow and gain tempo, while Saxophones start slightly fast and lose tempo. The strings are silent throughout this section.

Flute 1  
*pp*  
Start slightly fast; gradually lose tempo

Flute 2  
*pp*  
Start slightly slow; gradually gain tempo

Clarinet in Bb  
*pp*  
Start slightly slow; gradually gain tempo

Alto Saxophone  
*pp*  
Start slightly fast; gradually lose tempo

Tenor Saxophone  
*pp*

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass



Main section start

Musical score for the "Main section start" of a piece. The score is written for a woodwind and string ensemble. It consists of the following parts:

- Fl. 1** and **Fl. 2**: Flute parts, both playing a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure and a quarter note in the second measure.
- Cl. in Bb**: Clarinet in B-flat, playing a rhythmic eighth-note pattern.
- A. Sax.**: Alto Saxophone, playing a melodic line with eighth notes.
- T. Sax.**: Tenor Saxophone, playing a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes.
- Vln 1**, **Vln 2**, **Vla**, **Vc.**, and **D. B.**: String parts, all of which are currently silent (indicated by a horizontal line on the staff).

The score is written in 3/4 time and begins with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first measure of the flute parts is marked with a triplet of eighth notes. The woodwind parts play for the first three measures of the section.

Main section start

6

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Cl. in Bb

A. Sax.

T. Sax.

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

D. B.

Detailed description: This page of a musical score, numbered 200, contains the notation for measures 6, 7, and 8 of a piece. The section is titled 'Main section start'. The score is arranged in a system with nine staves. The top two staves are for Flute 1 (Fl. 1) and Flute 2 (Fl. 2), both in treble clef. They play identical parts, starting with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a quarter note B4. In measure 7, there are trill ornaments (tr) over the first and second notes. The third staff is for Clarinet in Bb (Cl. in Bb) in treble clef, playing a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes. The fourth staff is for Alto Saxophone (A. Sax.) in treble clef, playing a similar melodic line. The fifth staff is for Tenor Saxophone (T. Sax.) in treble clef, playing a bass line with quarter notes and rests. The bottom four staves (Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, Vc., and D. B.) are currently empty, indicating that these instruments have not yet entered the music in this section.

Main section start

9

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Cl. in Bb

A. Sax.

T. Sax.

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

D. B.

Main section start

12

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Cl. in Bb

A. Sax.

T. Sax.

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

D. B.

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for a woodwind section. The page is numbered '12' at the top left. The title 'Main section start' is centered at the top. The score consists of nine staves. The first four staves are for woodwinds: Flute 1 (Fl. 1), Flute 2 (Fl. 2), Clarinet in Bb (Cl. in Bb), and Alto Saxophone (A. Sax.). The next three staves are for strings: Violin 1 (Vln 1), Violin 2 (Vln 2), and Viola (Vla). The final two staves are for the Violoncello (Vc.) and Double Bass (D. B.). The woodwind parts are active, with the flutes playing a simple melody and the clarinet and saxophone playing more complex patterns. The string parts are mostly silent, indicated by rests.

Main section start

15

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Cl. in Bb

A. Sax.

T. Sax.

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

D. B.

Detailed description: This page of a musical score, labeled 'Main section start', covers measures 15 through 17. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. The woodwind section includes two flutes (Fl. 1 and Fl. 2), a clarinet in Bb (Cl. in Bb), an alto saxophone (A. Sax.), and a tenor saxophone (T. Sax.). The string section includes Violin 1 (Vln 1), Violin 2 (Vln 2), Viola (Vla), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (D. B.). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. In measure 15, the flutes play a melodic line starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and C5. The clarinet and saxophones play a similar melodic line. The tenor saxophone has a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes. The strings are silent, indicated by a horizontal line with a fermata. In measure 16, the woodwinds continue their melodic lines, and the tenor saxophone maintains its rhythmic pattern. In measure 17, the woodwinds conclude their phrases, and the tenor saxophone plays a final rhythmic figure.

Main section start

18

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Cl. in Bb

A. Sax.

T. Sax.

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

D. B.

The musical score is arranged in a system with ten staves. The top two staves are for Flutes 1 and 2, both starting with a trill (tr) on the first measure. The Clarinet in Bb, Alto Saxophone, and Tenor Saxophone staves follow. The string section (Violins 1 and 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass) is shown with rests in all three measures. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first measure of the flute parts includes a trill on F#4. The Clarinet in Bb and Alto Saxophone parts have melodic lines with various intervals and slurs. The Tenor Saxophone part has a few notes in the first measure.

