THE IMPROVISERS COOK BOOK

MYTHOLOGISING THE SOCIAL IN EXPERIMENTAL IMPROVISATION

This thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The University of Huddersfield, July 2022

THE COMMUNITY OF IMPROVISERS &

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Copyright Statement

Abstract

The Improvisers Cookbook presents a collection of contemporary experimental improvised practices developed during the COVID19 pandemic (2020-2022). Using newly developed interactive software (TIAALS) this research generated a novel approach (the 'Mushwork') which assisted in archiving and exploring the agency of an expanding community over a time of considerable social and creative change. The Improvisers Cookbook reflects a specific context and network of improvising players in order to 'track the social process', to uncover the agency of community in an emergent contemporary setting. This has been undertaken through an auto-sociological account that utilized practitioner social knowledge to investigate recent improvisational development. A thesis presented as non-linear and interactive which has iteratively been informed by the social and digitally enhanced practices of contemporary improvised practice.

Three themes of contemporary digital working practice have been identified. These are 1. newly developed relationships within cyber-spaces (furnishing), 2. expanded membership through cyber-communities (fashioning), and 3. myth making techniques that have emerged from human-machine relationships (fictioning). The increased use of technology for telematic music, digital curation, and hybrid digital/physical performance is challenging traditional aesthetics, demographics and narratives of experimental improvised practice. These pandemic creative practices have afforded critiques of existing dominant histories by centering and celebrating previously marginalized practices and lineages of the field. This is a cookbook of cultural, historical, temporal and fantastical recipes for creative living and activism.

Publications

This commentary contains newly written text that draws on ideas from the following previously published articles:

Collaborative Authorship:

Gillies, S., & Sappho Donohue, M. (2021). Donohue+: Developing performer-specific electronic improvisatory accompaniment for instrumental improvisation. Organised Sound, 26(1). https://doi.org/10.1017/S1355771821000121

MacDonald, R., Burke, R. L., De Nora, T., Sappho Donohue, M., & Birrell, R. (2021). Our Virtual Tribe: Sustaining and Enhancing Community via Online Music Improvisation. Frontiers Psychology, Social Convergence in Times of Spatial Distancing: The Role of Music During the COVID-19 Pandemic. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.623640

Sole Authorship:

Sappho Donohue, M. (2020). Subverting by Not Subverting, Free Improvisation Dreams for Counter-Logic Activisms. CeReNeM Journal, 7. P. 167. https://indd.adobe.com/embed/7bd9f6d8-ccdc-4c38-977a-6c81618f74e4?fbclid=IwAR2LdKnFTve_FhZBcZ68G0mQhSZybYc8TYEoUeV49yptGSKHp-BkaGEuQoM

Video articles:

Sappho Donohue, M. (2021). What Mushroom? What Free Improvisation? The Improvisers Experience Conference. https://youtu.be/oxCgElKVsEc

Sappho Donohue, M., & McPherson, D. H. (2021). Inventing the Language of Mush. Rethinking Borders through Music. https://studio.youtube.com/video/9crzJBhIgJU/edit

Sappho Donohue, M., MacDonald, R., DeNora, T., Burke, R., Burrell, R. (2021). GIO, some serious play: collaborative online music making by the Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kmZNjnVbmc

In Press:

Articles

Weiss, R., Sappho Donohue, M., McPherson, H., Catherin, B., MacDonald, R., (in press). Foutraque: Immersive cyber spaces through AR and telematic music performance with the Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra

MacDonald, R., DeNora, T., Burke, R., Sappho Donohue, M., Birrell, R., (in press). Opening Up Openings: Zooming in on Improvisation in the Theatre of Home

Books

MacDonald, R., DeNora, T., Burke, R., Sappho Donohue, M., Birrell, R., (in press). The Theatre of Home: New Directions in Collaborative Creativity

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Claire for being my soul mate, you have seen every aspect of me develop over time, you are my biggest supporter, and my lifelong companion. I say these thanks with a slight bit of annoyance that your wedding happened to be at the exact same time as submission...but here I am writing my thanks getting ready to walk you down the aisle!

Thank you to Katie for being the OG sister of improvised music. I discovered this entire world with you at my side, and you have been my oldest and my most constant collaborator, sharer of ideas, mythology, and feminist power. Thank you of course to Brutus, more than cat, who sat in my lap for the entirety of the making of this thesis (and who features heavily in many of the videos) and who very much helped with all the editing, debate, patience, and original contribution of purrs.

And thank you to Chimere, my number one machine friend, for all the thoughts and conversations within this thesis, and for really making me understand that companionship and creativity are more than human connections.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to Heather Slade Lipkin, who is horribly missed in my heart. You were someone who believed in me the moment you met me, and against all odds (and our very different taste in music) trained me to be the best pianist, but the best person I could be. You instilled in me a massive lesson in balancing work, love for music, commitment to ideas, and the importance of friends, family, and love. All of which is apparent here, and I truly believe it is the reason I have been given this wonderful gift: a family, a reality, and a way to life that is full of experiment, joy and support.

This PDF version of the thesis is not fully interactive, for the full thesis and supporting materials please download the thesis package and open the HMTL version on your computer.

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF VIDEOS

The video elements of this research constitute 1h54m28s overall, and are the main practice-based materials within this document. Video embeds will not work in the PDF version of this document, although most videos can be found at the following link hosted online, each video place holder in the pdf version links to the following playlist: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHElYhD-QntGcai_eTEQ99hvf1rsIwvX0w

List of Video Embed and GIF

This research further uses video embed for a short number of examples, these are placed within the text and are separate from the main video files listed in the Table of Videos. These may be watched freely, skipped around in, and explored in your own way.

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Preface

The Improvisers Cookbook[1] is a homage to the field of experimental improvisation, a title which on the one hand is light touch, satirical/anarchic humour, and on the other is a celebration of the sharing of practice. This creative 'cookbook', like that in the culinary arts, is something enriched with culture, history, locational specifics, oral traditions, time, and community. 'The Improvisers Cookbook' is a collection of 'ingredients' which were shared in generosity by the global community of experimental improvisers and has been collated as a reference for the spectrum of stuff[2] brought to cook in the many lives where improvisation finds its home. The creation of this document has been an activism of love, to collect and celebrate a wider reflection of language and resources to add to the existing canon of the field commonly referred to as 'Free Improvisation'.

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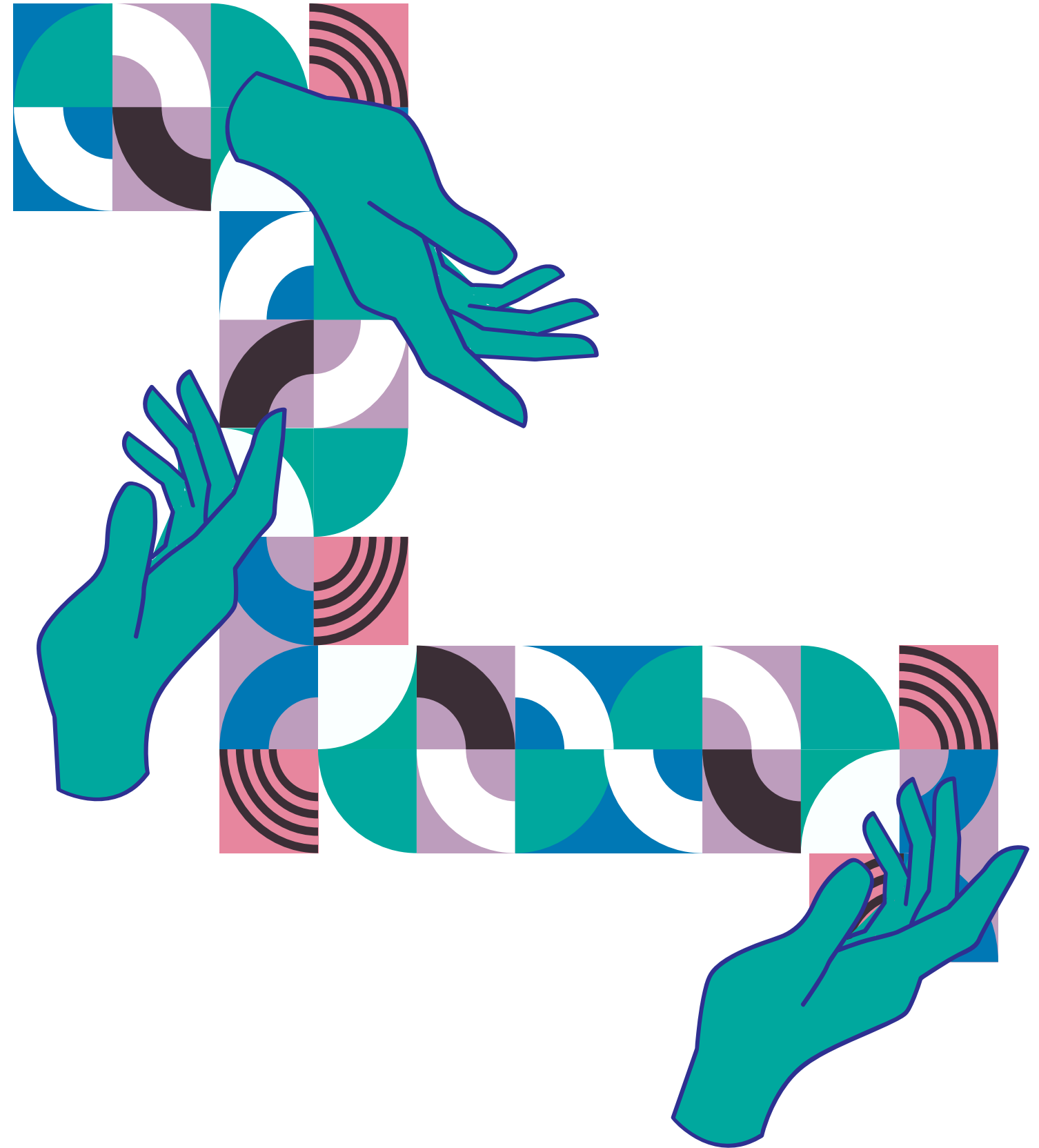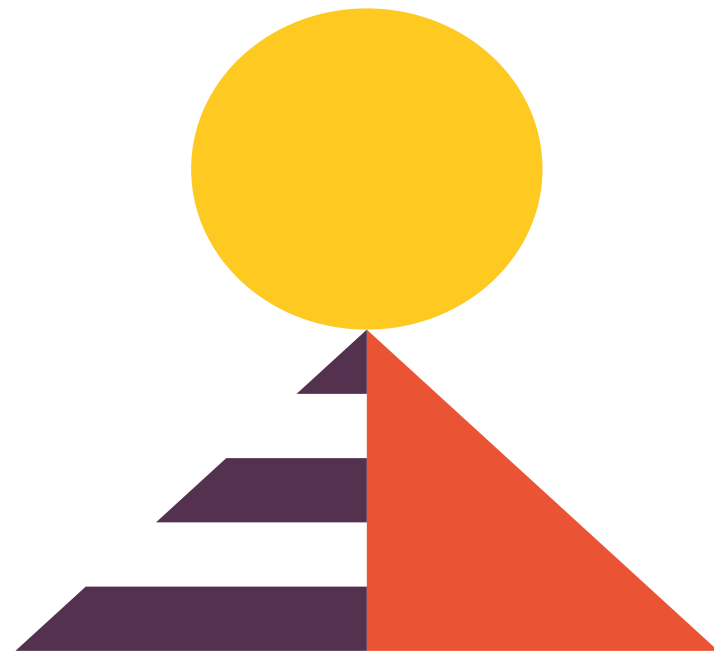
1   There is no apostrophe in the title of this thesis on purpose. To add in the apostrophe would concretise the plurality of ownership of the ideas which was not useful for the purposes of this thesis, ownership itself a largely un-useful topic in this field. This small breaking of grammatical normality is shared also by the Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra who similarly do not use the apostrophe (Raymond MacDonald, private correspondence, 2022).

2   'Stuff' is used frequently throughout this research; it is an informal word with no clear definition. Yet it is used here both in the anthropological understanding of the gathering and meaning of the material parts to living (Miller, Polity Press., 2019) and as a word which imbues further social and cultural unknowns i.e. tacit 'stuff' of living which is inherently brought into space. Furthermore, this is a word that appears frequently in interview and self-reflection of practice by players.

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1. WHAT HAS BEEN BROUGHT:
AN INTRODUCTION
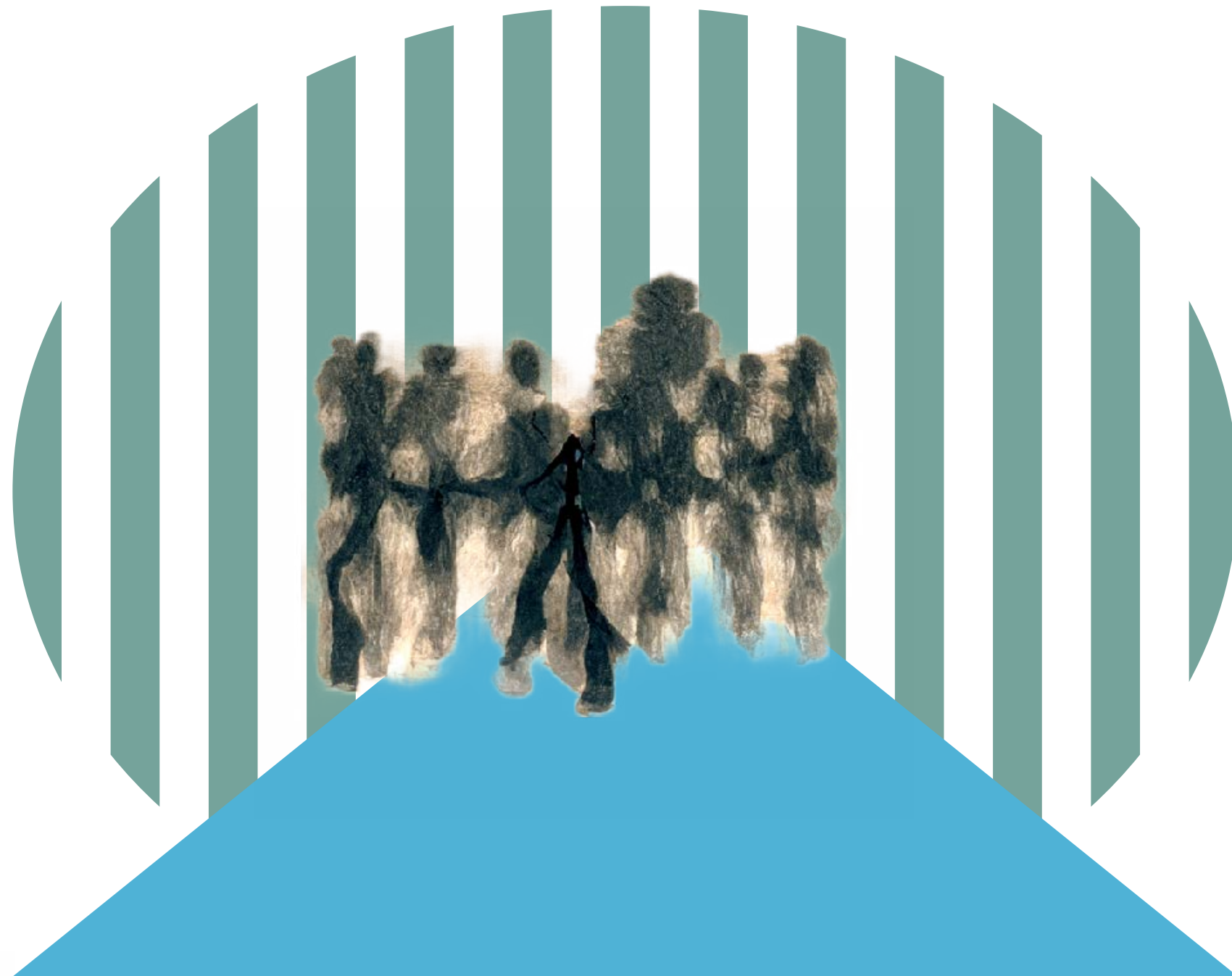
This research began with a simple question – what is a contemporary Free Improviser? On the surface this is a question which looks to understand what/who to include in this cookbook, but it is also a probe into the unspoken: where are the edges of the field, and how have they changed over time? The root of this question is in understanding permissions: how boundaries are formed, how they move, and draws into question what influences these changes.