Main section start

From here each player to end  
independently & start to move

21

Fl. 1  
*poco f* *p*

Fl. 2  
*poco f* *p*

Cl. in Bb  
*poco f* *p*

A. Sax.  
*poco f* *p*

T. Sax.  
*poco f* *p*

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

D. B.

Main section start

24

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Cl. in Bb

A. Sax.

T. Sax.

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

D. B.

Detailed description: This page of a musical score covers measures 24 through 27. The score is arranged in a system with eight staves. The top four staves are for woodwinds: Flute 1 and Flute 2 (treble clef), Clarinet in Bb (treble clef), and Alto Saxophone (treble clef). The bottom four staves are for strings: Tenor Saxophone (treble clef), Violin 1 (treble clef), Violin 2 (treble clef), Viola (alto clef), Violoncello (bass clef), and Double Bass (bass clef). Measures 24 and 25 show active parts for Flutes 1 and 2, Clarinet in Bb, and Alto Saxophone. Measures 26 and 27 show the woodwinds continuing their lines, while the string section remains mostly silent, indicated by horizontal lines on their staves.



Main section start

28

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Cl. in Bb

A. Sax.

T. Sax.

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

D. B.

Detailed description: This page of a musical score, numbered 207, contains measures 28 through 30 of a piece. The section is titled 'Main section start'. The score is arranged in a system with ten staves. The first two staves are for Flute 1 (Fl. 1) and Flute 2 (Fl. 2), both in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). They play a melodic line starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and then descending. The third staff is for Clarinet in Bb (Cl. in Bb) in treble clef, starting with a trill on G4. The fourth staff is for Alto Saxophone (A. Sax.) in treble clef, also starting with a trill on G4. The fifth staff is for Tenor Saxophone (T. Sax.) in treble clef, playing a bass line. The remaining five staves (Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, Vc., and D. B.) are currently empty, indicating that these instruments are silent during these measures.

Main section start

31

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Cl. in Bb

A. Sax.

T. Sax.

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

D. B.

Detailed description: This page of a musical score, numbered 208, contains measures 31, 32, and 33. The score is for a woodwind ensemble and a string section. The woodwind parts include Flute 1 (Fl. 1), Flute 2 (Fl. 2), Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. in Bb), Alto Saxophone (A. Sax.), and Tenor Saxophone (T. Sax.). The string section includes Violin 1 (Vln 1), Violin 2 (Vln 2), Viola (Vla), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (D. B.). Measures 31 and 32 feature a long, sweeping melodic line in the flutes, starting on a whole note and extending across both measures. The clarinet and alto saxophone parts play a rhythmic eighth-note pattern. The tenor saxophone part is mostly rests. The string section is silent, indicated by horizontal lines on their staves. Measure 33 continues the flute melody and clarinet/alto saxophone pattern, ending with a trill (tr) on a sharp note. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

Main section start

34

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Cl. in Bb

A. Sax.

T. Sax.

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

D. B.

Detailed description: This page of a musical score covers measures 34, 35, and 36. The score is for a woodwind and string ensemble. The woodwinds include two flutes (Fl. 1 and Fl. 2), a clarinet in Bb (Cl. in Bb), an alto saxophone (A. Sax.), and a tenor saxophone (T. Sax.). The strings include Violin 1 (Vln 1), Violin 2 (Vln 2), Viola (Vla), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (D. B.). Measures 34 and 35 are marked with a fermata, indicating a sustained note. In measure 36, the woodwinds play a melodic line, while the strings play a rhythmic accompaniment. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4.

## **Strings - Main section instructions**

Each part contains seven lines of music, and a diagram containing seven numbered spheres connected by paths. This diagram is a representation of the performance area: Sphere 1 is your own position on the stage, sphere two the area where the conductor is (and the other musicians begin), and spheres 3-7 points around the auditorium where musical materials have been placed for the other musicians.

To begin: all string players play music from 1. When the conductor starts to beat, gradually and independently move too playing material 2.

When the musicians start to move, each string player is to follow one of their movements around the space and play whatever material most closely fits their position as follows:

- Violin 1: Flute 1
- Violin 2: Flute 2
- Viola: Clarinet
- Cello: Alto Sax
- Bass: Tenor sax.

So e.g. if the first flute moves from position 2 to position 6, the first violin moves from playing material 2 to playing material 6, and continues to follow the player likewise from there.