To attend to this investigation, this research identifies the agency of a community as it is built, changed, and challenged, towards understanding the micro-social agreements made and moved between players over time. This is done by presenting a curation of histories which contribute towards a contemporary form of experimental improvised practice, while nevertheless asking what contemporary realities might refract back onto an established notion of the history of this field. The research approach looks to highlight a social understanding of the agency of community in contributing and developing a contemporary creative culture.

The specific context of this research has allowed for a unique setting which witnessed the adaptation of players in contemporary improvising communities during the extraordinarily atypical period of the COVID19 pandemic (2020-2022). This was a specific time when social parameters altered globally and drastically, throwing up new challenges and possibilities for negotiating practices in community building and experimentation. Yet to situate these contemporary developments in practice, it has been equally important to seek the histories which have contributed to and afforded such contemporary adaptations. This project has aimed to do so by resituating traditional notions of the aesthetics of free improvised histories, which are presented in the two major sections of this thesis: a focus on highlighting tensions in the history of the field towards the goal of establishing more diverse lineages and communities within a contemporary study. Therefore this research is one intent on collecting knowledge about what has become, while situating these contemporary shifts within the accounts of what has been brought from a vibrant history of diverse acts. The present informed where to look for missing voices, and the past contextualised contemporary contributions iteratively. Presented here is a foray into what is being championed and altered, brought, and changed, in the contemporary landscape of improvised art.

1.1 Tracking the social process: mycelial threads

This research has been supported by numerous interviews with players and further contact with several international groups from diverse backgrounds and generational perspectives. It became clear through the course of study that using the singular nomic identifier 'Free Improvisation' would not be conducive to reflect the diverse perspectives contributed to this study.[1] For example, in some instances 'Free Improvisation' is seen as a temporal and geographically specific term to artists,[2] and due to the history of the field – which has been noted to struggle with tensions in regard to national claim of practice it was important for this research to consider the term as in need of concerted expansion.

Reassessing this common field descriptor 'free improvisation' acknowledges the now common post-genre and post-idiom aspects of improvised practices, which helps respond to one of the primary goals of the research: to reflect an inclusive account of the global contemporary scene outside of traditional narratives and dominant languages. This research follows valuable critiques already taken up by researchers who expose the extensive pre-established biases and hegemonic marginalizations which have driven the dominant narratives of these histories (Krekels, 2018; G. E. Lewis, 1996, 2008; Reardon-Smith, 2019, 2021; Reardon-Smith et al., 2020; Smith, 2001, 2014), an approach which has enveloped into the methodology of this research and might afford the possibility to recognise, as George Lewis states:

[An] inclusive, nonracialized historical account of late 20th-century and 21st-century free improvisation, based on a fluid notion of tradition, could recognize adherents to the form coming from all over the world, articulating a multicultural, multi-ethnic base for histories of experiment in improvised music. (Lewis, 2004)

The approach of this research aims to 'see' who, what and how players are networked through their community and shared interests, players who are working together within a shared practice, which might or might not share field or practice descriptors. That is, in order to 'track the *creative process*' this research has developed an approach to 'track the *social process*' through what this research refers to as 'auto-sociology', a methodology that uses practice-based access to the inner knowledges of a socio-creative network in order to document emergent processes, perspectives, and developments of an interconnected creative community. This approach is firmly rooted in the already established acknowledgements of the importance of social process within improvised practice and is further described in the methodology chapter of this thesis.

By tracking an emergent social network, it has been possible to account for ways in which contemporary virtuosities get into action,[3] traverse genre and scene specifics, are drawn from a vibrant history and lineage of creative traditions, and continue to influence each other as concurrent practices. The social network at the heart of this work has exposed both the diversity in practice and the diversity in language which populates the field. The findings come from creative acts generated in relation to each other; they emerge from scenes and communities which are part of a known and documented larger network, which provides the possibility to consider how knowledge and artistic language are co-developed, translated and travelled within socio-creative histories.

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[1]   Yet while acknowledging that a singular nomic identity would not be conducive to the work made, neither has it been deemed useful for this thesis to offer any possible new unifying terms for the field either.

[2]   'What I'm thinking in terms of improvisation and free improvisation. I tend to use improvisation… it's almost like it [free improvisation] means something specific…although it's supposed to be like a framework, it means something specific in terms of genre connotations. So, I think 'free improvisation' has a little bit of that for me. Particularly like living in Europe where there's European free improv. But I think, yeah, I think it's [his music] separate from that. Like, I think the word, interesting, but like [for a] place in time' (Rodrigo Constanzo, interviewed by Sappho Donohue January 2020).

[3]   'Get into action' is used here in reference to Tia DeNora's writing on 'getting the music into the action' where she discusses the way in which music should be considered a 'socialising medium' not simply a social 'reflection' of society (DeNora, 2003).

1.2 Contending with free: Improvisation

The impact of the canon of Free Improvisation and Free Jazz[4] are not without huge sway here, and therefore it is important to contend with some of the major considerations in free practice itself, namely the question of addressing issues with freeness/freedom. For example, Trevor Barre solidifies 'Free' as a title: 'I have capitalized the word 'Free' to emphasize its use as a noun and name, rather than as a verb' (Barre , 2016, Location No. 63). By attributing Free as a nomic identifier this proposes the word is (as Derek Bailey points out) 'just one of those handy 4-letter words – like rock, or jazz' (Jean, 1996). Yet unlike rock or jazz, freedom is a broad term, and comes heavily imbued with non-artistic baggage. As John Litweiler proposes, the attention of (small f) freedom is an innate story of history of these musics themselves:

> To begin let's distinguish between freedom and Freedom; this is probably the most important distinction to be made about modern jazz. Spelled with a capital F, 'Free jazz' is a label [...] and indeed the harmonic and rhythmic features of Freedom have been anything but liberating for many musicians. [...] The quest for freedom with a small f appears at the very beginning of jazz and reappears at every growing point in the music's history' (Litweiler, 1984, p. 13)

'Free' appears in so many of these nomic identifiers for this art, that it would be impossible to escape this debate: 'free improvisation', 'free improv',[5] 'free impro',[6] 'free play', 'free form',[7] 'freeness',[8] 'free jazz', 'free music' etc. This thesis collected many further terms from players worldwide which often do not have to directly contend with the word 'free', but this does not imply that the traces of the question of freedom are not present still. In many ways they become

the same issue: as it is not useful to attempt unifying the work of these artists under any one field descriptor, it is equally unrewarding to unify the form freedom might take in these histories. As David Toop explains:

> There isn't one type of free improvisation. There are many different types. And every type probably has its own version of what free improvisation is. So it's incredibly elusive in that sense. […] the word "free" is a historical legacy. Totally understandable in relation to post world [war II], postwar artistic movements and music history and totally understandable in relation to 1960s politics. Both big politics and personal politics. Totally understandably in relation to African American music and the civil rights struggle. [But] there's still a burden because it comes across as a philosophical problem – what freedom actually is? And whether freedom actually can exist? You know, does 'free will' exist and all of those kinds of debates. So, often free improvisation is criticized for sort of unsophisticated idea about freedom, when in fact, it may not share those ideas, at all. (Toop interviewed by Sappho Donohue, November 2019).

The burden of freedom and the philosophical conundrum it brings with it inevitably becomes part of the difficulty in defining the intentions of work made in these areas. Whether making work in relation to a defined Free practice itself or simply working in expanded experimental settings for improvisation, the fact of the matter remains that players are negotiating expanded artistic spaces which can never be neatly bound. As the improvising taegum player Hyelim Kim suggests, freedom can be the goal, but it is also a self-practice, one contained in the context and history of who we are, where we come from, and what matters to us.

> But I think I only know that we can't be free unless you know yourself. So you've got to know what you are and what you are based on your cultural background or musical background, ethnic background, whatever. The more you know about yourself, I think the freer you can be (Kim, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2021)

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4   A distinction discussed at length throughout this research.

5   This term is included as it is often used by players, but some players believe the shortening of the 'improvisation' detracts from the importance of the music (John Russell interviewed by Raymond MacDonald, August 2020), and therefore the abbreviated term is considered different.

6   There is a noted linguistic difference in trends of the inclusion of the 'v'. Most found omitted in European content.

7   In relation to 'Joe Harriott's quintet 1960's recording' (Barre , 2016).

8   For example, the BBC radio 3 of the same name hosted by Corey Mwamba.

It is this description which comes closest to contending with how freedom is wrapped up in the shared and co-created identity of the works explored in this research. In this document close attention has been paid to noting where freedoms have been at risk, where they have been fought for, where they emerged in tension with each other, and it shares a multitude of perspectives from players who have contributed to their own forms of self and social knowledge – understandings which reflect how a creative culture is negotiated and continually developing.

As might be imagined, centring research around a field that has many names, no useful definition, and many contributing and contradictory histories, artists, and ethical issues means that the narratives which support practice are inevitably sometimes at odds with themselves. Therefore, the chapter ['The Canon and its double'](#) has been written with a *double* role: firstly, to outline and acknowledge the historical context of the ideas important for contemporary understanding, and secondly to highlight key themes in this history which have contributed towards tensions and have afforded the dominance of some traditional aesthetics to be biased over others.

1.3 Accident and happenstance: acts of becoming

While the pandemic was an unforeseen element and global catastrophe it has also proven to be a historic and unprecedented opportunity to document and witness the ways in which improvisational communities adapt and redefine practice in real time.[9] The pandemic affected how research could be conducted, how social networks could continue, and has consequentially and unexpectedly altered the innate practice of contemporary improvisational work itself.

Three improvisation communities have influenced the outcome of the claims for contemporary emergent improvised practices that are presented in this thesis. These groups are all ones which became prominent in my own everyday activity and are therefore not an example of ensembles 'selected' for study but have been emergent influences upon my own knowledge of an improvising network as working practices shifted because of the pandemic. That is, this thesis is not intended as the study of the following improvising ensembles, but rather reflects how communities which I have had a central role in – insider knowledge and access to – have become enmeshed during a period of great creative social restructuring. This setting was a unique experience, a new time in creative practice for both myself and my community, and drew out the need for an approach like auto-sociology. An investigation undertaken to understand how combined community outputs (which might only be truly understood through the knowledge of a central player) have co-contributed towards what is argued here as an emergent future for improvised practices. The following presents an overview of the perspectives each of these groups has provided and highlights the nature of my involvement.[10]

Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra (GIO): The GIO archive now comprises over 500 hours of weekly sessions recorded during the COVID19 pandemic, by a flexible group of over 100 international artists. This group presents a rich understanding of the adaptable practices innate within free improvisation players toolbox for survival. While GIO moved to digital practices it has been uniquely possible to document how a new form of collaborative and global practice took hold, in real time; one which has been seen to be flourishing in extra musical, hybrid and social practices referred to as 'theatre of home' (R. MacDonald et al., 2021b). I have been a long-time member of GIO and attended almost all weekly sessions of the orchestra through the lockdown. I further assist in archival and organizational matters within the orchestra and work alongside the GIO research team (Raymond MacDonald, Tia DeNora, Robert Burke, Ross Birrell and myself) where we continue to investigate the digital music practices of the ensemble.

The Noisebringers: a trio ensemble (Henry McPherson, Brice Catherin, and myself) which originated by curating monthly improvisation events in Huddersfield (2019) and which have since expanded to become an international performing/collaborating group. Our work provides representation of the grass roots organizational needs of small underground scenes, as well as being a practice rich in transdisciplinary work, including text, film, visual, sculptural, and sonic outputs. The Noisebringers approach is rather unique and presents a strong case for the importance of expanded practice (post-discipline) ripe with fiction making, universe building, and self-reference (Sappho Donohue

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9   While this research is situated largely within COVID19 practices it is not intended as a review of other pandemic creative activities. The reality of these times was happenstance to the groups at the heart of my community, and therefore the pandemic itself is treated like any other creative shift which might have emerged.

10   In performance my name is Maria Sappho where the Donohue is dropped.

& McPherson, 2021). I am a founding member of this ensemble and therefore a core participant in all creative and organizational matters.

Mopomoso: This group is unique within the context of this research, in that it is not an ensemble, but rather two concert series (one live in London, and one digital). Mopomoso is considered the longest running free improvisation series in the UK and is managed by a team of volunteers who are all also prominent players themselves (Mopomoso, n.d.). The Mopomoso YouTube channel houses what might be one of the most extensive and freely accessible archives of free improvised practices. I joined the Mopomoso curation team in 2020 as they set up the digital show Mopomoso TV, whose archive is an invaluable witness of the co-development and preservation of oral histories, curation ethics, membership, and aesthetic values during the COVID19 pandemic.