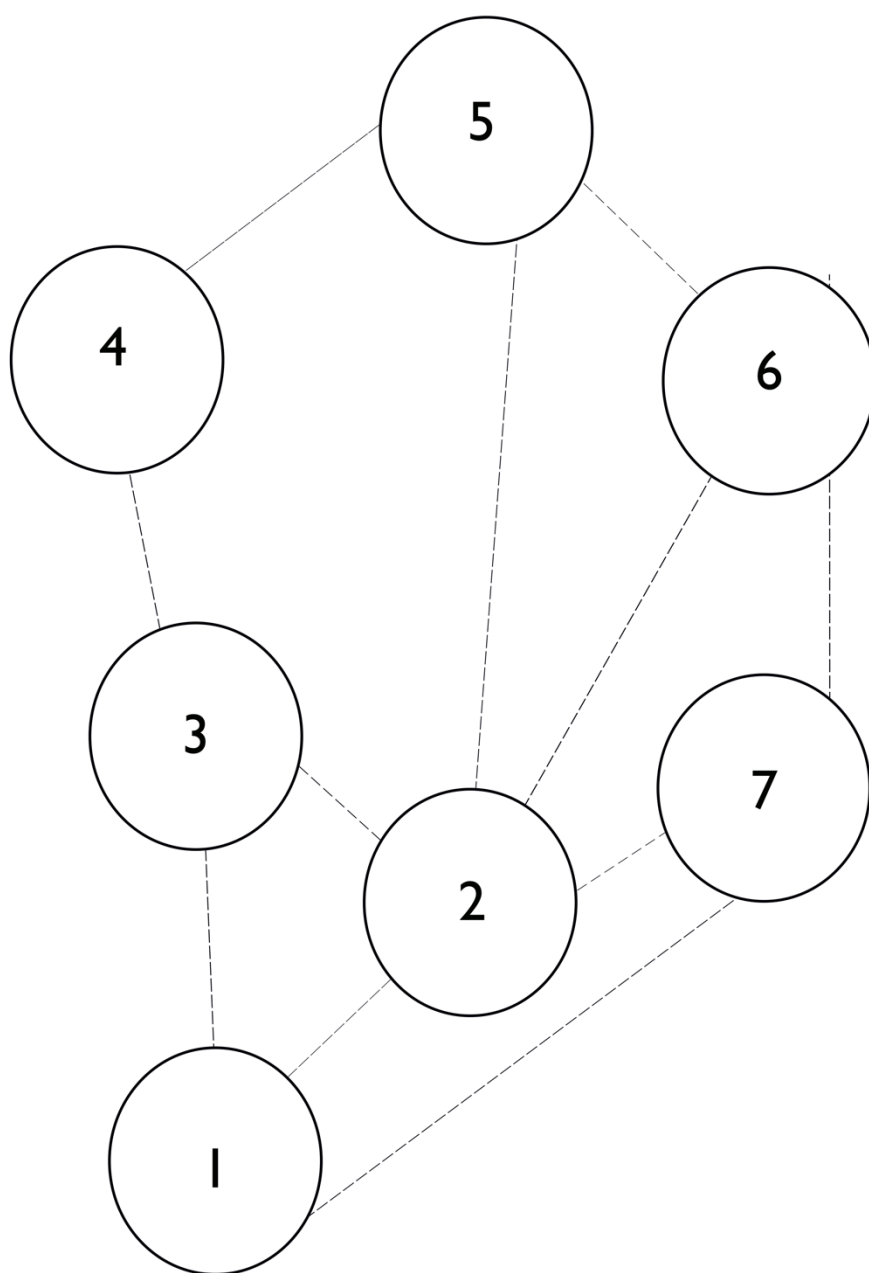
If the player you are following moves between two positions that are not connected by a dotted line on the diagram (e.g. from 5 to 3) then you must follow the lines through other material to get there (e.g. from 5 to 3 via 2 or 4). If the musician has left that point by the time you arrive you must follow them as best you can.

If you get irretrievably lost return to material 1 and begin again.

When the music from the cafe begins, the wind player will gradually exit the auditorium. When you can no longer see your player, return to playing material 1.

During this time the stage will be reset for the Harmonic Canon.

Continue until the set-up is completed, then stop in your own time and exit.



# Strings Main Section

1

Musical score for the first system of the Strings Main Section. The score is written for five parts: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature changes from 7/4 to 6/4, then to 5/4, and finally to 6/4. The dynamic marking is *pp* (pianissimo). The score shows a melodic line in Violin II and Violoncello, and a harmonic accompaniment in Violin I, Viola, and Double Bass.

Musical score for the second system of the Strings Main Section. The score is written for five parts: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature changes from 6/4 to 4/4, then to 7/4, and finally to 4/4. The score shows a melodic line in Violin I, Violin II, and Violoncello, and a harmonic accompaniment in Viola and Double Bass. A fermata is placed over the first measure of the Violin I part.

Repeats, note order etc. <sup>2</sup> ad lib.

normale - molto sul pont. - normale (etc.)