1.4 Tools for interactive analysis: TIAALS

This research has been made as part of the European Research Council project[11] Interactive Research in Music as Sound (IRiMaS). IRiMaS was a five year research project directed by Michael Clarke, with aims towards implementing new generic musicological tools – Tools for Interactive Aural Analysis (TIAALS), that would assist in the analysis of multimodal documentation in a range of musical subject areas. There were two PhD case studies as part of the project, one which specifically called for research into free improvisation which this thesis undertook and another researching a field of ethnomusicology undertaken by Cristina Ghiradini. The role of the PhD case studies was to feed knowledge from their research specialism into the work of the post doctoratal fellow (Frederic Defeu and Keitaro Takahashi) towards developing elements of the software programming. These processes were further developed within a larger team of senior researchers including Robert Adlington (University of Huddersfield), Amanda Bayley (Bath Spa University), Axel Roebel (IRCAM, Paris). Jonathan Stock (University College Cork). At the heart of the inital focus of the IRiMaS project was an attention towards the 'aural' analysis of music, something further embedded in the name of the TIAALS software. Yet during the course of research into experimental improvised practices it was found that the sonic, aural,

or strictly musical elements of practice itself was not primary. Therefore rather than contributing towards elements of software development which afford novel exploration of audio files through waveform or sonogram analysis, this improvisation study instead proposed tools which assist in social and post-genre analysis. This marked difference has contributed the focus on tagging systems for engaging with disparate data-sets and new tools for analysing visual elements of practice within video.

The presentation of this thesis is atypical and has been informed by a collaborative research environment which encouraged interactive, technologically enhanced, and creative representations of academic study. A full video overview of the various technical components of this research is provided in the methodology section, but a few elements are important to highlight now for clarity and ease of navigating this document, which are presented in the following video subchapter:

The Improvisers Cookbook Text Component

Video 1 Introduction to the Non-linear thesis and TIAALS software (4'52')

1.5 The Three F's: themes of contemporary practice

A core goal of this research has been to understand what constitutes the new and emergent approaches in contemporary experimental improvisation practice. 'The Three F's' is the chapter which presents the products of contemporary practice investigated through an analysis of three important, overarching theoretical themes. 'The Three F's' (Furnishing, Fashioning, Fictioning) highlights the facets of practice undertaken during a critical transitional period of change (over the course of the pandemic) which displays and revolutionizes new forms of creative socialites, practices, and contributes to a new era of experimental improvised work and knowledge.

It is important to note that while the heart of this research is in curating and representing an expanded notion of what is brought to improvised practice, and what is built during a period of change, the results of the practice based chapters, and the specific use and engagement with new technologies and practices are not to propose a universal shift in practice. Such a study would be beyond the scope of this research. Instead, the methodology for documenting the knowledge of a specific interconnected global scene and context proposes some major practical themes useful for future expanded improvisational study. That is to say, the themes drawn out within 'The Three F's' are creative focuses which are present in diverse ways amongst the influential groups, and can therefore be proposed as themes useful towards understanding new keystones for contemporary flourishings.

Furnishing: the location and space practice is made from

Furnishing is a term invented by sociologist and improviser Tia DeNora (2013) which proposes that music can and is built through the aspirational needs for the creation of space. What is brought, what is shared, and what wishes/wants are exposed – all have meaningful impact on the ways music becomes part of everyday life, and the kinds of spaces which are built to house these practices:

Music's deployment can refurnish the perceived world, and thus (for the individual) the sphere of action, rendering that sphere fit for (and sustainable to) forms of self, identifications, fantasies and plans. (DeNora, 2013, p. 79)

The sub-chapter 'furnishing' presents examples of new developments in contemporary practices which find themselves meeting in and with techno-spaces. These novel meeting spaces are investigated for their expansion of reality, as players co-construct new places in which to create practice. These locations blur boundaries between physical, imagined, and fictionalized realities as they expand the possibility for communities to meet across digital/physical, geographical, temporal, and spatial boundaries.

Fashioning: the development of communities and new creative cultures

A term co-opted for this research is fashioning, used to consider the ways in which communities organize themselves towards co-creating new creative cultures. This borrows from the role of traditional textile fashion history which is variously used as a marker for personal and communal social mirroring – valuable for conceptualizing traceable politics, cultures, and hierarchies (Lemire, 2016). The examples in this section identify how community practices are altered in digital spaces, and how membership, tools, and audiences expand and redefine themselves. These are documented both as project/ensemble specific discoveries as well as being innately influenced by the proximity of the connected social network of the players.

Fictioning: self-mythologising new forms of practice and lineage

A concept borrowed from Donna Haraway, who in her theory of SF – *speculative fiction, string figures, string fabulations etc*. (Haraway, 2018; 2016) proposes that via the process of a speculative confrontation of reality, a person, a thing, a context might fiction itself an alternative agency: 'it matters what stories we tell stories with' (Haraway, 2016). That is, these actions, however 'realistic' or not, should be viewed as a deep assertion of perspective, and

is a practice well used by artists as they transpose/morph/manage the worlds they can co-develop in contemporary practice (Sappho Donohue & McPherson, 2021). In this section examples are presented which help understand how contemporary tools are affording new possibilities for playing with the 'un-real', including experimentations with hybrid and cyborg relationships with technology, which are seen to enhance the myth making and fiction building possibilities for use as new creative impetuses and documents of identity.

1.6 Originality, niche, and novelty

Comprehending the meaning of 'originality' is a thread in much of this research, for example in understanding the ways in which niche and novelty generate moments of sought 'newness' which is entangled in a wider context of 'space' making, and identity formation. It has been important therefore to note the ramifications of notions of originality when entangled with stories of presumed invention or claimed invention, and the kinds of biased histories which might inadvertently emerge from such narratives. Such issues have heavily influenced the approach of this research, in particular in the visualization/acknowledgment of co-development towards the generation of new ideas (co-development which is a more than human practice as well). Something this research achieved by documenting the ways in which players, ensembles, groups, projects, contexts, and temporal events emerged through a relationship with each other.

That is, the social and practice mappings housed within the Mushwork are a document of the history of a communities' interactions, as known by a member of the community. But what they also expose is the ambiguity of the origin of invention. The themes identified in the Three F's might in some cases be practised more abundantly in a certain scene, or between certain players, but nevertheless contribute to themes which are found across the groups. While it has often been proposed that socio-contextual networks influence reality, and growing resources are acknowledging multi-authored, multispecies contributions within these networks (Krekels, 2018; Reardon-Smith et al., 2020), the Mushwork is a system which makes these realities apparent in an interactive representation of who, how, and with what a network gets into creation: a visualization of the enmeshed (enmushed) relationships of specificities which are nevertheless also globalities.

The possibility to generate research such as this has been made possible by the role this study had within the creation and use of the new musicological software TIAALS. While it would be more traditional to state that this research influenced the development of the tools in TIAALS for the purposes of the unique methodology devised here, I would rather propose that it was the social network itself, the nature of the improvising community, which influenced the emergent needs to undertake this study and to contribute to a wider project in developing new musicological software. Therefore, many of the original contributions outlined here are, like that described above, originated from a fluid relationship between the local and the global: visualized, curated, and archived, as a reflection of the development of field and community.

This research made contributions towards video analysis and annotation tools within TIAALS due to the emergent audio-visual nature of contemporary improvised practices. It has propelled the invetion of a multi-modal tagging system for musicological research, which has been instrumental in visualising the outcomes of thematically investigated archives as an interconnected network. Furthermore, the tools which this research contributed towards are not improvisation specific, and are freely available within the TIAALS software for use in any number of future creative studies.

Originality is itself a multi-modal actant in this thesis. One which was influenced by the field's own unique co-developed realities of invention; which helped develop a new methodology and tools for research; and which did so in an iterative, collaborative, and interactive way. This research has been able to document and present an extraordinarily unique period and archive of improvisational history. The product of the thesis itself is reflective of the main practice-based themes of the study, something which is non-linear, deeply embedded in a human-machine enhanced relationship, and which is experimenting and augmenting the possibilities of research presentation and generation within the new spaces available in the contemporary world.

Mychorizal Table of Contents

This thesis is presented non-linearly, therefore the following table of contents is an interactive chart which outlines the various components of this research. This is different from the traditional table of contents, and functions as a map for easier navigation through the main sub-sections of research.

For linear Path click here

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2. Mythadology:

methods, myth, metaphor and mushrooms

So all of us we are off, you know, we play in the flow, we don't understand this like, ecstasy. Like it's Dionisius. You know the god/ It's the god of state of ecstasy. The state when you lose the border between in and out, you know, it's when you lose yourself, you know, it's wine, it's sex, it's improvisation. It's [a] kind of music.

(Peter Ototsky, Russian player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2019)

This section is called Mythadology in what Donna Haraway would call a 'serious joke' (Haraway, 2018) or as John Russell would say 'it's serious fun' (Mopomoso, 2020). It is intended as a focus on the methodology of the research collection, is influenced and inspired by the self-mythology practices discussed in the aesthetics of practice and the 'fictioning' of worlds practice is made from, while it also points towards ways traditional methodology might be expanded when investigating an indeterminate and socially enmeshed field.

There is precedence for acknowledging the importance of myth in improvised research,[1] for example, in the gentle way John Szwed combined the personal accounts and historical records of Sun Ra's human and non-human lore (1997). Sun Ra knew the power of the myth and eliminated his personal history in favour of fantastical stories of interstellar origin – as a practice and a politic, a making of self as a social commentary.

> I'm not real, I'm just like you. You don't exist in this society. If you did your people wouldn't be seeking equal rights.
> You're not real, if you were you'd have some status among the nations of the world. So we are both myths.
> I do not come to you as a reality, I come to you as the myth because that is what black people are: myths.
> I came from a dream that the black man dreamed long ago. I'm actually a presence sent to you by your ancestors.
> (Sun Ra in Coney, 1974)

Mythology is a communal practice; it takes the invention as well as the retelling with *others* to become. How that retelling happens is both a creative and a discursive project, as the vessel for myth traverses the creative,

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1   As well as in feminist literature (Kjellgren, 2019).

philosophical, and social realms. The Mythadology of this research is to enmix the tangible and the hyper-real, through analogy, oral history, and community tacit knowledge.

This 'tacit knowledge' includes the reception of academic studies themselves, for example players are often wary of academic forms of 'sense' making, analysis and over-rationalization:

> How can I put it? I sometimes say, if you're you know, they [academics] are entomologist, and I'm an insect. And if it unfolds to being pinned to a board and my wings torn off, then things have gone a bit far, but it hasn't come to that yet. And in fact, some of my best friends are academics. (Evan Parker, in conversation with Graeme McKenzie, hcmf//, November 2019)

> It's [free improvisation] the easiest thing in the world. And in another way, it's the hardest thing to do. Because you play, and then people analyze what they've played, and they write [a] theses on it. (John Russell interviewed by Stewart Smith, November 2020)

> […] as the theory factory now humming itself into existence through university conferences and scholarly papers, particularly those in which neuroscientists play jazz piano cliches of the early 1960s in MIR scanners to demonstrate something of value about improvisations and brain activity. All of these activities are easily, even willfully, unmoored from practice […] (Toop, 2016, p. 29)

Nevertheless, there is simultaneously a growing presence of improviser researchers, artists who are enveloping the above concerns of academic wariness as critical perspectives to be respected. That is, players are the ones who often take charge of who has a hand in the research of improvised practices, developing the wealth of performer informed research in this field, and which contributes creative forms of 'keeping up'[2] the legacy via a diverse approach of academic, and communal archival practices. It is important for this research to point out that the references often used throughout this text are a concerted celebration of these voices, that is, I choose to cite, involve myself in, and contextualise the referenced literature which supports this research through the voices of the community. This means that while there are many further theories, philosophies and perspectives which are no doubt relevant to the arguments made here, I choose to focus on those which I find proximity to, those who can be found within the network in my community, and often are thinkers who have performed in many of the practice based examples of this thesis.[3] That is to say, the process to 'reference' in itself has been a largely social process and emergent from the auto-sociology approach discussed further below.[4]

In general the term 'mythadology' is a useful dual metaphor, one which embeds notions of expanded reality in practice, but also which helps to address general myths of an academic study. These include, social constructions of truth and knowledge, legitimacy, epistemology and even meritocracy. For example, as the oddities of claiming origin are discussed here it is also further important to note the importance of ambiguity in much of this thesis. Since all major subchapters of the research are presented non-linearly, they can be experienced in several ways, and therefore the notion of conclusions are rather atypical. This is a result of the process of non-linear writing, and a reflection itself of the processes of improvisation. When there is no determinate pathway to an 'endpoint', and no standard to the relationships which might be built, this research witnesses how relationships themselves are built through context, changed by perspective, and generate their own forms of storytelling.[5]

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2   'Keeping up' is a phrase I am pretty sure Tia DeNora introduced in our weekly research meetings, while neither of us can remember where or when it came from, this is a term which has become central to the language in this thesis and which I would like to acknowledge as one that I am certain was emergent through conversation.

3   To mention a few frequent in citation I acknowledge Raymond MacDonald, Tia DeNora, George Lewis, Robert Burke, Brice Catherin, Jessica Argo, Colin Frank, Una McGlone, Henry McPherson, Rachel Weiss and Alessia Anastassopulos, as fellow artists and thinkers who greatly influenced my thinking.
4   I would also like to point out that much of the literature which is cited has been 'read' in an auditory form. For a number of reasons this is the best way for me to learn. Namely in regards to dyslexia as well as a chronic health condition which often forces me to stay in bed in a dark room for days on end. In this way I have found audio-books, podcasts, and text to speech an invaluable opportunity to engage with research in ways that work for me. This is noted namely as due to this process it is often impossible to provide page numbers for certain references, and these sources themselves (like those of the Anarchive discussed later) do not lend themselves neatly to standard citation practices. Another myth I would like to lightly raise within academic approach.
5   While an experimental approach, this is a practice I have undertaken previously (Sappho Donohue, 2020) and is not dissimilar to the conclusion work made in Rodrigo Constanzo's own PhD (himself an improviser who contributes interviews in this research). His thesis begins to self-destruct on the 'conclusion' page, leaving the reader finally with a blank page that simply says 'the process'(Constanzo, 2016).

This general play with the notion of mythology and methadology is a central element also to my own practice. As is discussed in the interview section, it is important to me not to populate the writing and presentation of this research through any one singular aesthetic narrative. But rather, as myth does very well, to untangle and explore the many possible strands of a story. In this way my research voice also mirrors the way I improvise. I prefer to reflect and support sonic ideas in space without the need for a solo, which nevertheless of course can have very 'leading' outcomes. In improvisation this can be considered a murmuration, the collectivity of the group is most importantly felt, but yet small internal alterations in 'the many' nevertheless does direct and shape the movement of the whole. Elements of this research which most obviously reflect my own emerging aesthetics can be felt within the invention of new playful terminology which I use to support the structure and methodology of the work (recipe, mythadology and the Mushwork). It is in these new terms where I look to situate the elements of practice which I hold important: collective and shared oral stories, practice and histories, light touch politics which expose previously tethered 'truths', and a deeper acknowledgment of a connection with nature and wider non-human social relationships.

2.2 Making a Mushwork

Playing a drum solo is like growing mushrooms (Han Bennick, interviwed by Micallef, 2008)

I have come to the conclusion that much can be learned about music by

devoting oneself to the mushroom (Cage et al., 2020, p. 7)

One of the primary focuses of this research has been to find a way to reflect the agency of the social network in practice, which has been achieved by generating a so-called 'Mushwork'. Mushwork derives from the influence of mycological theory, where mycelial networks are masterful organic systems in complex inter-species communication and society building (Simard et al., 1997, Sheldrake, 2020). Thinking with mushrooms has been an invaluable analogy for conceptualizing the ways a diverse, socially complex, and underground community might form and develop. The

process of creating a Mushwork is intended both as methodology to visualizing a social system, and is also the name of the accompanying software within this thesis.[6]

In responding to existing improvising knowledge, this research has been most heavily influenced by two major theories (both of which happen to come from founding members of the Feminist Improvising Group)[7]: Maggie Nicol's theory on 'Social Virtuosity' (McKay, 2002) and Georgina Born's 'planes of culture and social mediation' (Born, 2017). Nicol's theory is invaluable as it is both simple – social skills are a necessary craft for improvisation – as it is political: virtuosity is more than the elements of meritocracy and mastery commonly considered in (Western) music evaluation. Born's theory is slightly more dense but is a useful system which maps four major contributing factors that influence a musical sociality: 1. diverse internal social-makeup; 2. imagined communities/audiences; 3. refracted contexts (politics, hierarchies, marginalizations) and; 4. broader entanglement amidst external institutional forces. By taking both theories on board, this research has developed a way in which to centralise my own social virtuosity within the community as a point of contact for the generation of more complex visualisation of social mapping, which consider the varying perspectives, tensions, and influences of broad socio-political contexts - both a local and a global in mix.

The result of such an approach is what has spurred this research to use the term 'auto-sociology[8] to 'signal'[9] the centralised use of practice based-social knowledge to track emergent communal creative elements. It could be said that this approach sits in a space somewhere between traditional notions of ethnography/sociology and autoethnography. That is, rather than the reflection of contemporary practice via my own self reporting or self-described experiences,

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6   While mushrooms are central to the analogy, the name 'Mushwork' is also a play on words of the 'meshwork' theory of Tim Ingold (2008) and is in further theoretical orbit with other networked/assemblage theories – Actor Network Theory (Latour, 2005) and the Rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari, 1995). All of these engage with network logics. The marked change here is towards an active and visualized presentation, one which is interactive and self-generated by a member of the network studied.

7   The fact that both of these women are feminist free improvisation pioneers and that both of their thoughts have significantly influenced this research greatly is not a surprise. As is discussed throughout this thesis, feminist theory has offered much in terms of contextualizing the importance of intersectional community thinking.

8   This is a methodology enacted both in interview collection and creative practice ensembles/groups studied.

9   For example, just as it is often useful for players to invent a new term (as discussed in the chapter 3.4:Signal), 'auto-socilogy' is used to highlight a space which seems to sits between existing theories.

the implicit anecdotal and autobiographical presence of practice-based knowledge is instead housed in the ways in which I have utilised insider knowledge to generate social mappings of player/ensemble and temporal interactions.

This means that while my own playing practice is not typically the primary source for analysis,[10] nor are my aesthetic definitions of improvisation, my role and position in the community are guiding, influencing and biasing[11] the generation of the Mushwork, and for that matter the community has informed a huge component of my notion of practice itself. This acknowledges my role within the social expansion of the research (the main groups considered for analysis are also major components of my own performing practice) and proposes that a social network can be a creative practice, something which again challenges traditional notions of origin. It is not my practice which is the component of the practice-based research, but my practice is held within the shared and diverse global practice, which is developed through the many contributions of the community, myself included, which I will visualise and track in this study.

2.3 Non-linearity and Video

This research uses a novel approach to research presentation which harnesses some of the keystone elements of improvised knowledge around in-time sense making. Non-linearity promotes trying to 'see' time from a bigger dimension and generates a process of developing documents which assist in thinking about ideas through their diverse and multiple relationships with each other. It is a useful structure for tracking the social processes of practice, as social networks themselves are not always best understood in a linear form. They influence, develop, and fold in on themselves, tracing a process of self-reference and enmeshment.

The document is therefore presented as an HTML file, which has afforded several interactive elements towards a non-linear aim, and also made it possible to embed the video and GIF examples which are critical for the further visual aids. Throughout this text, subchapters will often take the form of video, picking up where written text leaves off, in order to present elements from the Mushwork within the text. The approach to these videos and the general directions for navigation in this thesis are presented here.

The research presentation methodology is also a reflection of the contemporary practices identified during the study which provided a host of new ways of understanding process of working in digital spaces. In this sense the use of hyperlinks (that look like this)[12] can be viewed as a reflection of this creative practice, a way to traverse through a new technologically enhanced system. As players might meet from opposite sides of the world through the use of technology, or as we might skip around recorded works and engage in our own listening strucutre, this research also provide portals – ways to think through materials, viewing the results of the investigation as an interactive, concurrent, and self-referential system. Finally, in order to achieve non-linearity this research had to be written through the notion of thinking non-linearly, imagining with a reader, thinking above, around, and through the ideas. Therefore even if read in an entirely linear fashion the trace of this form of thinking is nevertheless present, and in itself comes naturally to me, which I attribute to my background as an improviser.

By combining non-linearity, video embeds, software and interactivity, the intention is to bring the web of research to 'life'. The use of HTML therefore was considered the best approach towards these needs as it is a relatively accessible format that I have used before in presenting non-linear articles (Sappho Donohue, 2020) and for providing supplementary materials for traditionally published works (MacDonald et al, 2021). The HTML used for this research provided the opportunity for in text hyperlinks, while also affording the work to be exported as a .pdf in which the internally linked text would also continue to work. HTML also provides the further ability for embedding videos within the text which allows for the various video chapters and performance examples to be closely related to surrounding content. These combined benefits allow for my ability to generate an accessible user interface for

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10   And in many cases I do not perform in works.

11   At this point it is important the reader contextualise the 'me' in this network. That is, this research is biased and influenced by my experience and my background. While much of this text looks to share a wide range of access points into this field, it is nevertheless important that the reader know mine. I am a Puerto Rican American, raised in Brooklyn NY, in a fierce household of feminine resistance. My mother is a powerhouse of strength, a woman who pioneered a space for women (and pregnant women at that) within the hypermacho spaces of the New York City construction industry. And my adopted grandmother, is a titan, a holocaust survivor and someone who taught me to never apologize for myself. At my core I have been radicalised, empowered, and fought for by these women my entire life and this is my privilege. What they have given me is a history of migration, lost histories, languages, and cultures, and what I build with this has been taught to me by expanded family in the community of this practice: I am a beautiful collage of lost-ness which is my unique contribution, my multitude. I am *made* to look to the lost-ness of history, and to ask questions and seek voices who have already forged paths into these sticky terrains.

12   If a hyperlink does not work for you, please simply refresh the current web-browser page. This is a form of glitch which appears to wish to remain in this format.

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engaging with interactive, non-linear, and multi-modal research, which also allows for the research to be easily shared on-line, proposing further audience reach for those who might be less inclined to download and engage with large text files.

This approach extends examples of the similar non-linear presentations of creative processes in software (Bayley & Clarke, 2011) web-based platforms (Constanzo, 2016) network system generation and analysis (Hart, 2021) as well as video essay/embed research and practice (Journal of Embodied Research, n.d.; Spatz, 2020). In particular I have found Constanzo's thesis one of the most accessible forms of research due to it's hosting on-line. A format which is beneficial for quickly locating and sharing portions of the research in a number of settings. The unique expansion of these approaches combines multiple formats, with no particular main theory in place.[13] This research is an amalgamation of contemporary research presentation practices because these approaches have been emergent through the process of working alongside software developers where I have been given the unique freedom to reconsider my research needs. That is, the IRiMaS project afforded me the opportunity to think about how I might present research differently, yet it is important to note that all of the non-linear and interactive elements present in this text (outside of the software) have been developed by myself.

2.4 The TIAALS software

The relationship with the IRiMaS project has afforded this research the opportunity to contribute towards new musicological software in two ways. The first is the development of the Mushwork which is the bespoke use of the TIAALS software specific to this research. The second is the contribution towards the generic tools which are part of the open source TIAALS software package. This process was iterative, by considering tools needed for the Mushwork, I was also always feeding into the greater TIAALS software and contributing ideas for tools now available for a host of other musicological applications. The most prominent tools contributed by my research include the multi-modal

tagging system that affords any researcher the ability to generate thematic tagging across multi-modal datasets, the generation of interactive networks and non-linear links through pages, and the use of video annotation tools which make it possible to highlight, annotate and comment on elements within collected research footage.

The specific tools mentioned above were generated in collaboration with the IRiMaS teams programmers who provided multiple demo versions of the tools which I iteratively tested and fed back on throughout the research process. The Mushwork therefore utilities these tools and is a digital representation of the social development of a community, and has also been further influenced by a number of existing visualized networks which present components of improvised community and practice: 'The Rhizome', a network of community generated relationships between players and ensembles (Mwamba, n.d.);[14] a map for improvised venues (Mwamba, n.d.);[15] a mind-map of engagement in free improvisation performance (Morton, n.d.),[16] and a mind map of Free Improvised practices in Brazil (Schroeder, 2014b).[17] Yet unlike these existing examples the Mushwork is a representation not only of what the assemblage of a practice has become, but also is a transparent example of 'how' community came to being, and is an interactive archive which is central to the presentation of examples across the groups:

2.5 The Anarchive

'we have to try to construct something, which is alive, which is connecting the past with the future […] I coined a term for this activity, I call it 'anarchival'. These two little letters A & N are extremely important. Because archive comes from *arkhōs, arkhē* in Greek, and that means also leader, leadership. I *know* where to go to. I *know* where everything has to lead to. Everybody who has a

13   For this reason this research has not included a scholarly review of these various research approaches beyond the acknowledgments made above. To do so would detract from the main focus of research which was largely towards adapting to the needs of the archives which influenced this study, to develop a socially motivated research approach, which by its very nature required the implementation of such a mixed-media academic experimentations.

14   https://www.coreymwamba.co.uk/resources/rhizome/ (last accessed June 2022)
15   https://www.coreymwamba.co.uk/resources/venues/ (last accessed June 2022)
16   https://www.improvisersnetworks.online/resources/mind-map-project/elements-of-engagement (last accessed June 2022)
17   https://improvisationinbrazil.wordpress.com/2014/06/20/mind-map-of-free-improvisation-in-brazil/ (last accessed June 2022)

state who is and archiving knows where we have to go to. They have telos, they have an intention, an aim. And artists are different working on their collections and on their archie. I think they are very anarchival. They neglect leadership. They don't want it. They want to move freely.' (Zielinski, 2011)

The multiple archives of works that this research has created present the co-construction of unique digital/hybrid spaces – 'homes'. In these spaces players are making work which has altered the possibilities for community 'meeting points' and which are augmented by the digital factors of their contexts, positioning identity politics, contexts and time outside traditional boundaries of 'reality'. The product of such drastic shifts in practices therefore requires a new approach to archiving, engaging with and becoming part of the future of the documentation of these artistic practices. The Mushwork and the general approach to this research considers itself as adding to a greater knowledge and archive of experimental improvisational practice.

The notion of 'instant archiving' or 'instant archaeology' is used here which describes the modern era that affords ways we might generate and then instantaneously view archival materials: through phones, tablets, and new technologies (Zielinski, 2011). This is a contemporary product that this research proposes has expanded also within the contemporary digital approaches enacted during altered social realities (namely pandemic restrictions) and which are now an emerging new factor in human and non-human history/future making. Siegfried Zielinski calls instant archiving a living in the 'present', but where 'presence' isn't there any more, 'past and future are connected directly, we are living for the future, and we are already past while we're doing so' (ibid.).

To celebrate the presence – to connect the past and the future in research, Zielinski proposes to look at the past and future as a collection of possibilities, not as a collection of fact or truth. In this methodology he draws forth the term anarchive:

> Anarchives and anarchaeological practices do not follow any external purpose; they indulge in waste and offer presents best-suited to the contemporary remains of the arts. They insist on the utopian potential within archaeology: the search for a world not identical to the one we experience(d), the opposition of the factual space of past with a potential space that lets both, however tensely, approach each other (Zielinski & Winthrop-Young, 2015).

Practitioners employ the anarchive in a variety of ways which allow them to present interactive, diverse, and multimedia products of practice in creative ways.[18] These include the dissemination of DVD collections (Kuntzel & Gutierres, 2006; Otth, 2007; Snow, 2012) web platforms and community hubs (Beltrame Trento, 2020)[19], mixed media and augmented reality applications (Campus et al., 2017; Fujihata & Duguet, 2016) and block chain and

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[18]   Resources for anarchive outlets include the Facebook group for anarchival work sharing: https://www.facebook.com/Anarchives-1529567990618435/, and projects shared on http://anarchive.net/indexeng.htm, as well as a brief overview made for the October MASS (for which I am the co-editor of) edition 'Anarchivist' by Anne-Laure Oberson: https://indd.adobe.com/view/e142b8d8-5b0a-40b2-b093-4c4d8847f68e (all last accessed February 2022)

[19]   Francisco Beltrame Trento, 'The Pedagogy of The Anarchive', *Research Catalogue* (2019) https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/659630/662484/0/0 (last accessed March 2022)

Mapping a social network

NFT communities (*About ~ The Sphere*, n.d.).[20] In many of the same ways the Mushwork is generated towards a contemporary conception of how documented works might be collated and presented, represented and discussed. This

is made in part using new software for research generation and dissemination, but which itself is reflecting a greater turn in contemporary digitally enhanced <u>self-archival and community generated histories.</u>[21]

2.6 Interview

While my insider knowledge of social networks has helped inform a large portion of the approach to this research, it was also critical that I challenge my own understanding. This research is therefore supplemented by 28 interviews[22] with international players[23] and further developed by numerous private correspondences and follow-up meetings where necessary. When citing quotes from these sources, the player's name as well as locational scene specifics[24] are given in the first citation of each section.[25]

The quotations given from the interviews are presented as large blocks of verbatim texts, with a minimal paraphrasing. While rather untraditional, this approach was made to respond to a growing need identified in listening to the diverse perspectives of improvisation from the players themselves. That is, responding to <u>feminist critique</u> of traditional free improvisational history which notes the marked dominance of certain aesthetics of practice passed down through a dominant demographic voice. This approach was made as a collection of distinct voices which have been presented thematically, yet which have not been homogenised into my own personal improvisational aesthetic voice.