Violin I  
(cresc. e dim. ad lib.)  
sul G, molto sul pont., harm. gliss

Violin II  
(cresc. e dim. ad lib.)  
sul G, molto sul pont., harm. gliss

Viola  
(cresc. e dim. ad lib.)  
normale - molto sul pont. - normale (etc.)

Violoncello  
cresc. e dim. ad lib.  
normale - molto sul pont. - normale (etc.)

Double Bass  
cresc. e dim. ad lib.

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

The image shows a musical score for five instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The score is for page 3. Each instrument part is written on a five-line staff. The Violin I and Violin II parts are in treble clef, while the Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass parts are in bass clef. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The time signature is 8/8. The score consists of a single measure. The Violin I part has a whole note chord of B-flat, D, and F. The Violin II part has a whole note chord of B, D, and F. The Viola part has a whole note chord of B, D, and F. The Violoncello part has a whole note chord of B, D, and F, with a fermata over the final note. The Double Bass part has a whole note chord of B, D, and F, with a fermata over the final note. The dynamic marking *pp* (pianissimo) is indicated below each staff.



TACET

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

The image shows a musical score for five instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. Above the staves is a box containing the word "TACET". Each instrument's staff contains a single note, indicating that all instruments are silent for this measure.

Repeat bars ad lib. in any order

The musical score consists of five staves, each labeled with an instrument name on the left: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. Each staff begins with a treble clef for Violin I and II, and a bass clef for Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The notation is a single melodic line for each instrument, starting with a quarter note G4 (with a sharp sign) and followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5 (with a sharp sign). The first measure of each staff is marked with 'pizz.' and contains a repeat sign. This is followed by a double bar line, then a second measure with a quarter note D5 (with a sharp sign), quarter notes E5, F5, and G5 (with a sharp sign), and another repeat sign. This pattern repeats for a third measure with quarter notes A5, B5, and C6 (with a sharp sign), and a final measure with quarter notes D6, E6, and F6 (with a sharp sign). The score is presented as a single system with five staves.

sustain any high note

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

The image shows a vertical musical score for five instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. Each instrument part is represented by a single staff. Above each staff, the text "sustain any high note" is written. A triangle symbol, representing a sustain pedal, is placed on each staff. The staves are arranged vertically, with Violin I at the top and Double Bass at the bottom. The Violoncello and Double Bass staves use a bass clef, while the Violin I, Violin II, and Viola staves use a treble clef.

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

The image shows a musical score for five instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The score is written on five staves, each with its respective instrument name to the left. The notation includes treble clefs for Violin I and Violin II, and bass clefs for Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The music consists of several measures, with notes and rests clearly visible on each staff.

# Natural Horn lines

Horn

Musical staff for Horn in C. The notes are: C4 (with +), B3 (with +), A3 (with +), G3, F3, E3, D3, C3.

Hn in F

Musical staff for Horn in F. The notes are: F3 (with +), E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F2.

Hn in Ab

Musical staff for Horn in Ab. The notes are: Ab2 (with +), Gb2, F2, Eb2, D2, C2, B1, Ab1.

Hn in Eb

Musical staff for Horn in Eb. The notes are: Eb2 (with +), D2, C2, B1, Ab1, Gb1, F1, Eb1.

Hn in G

Musical staff for Horn in G. The notes are: G2 (with +), F2, Eb2, D2, C2, B1, Ab1, G1.

Hn in Bb

Musical staff for Horn in Bb. The notes are: Bb1 (with +), Ab1, Gb1, F1, Eb1, D1, C1, Bb0.

Hn in A

Musical staff for Horn in A. The notes are: A1 (with +), G1, F1, Eb1, D1, C1, B0, A0.

Hn in E

Musical staff for Horn in E. The notes are: E2 (with +), D2, C2, B1, Ab1, Gb1, F1, E1.

Hn in D

Musical staff for Horn in D. The notes are: D2 (with +), C2, B1, Ab1, Gb1, F1, E1, D1.

# Ouroboros

Flute

## OUROBOROS

Peter Nagle

### Flute lines

Linear time is a western invention

time is not linear

it is a marvellous entanglement

where at any moment

points can be chosen

and solutions invented

without beginning or end

The musical score consists of seven staves of music, each with a number (1-7) in the left margin. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff (1) contains the lyrics 'Linear time is a western invention'. The second staff (2) contains 'time is not linear'. The third staff (3) contains 'it is a marvellous entanglement'. The fourth staff (4) contains 'where at any moment'. The fifth staff (5) contains 'points can be chosen'. The sixth staff (6) contains 'and solutions invented'. The seventh staff (7) contains 'without beginning or end'. The music features various note values, including quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, with many notes beamed together. There are several slurs and ties throughout the piece.

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