All interviews were transcribed and compiled for thematic analysis. ['The canon and its double'](#) presents much of this thematic analysis and refers to the impact of these interviews from their translinguistic perspectives. Translinguistics is referred to here in response to the diverse language collected via the interview and private communication process. Transliguistics proposes to understand shared meaning across language, via understanding aspects of words used in their 'everydayness' – normalised aspects of scenic knowledge, and 'simultaneity' – the coming together of these habitus across locational/linguistic specifics (Lee & Dovchin, 2019). This thinking helped consider the global assemblage of experimental practice, something which shared basic and critical principles, which diverged in innovative and individual ways, but which are expressed as a concurrent and simultaneous phenomenon.

2.7 Recipe

> I don't cook with recipes. I mean, I'll sometimes reference them or read them, but like it's, I just go to the kitchen with a bunch of ingredients and sauté and start getting at it. (Rodrigo Constanzo, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, January 2020)

> One can very well improvise without notes or arrangements of any kind. But in the written tradition of recipes and frameworks which are not, like traditional composition, a pre-arranged text, lie also some valuable insights into the musical language. (Bergstrøm-Nielsen, 2002)

> GATHER INGREDIENTS:
> come contaminated
> practice curious presence
> unmaster leadership
> cultivate vulnerable intimacy
> celebrate oddkin
> suspend the future (practice, not progress)

> (Reardon-Smith, 2021, p. 200)

'Recipe' is a metaphor which was found to be useful when interviewing a range of players. It allowed for a way to talk about 'practice' – a word not well-loved by players[26] - through analogy, and shed light on various concepts for creative selection, learning, and strategy:

> It's just it's something like yeah, like a conversation. You're, you're just trying to communicate and to share something. And that's also maybe a good metaphor for cooking because when you're also trying to create the best association with the elements you have. And you're not going to open your fridge and put everything [in] even, if you have all these great ingredients inside. But you have to, you have to choose you have to select you have to taste. Yeah, maybe it's like that. (Antoine Lang, Swiss player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, October 2019)

> I think food is very interesting metaphor or parallel. Earlier on, I was reading from my book and I was talking about shojin ryori which is like monks cuisine in Japan. […] And it's usually a succession of tiny plates, bowls. And each of these bowls has something that looks exquisite. And flavours aren't intense, you know, they're usually quite subtle. But it's, they follow each other in a sequence. And I find that very interesting. It's, you can think of certain strategies of improvising… (David Toop, UK player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, November 2019)

> And if we're talking about ingredients, let's say we've each got 100 boxes of ingredients in a given situation you don't you're not gonna throw them all in, you might, there may be a situation where you're only actually throwing half a box, and that's the best thing for that particular piece, performance, whatever. So, if you like, you have the freedom to choose according to your own creative and aesthetic

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26   'I've never liked that expression [practice]. It makes it sound like it's something you kind of, you know, you get up in the morning, you start working on element five of your practice, you know, for me, what has been valuable is what comes out of playing with other people.' (John Butcher, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, November 2019).

criteria. What you select from what you know about, and you hope that in the course of doing that, you'll also throw in a few things that you don't know about (John Butcher, UK player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, November 2019)

'Recipe' can be found throughout the literature. For example the in-depth account of Misha Mengelberg cooking pork chops (Whitehead, 1998, p. 142); and the recounting of a player who once asked Sun Ra for his recipe for 'moon soup' and was told:

'like a musician you improvise. It's like being on a spirit plane. You put the proper things in without knowing why. It comes out wonderful when it's done like that, when you plan it, it doesn't work' (Szwed, 1997)

Recipe is also used as an analogy in 'A Cake Made from 5 ingredients' – the history and socio-economic practices of the Chicago Art Ensemble (Steinbeck, 2018); as investigated in relationship to notions of 'score' (Bergstrøm-Nielsen, 2002) and as temporal/historical shifts in creative notation (Kennaway, 2011). Food is traceable also in the language of ensembles and venues: the Kitchen Orchestra (ND), the Kitchen venue (USA) the Soup and Sound Series [27] (USA) and can form the basis for practice, for example the performative 'conciertos de cocina' of David Velez (Vélez Rodríguez, 2021).

These very diverse ways in which food naturally finds itself 'at home' in creative practice is clear throughout this research and became one of the practice tags for the archives. Examples include culinary reference as practices adopt to the new domestic settings in networked music practices (see Figure 1). Therefore, further to the namesake of this thesis a sister document was created during conversation with players towards creating the companion 'Recipes from Improvisers'. This cookbook (presented in the appendix)[28] collected more literal recipes (culinary and otherwise) and

contributes to works like Notes from the Underground Kitchen (2015) the vegan cookbook by free improviser Philip Gelb that contains recipes from his restaurant/concert series;[29] and Jazz Cooks: portraits and recipes of the greats (B. Young, 1992). While recipes from improvisers are not directly analysed, their diversity in sharing 'instruction' is nevertheless considered a further representation of idea and culture sharing important to this research. They are part of some of the practices of the ensemble themselves, for example the score for 'cooking in the theatre of home' made by the GIO research team and performed with members of GIO and the Australian Jazz and Improvisation Research Network (AJIRN) conference (2022), enfolds many of the central arguments for expanded practice in the 'Theatre of Home' (MacDonald et al., 2021) and the new digital and hybrid spaces possible with post-lockdown practice.

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27   Concert series with homemade food, and often potluck audience contributions: https://soupandsound.org.
28   Folder: 'C: Appendix 2' file name: Improvisers Cookbook - Recipes from Improvisers.pdf

29   Which also includes an introduction by Pauline Olivero.

Figure 1 TIAALS page: Mycelial Practices (objects tagged with food)

3. The Canon and Its Double:

Introduction

John Cage makes two attempts to translate a Bashō poem[1], the first generated the phrase 'that that's unknown brings mushroom and leaf together' which he then further simplified to 'What leaf, what mushroom?' (Pocci, 2014). In this sequence of ideas Cage appears to be proposing that a particular circumstance of events might collide in a certain context, but the specifics of these contexts might always be indeterminate: when the leaf met the mushroom under a specific tree, in a specific forest, in a certain place, a new relationship was built.
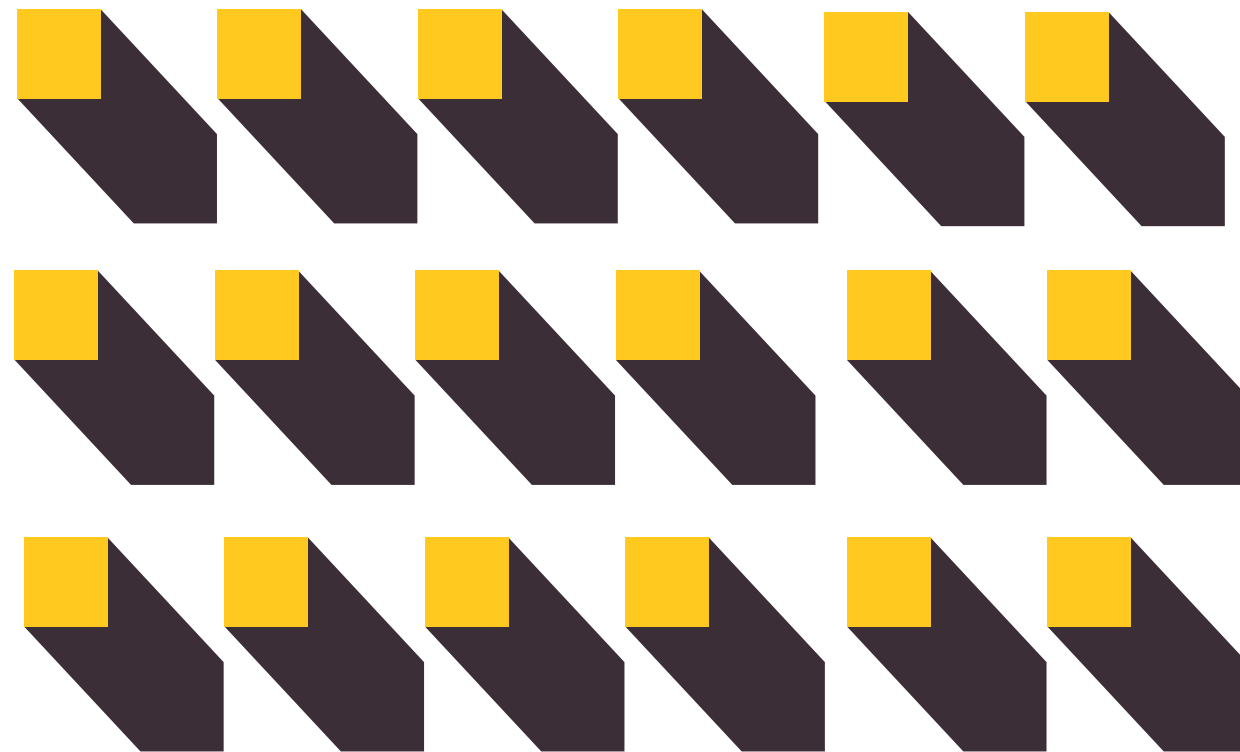
The poetic example of Cage should be considered a useful concept for the kinds of happenstance relationships which are important in the following twin chapters. The 'Canon and its Double'[1] is presented nonlinearly (described below) in a format which draws two chapters together interactively. The purpose of this approach has been towards enmeshing an overview of the existing baggage which will inevitably be brought from the diverse history of practices in this field. The non-linear approach taken proposes that there are many issues at play which cannot be summarized via a singular route, nor are they entirely temporally/historically tethered. For example, the duality of the local and the global is a large theme which has fluctuated over the course of the practice and has driven narratives of improvisational claim and access in many diverse ways. This duality is a major factor within the kinds of language players use when they look to position, associate, or politic their practice within locational and socio-political structures.

Therefore the following presents a historical overview which leaned into some of the main critiques of the way this canon has been developed (global), and the practice-based specifics drawn thematically out of several interviews discussed below (the local). By intermixing these two perspectives it is possible to acknowledge and celebrate unique local contributions as vibrant acts towards lineage, while also recognizing context, migration of ideas, and concurrent histories.

There are ten subchapters for the development of these twin chapters (visualised in the sub-chapter map). The broader historical tensions cover: an overview of the history to date of the development of practice; the national and racial exclusions which exist within these narratives; the genre and industry biases and presumptions; gender disparities; and notions of community membership and access issues. These are presented in relationship with the five associating artistic reflections and needs of diverse practice: practical elements of temporality (change); practice customization

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1   'Matsutake Ia shiranu Ko no ha no hebaritsuku' quoted from (Pocci, 2014).

1   The title for this chapter very lightly references The Theatre and It's Double (Artaud, 2018) in so far that it is interested in toying with a relationship between art and context. Yet the title is a way to simply express the duality of canon which the field often suffers from, one variously critiqued for its national, racial, gendered, and temporal divides.

and focus (signal); development of value and creative culture (context); extra-musical practices (expansion); and social embeddedness (community).[2]

The result of the combined front of these twin chapters is to extend expression of perspective by the expansion of language,[3] scenic contribution, and diverse history, which is clearly noted as being needed via an understanding of the broader socio-political histories which have driven traditional narratives. This is something which has afforded the possibility to draw across multifaceted contexts, time periods, and player perspectives, and is critical to scaffold the broader context of the contemporary practices of 'The Three F's'.

Thematic analysis of practitioner contributions provides invaluable insight into perspectives from players from Colombia, Estonia, Hong Kong, Iran, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Lithuania, Russia, Serbia, South Africa, South Korea, Switzerland, the UK and Zambia. The interviews and private communications form the baseline to the thematic overview of concepts and terms provided a wealth of terminology to expand the language of experimental improvised practice.[4] The terms are used variously throughout the twin chapters and have been geographically mapped to visualize the globality of contributing ideas (see Figure 2, also available in TIAALS). The map does not propose that these terms are exclusive to the location in which they are mapped (rather this chapter often signals to the diaspora of practice that the field contains). It is, however, a useful visual reflection of the representation of the theme of local and global duality and is another visualisation example of a research network.[5]

The reader may choose to read each subchapter as a vignette on a theme, or to follow a predetermined path within the layout of this document. The home page of this chapter offers the complete overview of subchapters with a further view of the predetermined linear route and the resulting thematic companionships.

The overarching argument nevertheless is persistent: these chapters are a politic which point out the need to acknowledge the many forms of dominant canon, which should continue to be picked apart to expose more diverse contributions within the lineage of creative practice. The 'Canon and its double' invariably therefore performs a dual role: it presents the context and critique of a history through curating the diverse commentary of global contemporary players (many of whom are central figures within the practical examples of this research). What this generates is a way to situate what has been brought, tampered with, and manipulated in practice. Informing a way to comprehend the many various stories which have and continue to be told in this field, presented through a process which encompasses a multitude: the micro and the macro, the personal and the political, the local and the global in orbital relation to and in echo of each-other.

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2   Importantly these practice based themes appear to reflect similar focuses in improvisational study which cover: musical facets – structure, pulse, form etc. (Morris, 2012); self-reported contextual influence (Ninh, 2014); listening and digesting (Corbett, 2016); historical accounts of influence and change (Barre , 2016; Toop, 2016; Wilmer, 2018) and group cognitive and community socialites (Linson, 2014; MacGlone & MacDonald, 2018; Wilson & MacDonald, 2016).

3   It is of note that the expansion of language investigated here is still primarily within Europe, and that the author is writing in English.

4   It is important to note that the perspectives that players share are presented here only as a reflection of individual artists' perspective. While they might often reflect notions of their scene at large, this thesis does not propose that it might account for an accurate generalization of aesthetics or theory of locational scenes. Such claims would require a larger data set than this research could provide.

5   The most similar work to this is that of the English language terminology collection that overviews ten terms commonly found in a particularly North American/European context: Free jazz, Free improvisation, Free Form, The New Thing, Fire Music, Creative Music, Energy Music, New Music - Outside Music and Avant Garde Jazz (Barre , 2016, Location No. 286).

Ecstatic Jazz
Space Jazz
Anti Jazz
Free Jazz
The New Thing
Great Black Music
Fire Music
Energy Music

Feminist Free Improvisation
Trans-idiom improvisation
Non-idiomatic music
Spontaneous music
Contemporary chamber music

Instant Composition

Freevücha

Total Musik

Kaasaegne improvisation

новую импровизационную музыку

полиидиоматическая импровизация

Improvisation Générative

improvvisazione destrutturata

Potpuna improvizacija'

یزاون ههادب

Comprovisation

完全即興
Onkyo

Chúkhùng umak

Experimental Music

Comprovisation

Jazz

Jeitinho Brasileiro

Ukucita icilconse eco ulefwaya'

Feminist Free Improvisation

Free Jazz

Figure 2 Map of improvising languages

The Canon and Its Double

sub-chapter map

Before reading any of these subchapters it is useful to read the overall chapter introduction to contextalise the writing.

i. Birth: traditional histories
ii. The ideal society: parallel takes on liberation
iii. Key to the future:

i. Ownership and a European Sonicity
ii. In, on, through, against, besides Jazz

i. Genre: whose avant garde is it?
ii. Elitism, two sides

i. Identity and visibility
ii. Legacy

i. Membership and hospitality
ii. Access: getting into the creative space

A. 3.1 It was never free

A. 3.3 Place, location, and improvisational claim

A. 3.5 Bias and aesthetical Supremacists

A. 3.7 Representation and lineage

A. 3.9 Space: what is made together

time

claim

bias

presence

membership

B. 3.2 Change: Temporality and Trace

B. 3.4 Signal: Specifics in unspecificites

B. 3.6 Context: Creative culture in development

B. 3.8 Expansion: Re-fashioning civilisation

B. 3.10 Community: Adaptable living and care

i. experiencing temporality: Trance and altered states
ii. Capturing temporality

i. customisation: names and influence
ii. Universality, (un)translation, and instability

i. Hyphenated Music: the generation of creative language
ii. value: reception
iii: Rewriting roles: industry and culture

i. non-human companions: membership and respect in expanded improvising communities
ii. Spaces and places: relationships with the location of making
iii. Sartorial Expressions

i. Belonging
ii. Response-ability

G

A.3.1 It was never free: negotiations of history

It was never free, we fought for it every step of the way (John Russell, rehearsal recording, 2020).

[...] nothing in this world is FREE you just spread your elbows and make a bit more space for yourself. (Brotzman interviewed by Breznikar, March 2019).

The above quotations from the icons John Russell and Peter Brotzman propose another role that can be ascribed to the word 'free': the gaining of the right to practice the craft.[1] The 'fight'– making a bit of space – reflects the work put in to legitimize the craft and is a celebration of these contributions along the journey of the field to *becoming*. A recognition of a creative space where freedom was never a prerequisite in all of its fringe existence but is one that is now embedded in the story: 'the word 'free' is a historical legacy' (David Toop, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, November 2019). These steps along the way are a history of how a music gave itself a plurality of associations with freedom, and the following is a brief overview of the traditionally accepted birth of this movement and its evolution of where it finds itself in current contemporary practice.

This overview presents the traditional lineage of the field, one most often associated with European/American narratives, and compares between the initial intentions of the field with the marked shifts that have occurred during the COVID19 pandemic. This comparison exposes the altered ways in which contemporary practice might work in lineage with the traditional narratives of the field. If read in companionship with the creative practice theme of Change, it is useful to consider how these broader temporal histories might be enmeshed within the experiential, philosophical and physical documents of a practice deeply conscious of the presence of time in practice.

The period of practices often associated with the term 'free improvisation' is noted to have begun clandestinely in the 1930s[2] followed by a sharp documented eruption in 1965 (Toop, 2016, p. 14). This sharp eruption has become particularly important in the canon, especially from a European perspective. The earlier actions, especially from the 1960s onwards, are rich with social undertakings and are often companioned with subversions of perceived norms, empowered by political and personal dissatisfactions, and propelled by numerous small and large acts of resistance. These covered a wide range of goals, from reassessing the music industry, to the ways in which people might organize and build communities. As Alvin Curran describes this period:

> In the middle and late 1960s we witnessed attempts to embrace all of these aspects of musical liberation while focusing at the same time on philosophical, political, and economic liberation of music from ITSELF – that is the freeing of music even from the need to liberate itself. Nevertheless, a momentary and generalized "freeing" of music, not only of all former musical ideology and practice but from its fiercely rooted social and economic basis in the West, became the utopian challenge taken up in many different ways by a number of dedicated musicians throughout the world (Curran, 1995).

Curran's comment, and his central role during this time, helps consider the two-fold motivation behind the practice: a liberation of the music in an artistic canonical sense from Western harmony, history, techniques, and other kinds of improvisation; and a more physical freedom for communities and bodies from wider contextual elements, economics, and oppressions. Ultimately these can be viewed as concurrent phenomena; artists were looking to find new ways to live and commune creatively.

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1   Russell is a core player to this research, a staunch advocate for free improvisation over his life, and the founder of Mopomoso concert series. Sadly John Russell passed away in January 2021, but his legacy lives on not only in the extensive contributions he made as a free improvising guitarist, but also in the international community he built across both Mopomoso live (the oldest running UK series for free improvisation) and the Mopomoso digital series (setup during the COVID19 pandemic) which both continue today.

2   For example in Toops 'Into the Maelstrom', he tells the story of two early experimental improvised recordings, one from Charles Ives in 1938, and one from 1937 of Django Reinhardt, which he notes as recorded versions of now iconic figures in free form which are nevertheless recognizably these players.

Curran's comment proposes these were challenges taken up by 'dedicated musicians throughout the world' but unfortunately much of this earlier period is documented in a split canon largely falling across the terms of 'free improvisation' and 'free jazz' in the European/American geographical divide respectively. And while Curran points out the 'freeing' from the 'fiercely rooted social and economic basis in the West' as a central goal, he comments as a player speaking from Western settings (an American who lived much of his life in Italy). Therefore, further to Curran's comments the following considers the similar broader ideals within contexts which refract a different experience with regard to 'the west', 'socio-economics' and 'liberation'. Undeniably this urgency to live differently was shared globally, but how, and against what this 'difference' was formed is reflective of the landscape in which these artists were mobilized. While it is beyond the scope of this research[6] to attempt an in-depth investigation into what kinds of similar social, creative and communal experiments were being made outside of the dominant Anglo/European narratives, this research can point to a few particular cases that help to expand the relationships of these histories, further situating perspectives shared by the international contemporary players who have contributed to this study.

A. 3.1.2 The ideal society: parallel takes on liberation

While free jazz is often associated with North American histories, the Blue Notes were a South African group who instigated bringing this music to Europe. They were players who lived much of their creative lives in exile as a mixed-race group during apartheid,[3] and had a great impact on the London scene.[4] The Blue Notes are a group which embody the story of a practice in displacement, migration, and exile, which reflects a wider narrative of jazz and free jazz histories dominated by racially motivated governmental oppressions and abuse.

Contemporary experimental music and free improvisation are said to hold less of a presence in South Africa, something bound up in a history of exile which continues to affect younger generation players.[5] And yet, the influence of The Blue Notes on a European scene importantly bridges a gap many feel divides practices of 'free jazz' and 'free improvisation'. This is a story that draws into question *where* contributions have been made towards 'free improvisation', a practice which has a huge documented history in heralding British inventors. An example which poses a question considered throughout this chapter: is a scene a product of its location, or can it be understood and documented through a more nuanced understanding that mixes culture, histories, and lineages?

Another important scene relevant to the research presented here are the musicians' performing from Russia[6] and former Soviet Union occupied countries. Here alternate histories are found with regards to the presence of an 'underground music', practices which are inspired by western romanticized notions of 'outsiderness', but which were more often than not made in much more pressingly volatile fringe spaces (Crowley & Muzyczuk in Akademie Künste Akademie, 2018, p. 59).[7] Popular Western music in all forms was heavily censored and accessible often only through underground channels, for example the 'bone music' or bootleg records of jazz, boogie-woogie, and rock and roll that were pressed into old X-rays (Paphides, 2015). Therefore improvisation, and an echo of Western creative aesthetics, assisted in an assertion of individual and collective liberty, which became a practice of resistance itself: 'performers incorporated various forms of improvisation into their performances and actions, sometimes to comment on the conditions of unfreedom prevailing in the region' (Akademie der Künste, 2018, p. 71). In some cases these musics themselves are considered large influential social factors in the fall of the USSR (Starr, 1994).[8]

The briefest of contexts of South Africa and former Soviet Union countries are highlighted here because they pose a widening of the history which is the necessary background issues delved into in 'Place, location and improvisational claim'. This historical overview has shared narratives from similar time periods with shared themes of nationalistic/governmental posturing of what the 'ideal' society should be – racially, economically, and otherwise. These are external factors which are critical to understanding the propulsion of generations of artists who seek their own ways to live outside, to make art outside, and to fight for new forms of social practice. A political narrative which is still dominated with narratives of American and European liberation 'outsides'. It is so easy to fall into the trap of regarding the path to liberation as one in opposition to Western structure as a primary goal, because the Anglo/European narrative is the most well documented in the field. But this is a global field, with a global history, and even with a lack of literature it is still possible to remember that commentary on 'subversions' are often also tethered in bias towards dominant 'versions' (Sappho Donohue, 2020). This is a slippery theme, one which this research has no answer to, but which ties the propulsion of creative liberation in all its many social, economic, creative and personal forms – in opposition to no point in particular.

A.3.1.3 Key to the future: Contemporary practice and context

> Some days I wake up and I say improv is dead. Other days, I say it's the key to the future (Alvin Curran, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, November 2019).

Many of the conversations which support this thesis happened across generations, a full spectrum of experiences of players from the newest generation to the pioneers, and what is held in these meeting points is a question of where the field is finding itself now and where it is headed:

> Again, what if you're interviewing some younger musicians? Maybe they will still think the power, the purposefulness that comes from it [free improvisation] the kind of challenging of authority, you know,

is still a driving force of their music. I don't know (John Butcher, UK player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, November 2019).

> let's say going back about 50 years or more to the late 20th century, a period that as I say was full of urgency, needed to make this step to liberate themselves from the bourgeoise codes and practices and methods and ideas or non-ideas. The question now is this music. Can this music continue to regenerate itself? This is what I asked myself in a perpetual way, in the near and distant future (Curran, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, November 2019).

Comments like these point to questions around the culture of 'now' . On some levels it is safe to say that most of the social struggles inherent to the 'greater politic' are still paramount today, especially to do with racial, gender, and economic disparities. But on another level, this is a field which has grown into new spaces, at least as far as an 'underground' is concerned; it is contemporarily more entangled in institutional realities. For example, this thesis was part of a multi-million-euro funding bid which specifically set out to look for a researcher with expertise in free improvisation. In this light Curran's and Butcher's comments are understandable, while on a public standing this art might still exist as a niche practice. Could it be that the days of dissidence and anarchic revolution have passed?

For a while it was my task to posit that there are continued acts of revolution taken up in contemporary practice, especially for those who more palpably feel their continued otherness in relation to the dominant demographics of representation which men like Curran and Butcher might not. Yet if in 2019, when Curran and Butcher were interviewed, it was possible to wonder what kinds of global actions, community organizations, and creative activisms really did exists in relation to the music, by 2020 the context had drastically altered. That is, creative narratives would change: how, why and with what improvisers met and made work. A period which in its own way has been a global revolution for creative practice and social living. Due to this abrupt change, new contemporary questions emerged – what has been brought from the past which uniquely arms this field for dealing with the situation at hand? And also,

have we reemerged with new approaches which are affording an expanded agency for those of us who must continue our own activisms?

During, the pandemic contemporary practices and creative output could be tracked as they switched to new spaces: live-streams from empty venues, living rooms, and gardens were presented on newly formed digital platforms.[9] These are actions which operate in new techo-socialities: social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitch etc.) networked music rehearsals working in digital conferencing software (Zoom, Google Hangouts, Twitch etc.) and specialized telematic music programmes (JamKazam, Omnibus etc.). The nature of the all-consuming switch from 'in person' to online became both a problem to be solved, as players tested options, and a fertile ground for research and documentation (Fischlin, Daniel, Risk, Laura, 2021; Fischlin et al., 2021; R. MacDonald et al., 2021b; R. A. R. MacDonald & Birrell, 2021). For some this new reality was an end to group performance, where online working was incompatible with artistic needs,[10] and for others it became a complete reboot of what improvisation could be, and how improvisation communities could meet. For those who continued making during this period, new issues became the overriding narrative, with contemporary pressing urgencies: to stay connected, to continue to make work, and to learn to expand through constraint. This is a period of new forms of external forces which came with their own effect on issues not still un-resolved, with ramifications that re-highlighted issues of social equalities, government accountability, economic safety, and the liberation and protection for people and places at risk.

Back to the Canon and Its Double Home Map

10   Although one interesting method tried by the improvisation group Shunyata was to arrange a time to play, and all play together without any connection to each other beyond imagining that the others were playing (Katie Oswell, private communication, 2020).

B.3.2 Change : Temporality and Trace

> To make a nuisance of ourselves. To make a new sense of ourselves
>
> - Creative Contradiction, track 'Hecate's Household', Maggie Nicols (2020)

The following considers change over time and within (with - in) time to understand both how the experience of time's passage, on a practical level, is an integral part to practice, and how the conceptual impact of 'big time' change has developed and affected document and trace of work. These themes are important to study as they highlight the prevalence of individual temporal experience as a creative parameter and agent in play, and as a philosophical question, which exposes the use and issues around various modes for capturing time in creative documentation. These are valuable factors within practice as they are altered drastically during contemporary digital practices, where temporal matters are shifted towards latent and distanced experiences, which produce new forms of disseminated and captured work.

B3.2.1 Experiencing temporality: trance and Altered States

> '*Chŭkhŭng umak*, music based on an impulsive feeling on the spot' (Hyelim
>
> Kim, Korean, UK based player, private communication, April 2021).
>
> *Sokkyo* means 'made-up on-the-spot', and is used to denote spontaneity and
>
> instantaneous creation often in every day talk or performance. (Novak, 2010)

Spontaneous music, instant composition, music played on the spot, without preparation or planning – in real time: this kind of language flourishes in the world of experimental improvisation, and in many ways is the appeal for audiences too. While some debate how 'spontaneous' or indeed 'free' a music can be if training, background, and habitus are inevitably brought to an improvised setting,[1] nevertheless it is equally clear that gaining access to a point where one feels present (both as a player and an audience member) is central to the experience. Yet, as a result a unique phenomenon of experience also emerges where elements of practice range in descriptions of trance, transcendence, unspeakable altered states, and aspects of mediation in seeking togetherness (both with other humans and with time itself). Such intangible notions are investigated here to outline a few elements therefore which are present in practice: the magic, unknowable agency, and divine experience, which for many is a reason to practise the craft:

> …it's Dionisius. You know [the] god? Yes, it's God. But it's not wine. It's the God of [the] state of ecstasy, the state when you lose the border between in and out, you know, it's when you lose yourself. You know, it's wine, it's sex, it's improvisation. (Peter Ototsky, Russian player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2019).

The presence of a shared understanding of a conceptual *other plane* includes many notions of self-practice, attentiveness, and role of practice within community, society, and time. For example, some players call this the 'soup', an evocative term which notes a particularly shared moment of playing. Or sometimes the experience is described in relation to Csikszentmihalyi's theory of 'flow' (2008); the psychological experience of falling *out of* the knowledge of time/self-action. Or there are terms which carry theses meanings, for example, *Improvisation Générative*[2] proposes a methodology for accessing a conceptual absolving of self that is rooted in a virtuosic ear (Schroeder, 2019); or *Fire Music* acts as a definitional term to highlight the spiritual and perpetual liberation of music 'unmediated by the mind'.[3] A term further bound up in a personal and political project within a wider notion of music's role in society.[4]

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1   [Defining free improvisation] 'As a sort of fantasy? Because, okay, once you gain knowledge, you lose a certain amount of freedom. So, I think it's a mistake to necessarily lump the two things together. The concept of freedom and the concept of improvisation – have elements of overlapping-ness, but they're not intrinsically linked in any way. And I think most people who stay with improvisation for any length of time develop many conceptual frameworks and sets of experience where nobody could call what they were doing "free"' (John Butcher, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, November 2019).

2   Term used as a course name and practice at CNSMDP (conservatoire national supérieur musique et danse de Paris).

3   A term used largely in relation to Free Jazz by players such as Albert Ayley, Cecil Taylor and John Coltrane.

4   'We are the music we play. We keep trying to purify our music, to purify ourselves, so that we can move ourselves – and those who hear us – to higher levels of peace and understanding' (Albert Ayler quoted in Young, 2009, p. 137) 'Fire music was an attempt to break on through to something primal, sensually liberating and consciousness-expanding: to create a total music unmediated by the mind' (Young, 2009, p. 137).

Yet when noted in player feedback, the presence of the experience often reflects the positive value judgments which emerge from these states, even therapeutic elements, and a clear wish to continue to seek ways to recreate this state:

And it was like magical, magical moment, that I didn't realize where does all these material, that rhythm, that phrases, that kind of overall [come] from? […] So that's the point, which is very, very rare. I think that I call it completely free improvisation, where you're not - I mean, the performer, the creator, the improviser, is not familiar with those components with those material anymore. It's completely coming from nowhere. And also it's completely [in] sync, it syncs completely, it's not like you're try to grab, and you try to define yourself to other improviser […] But here for free moments like this, first, you will not any more [be] familiar with your own material. And secondly, it's effortless. You don't need to define yourself, it's like somebody, you're the marionette, and somebody is playing. Somebody that they already know the plan. And you're just kind of acting, acting the sets. And it's really, it's really magical, and I think it is the magic of improvisation. And it doesn't happen so often. (Golfam Khyam, Iranian player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, June 2021)

But while improvising, I don't actually think of anything. Yeah, I just disappear. […] I just feel that the violin is playing itself. So a bit like a disassociation experience. So I literally just see from another point of view, everything that's happening, and especially from this part on [gestures at arms] the hands are just not even me. And the violin is just playing itself. […] Because I feel disconnected. From other conscious thinking of what [I] have to do, what I'm going to play. And then just sit back and relax. And that's, yes, it's very therapeutic. (Alessia Anastassopulos, Italian player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2021)

Importantly Khyam comments that these magical moments of improvisation don't happen very often, and yet Anastassopulos further notes in interview that she enters this state almost every time she plays, which highlights that the transcendent experience of *presence* is varying, and therefore might not always be a communal shared experience.

While the novelty of creative trance is very important to practise, it is also useful to consider how these notions might become an expectation when the word 'improvisation' is used, an association with a practice which carries with it a possible presumption of immersion and cohesion. The field often has audiences which also appear to enter these experiential states with players. However, the intensity of this kind of experience can also be criticized for the exclusion of the audience. For example, players self-report the power of these kinds of experiences which on occasion might generate a form of 'cultish' behaviour. I.e. in a context of a vulnerable experiment group cohesion can act as a protective measure, wherein the actions of the group both insulate and alienate players from their surroundings (reflections from a performance with Henry McPherson, Ronan Whittern, and Adam Hall, private communication, 2017).

The reflection of things like 'trance' or 'meditative' experiences are important for this research because of their manifestation within contemporary digital practices. Where shared bodily presence and 'real time' are notions which are substantially altered conceptually, the reality of shared listening and collective unconsciousness must also be re-managed. In these contexts, the notion of 'listening' alters how a virtuosic ear might engage, for example, what one player notes as a digital listening form of 'mental ventriloquism'(Argo, 2020). Here the role of the visual processes assists in filling in the gaps of digitally distanced auditory expressions. Alternatively, the experience of trance itself can be developed. For example, Raymond MacDonald notes, the effect of telematic practices evoked a feeling of 'transcendental improvisation' which he describes as a digitally enhanced experience of trance. A practice that he found new possibilities from when back in entirely physical practice as well (Raymond Macdonald, private communication, 2020). As practice becomes hybrid and audiences have both physical and digital presences, new questions arise around the needs for space generation and practice setup which afford a way to welcome all bodies *into* the present, and to seek togetherness in experience in new settings, with new skills.

B.3.2.2 Capturing temporality

As the more metaphysical experiences of improvisation might be considered as an ebb and flow of synchronous and asynchronous tapping into an experience, the physical parameters of the music are necessary to unpack as well. This includes the tangible musical concepts: pulse, rhythm, structural aesthetics[5] but more importantly the realities of capturing temporalities in the shape of recorded and documented traces of real-time practices. For example, the influx of recording possibilities alters who has access to capturing a 'present', and with such technological advances comes also the affordance for re-manipulation of singular improvisational moments and real-time processing for augmenting or reusing material from performance (e.g. Trance Map project with Matt Wright and Evan Parker). New technologies alter the possible engagements with 'real-time' and the fact that networked music[6] expands the possibility of meeting in time across great distances; cross-temporal and physical proximities propose a need to address notions of the documentation and presentation of a 'moment'.

The debates that come with technological changes are what is of interest here. For example, the notorious ethics of recording the improvised moment, which in a traditional sense is seen as a destruction of the ephemeral nature of the practice. Cornelius Cardew famously proposes that 'recording[s] of improvisation are essentially empty' (Cardew, 1971) primarily because the recorded document does not 'convey any sense of time and place' (ibid.) in which the work was made. Cardew notes this has as much to do with the lack of context of the physical room 'view from the windows' (Cardew, 1971) as it does the capturing of live acoustic sound in space. While being a comment made before audio-visual practice was common place, it is nevertheless interesting for a player to note the importance of physical and locational context at play within the creative moment.

What a recording produces is a separate phenomenon, something really much stranger than the playing itself, since what you hear on tape or disc is indeed the same playing but divorced from its natural context [...] Besides, this music does not *occur* in a home environment, it occurs in a public environment, and its force depends to some extent on public response. For this reason too it cannot happen fully in a recording studio; if there is hope for a recording it must be a recording of a public performance. (Cardew, 1971)[7]

Rodrigo Constanzo notes that documenting something is 'voyeuristic' and similar to Cardew comments that, on the one hand, notions of performance are bound in time-space, yet on the other, rather than provide a case against recording, he *prefers* to work in the form of recorded video.[8] Often he makes work without audience present, a practice which might have no place and no time. As he says 'using time in a more, non-representative or using like recording in a non-representative or non-documentary manner. (Constanzo, American, Portugal based player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue January 2020)

The videos versus performance stuff and something that I think about now a lot as well, in terms of pedagogy and education and communication in the community […] if there's a performance I'm going to perform here tonight, let's say, it's bound by a place. So there's a physical place where it happens and it's found by the time. And then there's also like socioeconomic things. Is it free? Is it not? You know, like there's all these kinds of things. It's very bound in terms of like time-space – in terms of its reach. Whereas something like a video, it's not bound by time. I mean, it happened in a specific time, but the time in which someone can view it is whenever, and then it's also not bound by location because it can be viewable anywhere. […] I have to say that a concert can get filmed, but I think it's different, there's like a different aesthetic feeling to the act of documentation versus the act of creation. […] if you're documenting something it's a voyeuristic thing, like there is an other, and it is, it is a

5   For example, John Steven's piece 'one two' (Stevens et al., 2007, p. 9) gets players thinking about inhabiting beats in a shared pattern. Whereas repetitive rhythm can also be a famously unwanted aesthetic, as Joe Morris points out in his own section on pulse in improvised practices of 'European free improvisation': 'there is no pulse *stated or implied*. Instead*, each sound*, phrase made by the individual or ensemble is made without reference to *pulse* as if it is disconnected from any reference to it.' (2012, p. 62 italics in original).
6   A short history of which is provided in the introduction to 'The three Fs'.

7   Cardew could not know that improvisation in the home environment would become incredibly bound up in the visual context and perceptual space of performance (2020) see 'Furnishing'.
8   Important to note here is about 50 years of technology advancement and differences in accessibility to audio/visual recording between Cardew and Constanzo.

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body that is now, capturing this thing that it has no relation to. Whereas a lot of videos that I make with my partner, they're not that. They are a thing that is happening as a singular thing. (Constanzo, interviewed by Sappho Donohue January 2020)

Constanzo's consideration points to some wider politics and the reality of 'Concert'. When playing with linearity and space/time, through audio-visual intended documents, he sees this not as subversion of tradition, but a new possibility for presentation and experience – a new dimension for work to generate, one which has no specific time or place: 'a performance practice reflective of a new digital world for creative engagement.' (ibid). Within these notions Costanzo proposes that contemporary watching culture has changed and should be responded to through platforms like YouTube, where he acknowledges the audience-agency to play with performance in time, to step outside the 'sit down and listen' tradition. A form of art making which generates its own/multiple temporal experiences.

[...] But then I think there's, a lot of cultural weight placed on the concerts and particularly [the] Western classical music tradition of concert, where there's like people on some kind of stage, there's people that are separate from them, like sat and very quietly and politely […] And there's a lot of music where it isn't the case. I think a lot of people, there's a lot of like performance practice that pushes against that. […] And it sort of is, is pushing back against the artifice of what a concert like Capitol C concert is. But it comes at it from accepting it as a given – like a concert is this thing and how can we rally against it? Whereas like, it isn't a thing and it doesn't need to be a thing! So you just come up with a practice that doesn't involve that, of which almost every other type of music in the world has done. [...] I mean, even in that sense, let's say like with the practice of like tape music or electronic music, you know, kind of multichannel piece and the idea is that someone will come into a room or space or concert performance like this [gestures to recording studio we are sitting in] and they'll sit quietly and listen to the piece from beginning to end. And that'll be kind of a solemn thing. Whereas, if you're watching some kind of like random YouTube video, you jump around, you play, you jump. And, you know, and I do that with my own music and I, and I would be surprised that people don't do it as well. I don't, I don't think that

there's anything, that's not a bad thing. That's just, it's, it's a matter of how you experience that thing and that's fine. (ibid)

The metaphysical experience of a time-less-ness in performance might overtake a player during performance, it might be considered how these practice-based experiences inform and are part of these kinds of contemporary possibilities for time play. This is both in the ways that Constanzo notes a new form of 'Concert' that might also be considered as being further explored within the new dimensions of space and augmented time in telematic music practices. Contemporary tools hyper-augment the rules of reality; Cardew notes the lack of recording documents 'view from [out of] the windows' these contemporary practices are rather a view *into* many windows, none of which might be the 'real' version of practice on their own. In contemporary practice distanced techno-bodies, representations of multi-locations, the generation of fictional contexts, and the myriad forms of audience engagement and output mean that digital and hybrid practices are agential contemporary tools to respond within contemporary perceptions, with the power to politic the notion of concert document, through non-linear and non-origin based practices.

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A.3.3 Place, location, and improvisational claim

You can imagine lute players in the 1500s getting drunk and doing improvisations for people in front of a log fire. The noise, the clatter must have been enormous. You read absolutely incredible descriptions of that. I cannot believe that musicians back then didn't float off into free playing (Keith Rowe interviewed by Warburton, January 2001)

The following considers the larger genre divide between 'free improvisation' and 'free jazz' by assessing the relationships these terms have developed with locationalities, nationalities, and presumed rights to invention. By considering creative 'claim' through the locationality of practice, a particular understanding emerges around narratives of lineage and legacy. These are aspects of the field which are important to contextualize in comparison with the changed notion of location within contemporary practices when work is generated in digital spaces un-tethered to any specific physical space. The case here questions the role of genre in locationality, as well as the generation of lineage tensions which such *claims* generate during the development of a history. If read in parallel with the creative practice theme on <u>Signal</u> it is useful to consider how the customisation of creative language further complexifies these investigations on lineage, language, and origin.

A.3.3.1 Ownership and a European sonicity

It can feel as though there is an inescapable European-ness to the history of this field, something which seems very represented in the canon, and which players note as having a 'Eurocentric style' (Jasper Feng, Hong Kong player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, May 2021). An issue this research had to contend with is whether the contemporary global practice researched here will always be associated with inherently, and often self-proclaimed European invention.

The free improvisation movement … a lot of us have been talking about those kinds of musical innovations…. It seems to me that that's an area that potentially, that arguably, is a new European sonicity…. Its music, its culture, its attitudinality, its educative practice – its pedagogy – its stubbornness, and definitely its radical politics (McKay, 2011).

Even in the opening quote of this section, we might wonder with Rowe – if lute players of the 1500s might have explored the depths of their instruments, might *erhu* players, similarly, have been doing so?[1] For example, Gwen Ansell recounts a comment once made to her by a South African player who considers their experience of European notions of free music on encountering it when in exile from practice at home:

You know this stuff of sitting around in a circle and just improvising? We have been doing this back home in our communities for generations. It was nothing new to me. These European musicians seem to think it was some big deal but it was nothing new to me (As recounted by Ansell in Strainchamps, 2021).

A dissonance appears between a diverse contemporary international practice nevertheless often being cited with a geographic specificity to its sound. As a younger generation player, I am biased from an experience which is decidedly different from previous generations, and some might argue that the historical legacy of a European Free Improvisation is a result of the influence of earlier European free practices on many styles globally (Morris, 2012, p. 104). Yet from a vantage point looking back it is still hard to believe that a notion of 'free'– structurally, societally, economically, personally – originated first and foremost in European content, or for that matter that the aesthetics designed in these areas should account for a more general point of reference for all other experimental improvised practice.[2] Rather, it seems that due to the relative small scale of these scenes, the histories have influenced each other – eg. <u>*Onkyo* and reductionist improvisation.</u> While it might seem trivial to get caught up in questioning whether

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1　　A subject returned to also in a question of what constitutes an experimentation into 'free' playing when looking across musical tradition particularly outside that of Europe.
2　　It should also not go un-noted that this is further suspicious as European music itself already dominates documented musical history, eg. 'world music' often implies everything other than Western music narratives.

free improvisation is a useful term the association with a European sound is a red flag when attempting to situate this history in a contemporary global sense.

The strength of most of this European association comes from a particular narrative in which European artists were mobilized around forming a unique type of improvisation that could be a 'European sonicity'. That is, in the sharp uptake in 'free' practice in Europe in the 1960s players exhibit an urge to find a form of creativity that could be attributed to Europe – new, not owned nor reflective of existing idioms. For example, terms like '*Emanzipation*' (Gunter Hampel Quintet, 1965; Jost, 1987, p. 12) Peter Kowald's phrase 'kaput era' [*Kaputtspielzeit*][3] (Waters, 2017) and a general sentiment of signaling a break with American jazz tradition predominated, and is documented variously in European free practices (Jost, 1975; Schuiling, 2019).

> Today it is clear for the first time that most Americans are irrelevant as a musical influence on our generation (Frose, translation found in Waters, 2017, p. 163)

> In the liberation from the structural principles of traditional jazz, from chord changes and the rhythmic regulation of the beat, younger European musicians simultaneously began to detach themselves from the almost obligatory influence of their former American models. (Jost, 1987, p. 12)

> And this body of work [that of Mike Westbrook], probably more than anything else, was responsible for **the emancipation of British jazz from American slavery**. (Carr, 1973, p. 25, my additions of bold)

These accounts echo ideas of looking for individuality, predominantly detached from reference to activities in the United States, and which benefiting from socio-political hindsight, they might be considered as a product of post-war realities. As George Lewis comments, the creative scenes in Europe seem to ask themselves: '[…] if jazz is American, then who are we as Europeans? (Lewis, 2004). This move could be seen as a wish to rebuild, with home grown influence,

a new form of European – borderless creativity – a sort of conceptual European Union of musical expression. But be that as it may, the above language should also be critiqued for its co-option of words like liberation, emancipation, and freedom, in relation to a history of music which is tangibly linked with notions of human liberation of slaves (not un-ironically considering the European role in this history) and the large impact of these histories on diaspora. Therefore, it would be amiss not to note that if a narrative wanted its own kind of original space, it might not also be a fertile breeding ground for insularism, nationalism, and racism.

A.3.3.2 In, on, through, against, besides Jazz

Arguably before European improvisers began to forge a path for their own form of improvised music (and much later than the speculative 1500s lute and erhu players), the internal assessment of jazz was already enacting a 'break with' tradition. In general the story of Jazz is deeply bound within narratives of something fought against, rallied behind, ignored, transposed, and claimed. The following presents a collection of global perspectives, aspects which help comprehend the presence of concurrence within a complex history of locational specificities and palpable placelessness. Something used here to express the ways a history might be controlled, politicked, and migrated in response to a shared theme, but in echo of diverse realities.

In an American setting the rise of free jazz is deeply entangled with the civil rights movement – a palpable struggle for liberation outwith music, nevertheless clearly present within the politicized relevance of Jazz in American culture. This might be viewed in two ways, on the one hand as Europe sought to unify a shared European sound, practices like that of the AACM instead sought to maintain and actively celebrate a diversity in black cultural sound. This friction in experimental improvised needs proposes a divergence, something which is not useful towards a Eurological need (Lewis, 2004). That is, jazz or an American improvisation needed to be a clear homogeneous aesthetic in order that European sonicities might clearly invent in opposition to it. Therein, canon which reflects these histories is one which as Lewis proposes continues to propel the 'flattening of black culture', which suites prominently European needs and lineages of creative aesthetics of jazz and African American experimental contribution (Lewis, 2004).

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[3]   A phrase which he later distanced himself from, but which is still contextually relevant here. (Frose, 1972 translation found in Waters, 2018).

These Eurological perspectives are also internalised within American culture, wherein a growing aestheticizing of jazz suited the American narrative for many the same reasons. For example, the story of the 'Jazz Ambassadors' (Berkeley & Martin, 2018) enfolds a larger freedom debate within an inflexible binary between North American 'democracy' and the Soviet regime. In this history the US defence department funds a large programme to send out primarily African American jazz musicians to travel the world to counter the Soviet government's public criticism of the ongoing segregation laws of a country hypocritically propelling 'democratic' promises. A not unfair claim. In response jazz became a viable option to capitalize on musicians as creative diplomats (Berkeley & Martin, 2018) where the musicians could be sent out as envoys, used to counter communist ideals, and bring notions of American 'freedom' and 'equality' via a packaged version of jazz around the world.[4] No wonder therefore new phrases/scenes emerge in America which mobilize around 'free jazz', 'new black music', 'anti-jazz' or 'the new thing' (McClure, 2006).

The story of the Jazz Ambassadors exposes the strange narrative of a music being mobilized for propaganda which crosses a growing divide between Eastern and Western notions of 'freedom'. Yet players working under the Soviet regime had even further different relationships with accessing these forms. Unlike the North American or the European actions, Western influence was not a factor of abjection, it was an influence of scarcity which was engaged with as an underground, deeply marginalised and lonely undertaking:[5]

> [speaking about players from 1950's] and just was like some crazy stuff – was like jumping off the roof you know. It's like suicide movement. So it was the guys who plays Jazz at that time was – one leg was dead, you know? And so they see the death, and they play very true music without civilization, without – it's like archaic true music. (Ototsky, Russian player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2019).

Otostky's description is interesting because it proposes that jazz becomes an entity of a message, and this message is deeply confused. Not only does it appear to have been co-opted away from the diverse reality of the field's intention, but it is also a message variously acted against. For a final example, in South Africa under apartheid, jazz was similarly seen as a threat. In this sense the music was read as something which promoted an urban black culture, which directly challenged the prevailing political need to enforce notions of tribalism. As Gwen Ansell notes, the way jazz was abjected from South African musical production is a form of 'symbolic annihilation' (Ansell quoted in Strainchamps, 2020). An industry control of aesthetic creation that enforced that any black player working in experimental form outside of traditional musics found themselves enacting a mode of politics, whether intentioned or not.

> [jazz] It was sonically subversive because it was an assertion of a non-tribal, urban Black identity, and the ideology of apartheid was that that simply did not and could not exist (Ansell quoted in Strainchamps, 2020).

The climate of this behaviour propelled countless artists to leave the country to seek musical autonomy. Experimental contribution was therefore displaced, historically generating a large influx of creative acts made in exile, and thus hindering the growth of experimental jazz in South Africa. A speculative question could be raised: what would have happened to jazz in America, if all the Jazz ambassadors never went back?

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4   A useful analysis of the complex narrative between Jazz and democracy can be read in 'Everyone's music? Exploration of the democratic ideal in jazz and improvised music' (Mwamba & Gravem Johansen, 2021).

5   Of further interest also is the shift after the fall of the Soviet Union, which like in many aspects of social living, began to open quickly to western commodities, ways of living, and economics. In the arts for example, a large building is given to the experimental arts community in Snt. Petersburg, a building which now houses many artists studios, including being the home for the Snt. Petersburg Improvising Orchestra, and the Sound Museum (a museum of experimental music histories) (Markov & Shubin, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2019).

I've always found it weird that in South Africa, jazz musicians came, you know, went into exile and went to the UK. And when I lived in London for a while – I was kind of in a jazz world all the time. […] You don't understand how important these Blue note guys, Chris McGregor and Louis Moholo, whatever – they were so important in terms of the British jazz scene. […] But, it's weird that they kind of left and then brought some kind of very avant-garde way of approaching music to the UK. But things here kind of, I mean, maybe it's cheeky to say they stagnated. But, you know, you don't find many free improvisers here [South Africa]. (Cara Stacey, South African player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2021)

The above wide-reaching triangulation of paths of jazz highlights some questions about locationality. It feels palpable that the narratives of these experimental forms envelop stories of migration. These are musics which are deeply part of histories of displacement, slavery, travel and abjection. And yet as Meklit Hadero reminds, the word 'diaspora' means the spreading of seeds, which she considers in her work as 'diaspora music [...] making hyphenated music always [...] it's a part of having a relationship with a global world' (Hadero quoted in Strainchamps, 2021). When Hadero notes hyphenated music, she means she is Ethiopian-American, and therefore she makes Etheopian-America music, with all of the diaspora and diversity such a hyphen might contain. Something Lewis notes is a needed practice within twenty first century music, that is, music made amidst its 'creolity': a global existence which has multi-origins; the growth of seeds spread.

Conceptual migration (or even conceptual nomadism) would create a new curatorial subject for contemporary music that can directly conceive of ascribing kinship, membership, and subjecthood to these new composers and their forebears, creating a new, creolized usable past for new music. Building upon that foundation, we can address the question of how Defragmentation might sound, and how that sound can be heard. (Lewis, 2020)

These are important questions because the mixed nature of these histories is present in the experience. Especially when a player joins these practices for the first time. For example, in interview with George Achieng, a Kenyan player, we spoke about what it was like for him to join GIO online for the first time,[6] and his first experience with free playing. He at first describes the music as a form of jazz, which he further adds an acknowledgment of something different, in seeking his voice within a new sound world.

And what we are doing at the jazz, is first, it gave me a lot of challenge because I've never did such sound before. […] because we typically do folk. Yeah. But this one is it gives me a lot of challenge and, and a lot of thinking because the way it starts, the way people, the way it happens is like everybody's trying to create a sound which is never there before. Yeah. It's not what has been there that people know […] I feel that like, we are creating new sounds which are never there. Yeah it's a good […] It's my first experience doing it. But I think it's good idea because now I've got something to think about again. Yeah. Which I've never done. Yeah, that's why when I joined for the first time I took a lot of time to get where to fixed [fit] my instrument in. But now I think by now if I join I, I easily find where to find myself. Last week, we even tried it with the with my, you know, I have a band. We have a band here. (Acheing interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2021)

6   A luxury of the place-lessness of digital practice is that a Kenyan player might join a free improvising ensemble online to try the music out.

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The reflections of Achieng joining GIO reflects the spreading of seeds of sound in practice, a two-way street of sharing and exploring space. As Achieng comments about finding his place in the music, he talks both about listening but also in thinking about where his instrument (the Orutu) fits into this sound world. Something he sees as an extension of the experience of new sound making: 'This one [music] is different instrument, different people. Different idea. People create what is never there, you know?' (Achieng, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2021). Achieng further notes these are ideas that *have* spread because it is an approach he later tries with his Kenyan folk band (Kenge Kenge).[7] A story which contains all the undefinable aspects of a practice made in no specific place, with no specific style, between players both old and new to the histories, taking it onwards, spreading the seeds.

Back to the Canon and Its Double Home Map

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7   https://www.womex.com/virtual/global_heritage/kenge_kenge (last accessed July 2022)

B.3.4 Signal: Specifics in unspecificities

Free form as a name may be a misnomer because no one can do exactly what they want. It is a dialectic process, and you have to be responsible. As soon as you work with somebody or something, even if you destroy the existing rules, you make your own. It is always a dialogue between what you have in mind, and what is possible. The language you use is based on the character of the person speaking — or playing. (Peter Brotzman interviewed by Sammy Stein, May 2014)

[…] everybody's trying to create a sound which is never there before (George Acheing, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2021).

While much of the language common to the field promotes an open field for experimentation – i.e. terms like 'open improvisation' or 'complete improvisation',[8] there nevertheless is something contained within contexts which are specific, and which are emergent from the ways diverse intentions meet in collaborative settings. As Brotzman's opening quote proposes: 'As soon as you work with somebody or something, even if you destroy the existing rules, you make your own' (Peter Brotzman interviewed by Stein, May 2014). The following considers several terms and aesthetics of practice which carry particular 'signals' of meaning important to the players and their scenes who use them.

These signals are considered microsocial knowledges which allow for practice to communicate action, interest, and focus. While several terms are used here to present a diverse range of possible improvisational 'signals' it is important to remember that many of these knowledges are often understood non-verbally, and the terms are used here purely to help elucidate some of the emergent elements which might be perceived during practice. Such a collection of language such as this helps to notice some interests brought to an improvisational space, and provides a broad overview which lays the groundwork for conceptualizing contemporary practice which has built upon existing aesthetics, while further redefining and inventing language as a shared approach.

B.3.4.1 Customisation: names and influence

Naming a new form of music, then, is part of the way that musicians and listeners experiment with the historical resonances of cultural identity. (Novak, 2010, p. 43)

The Italian term 'improvvisazione destrutturata' (deconstructed improvisation) implies an important facet of experimental improvisation: a conceptual de-constructing of improvisation. If improvisation itself comes with associations that are restrictive and that a player wishes to go beyond, it is significant that the word 'deconstruct' is chosen to propose a further action. 'Deconstruction' does not propose specifics, but rather promotes the notion that taking something apart and working with it in a new way/rebuilding it – provides new opportunities. Yet *Destrutturata* is explained in interview to signal a specific to other players as well, the kind of improvisation that is *not* happening:

So, if you say, let's improvise, or do you improvise? People always think about jazz, mainly jazz, or maybe folk. Mainly jazz. So, if you want to be specific, you have to use the *destrutturata*. (Alessia Anastassopulos, Italian, UK based player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2021)

To use a word to specify *the kind* of improvisation makes sense. For example, the now famous *non-idiomatic music* by Derek Bailey[9] is conceptually very clear at face value – music which is not concerned with idiomatic identity (Bailey, 1993, xi-xii). Although it is debatable whether this is achievable in practice. Furthermore, the Russian term

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8   Used in both Serbia *potpuna improvizacija* and Japan 完全即興.

9   'Non-idiomatic' improvisation has other concerns and is most usually found in so-called 'free' improvisation and, while it can be highly stylised, is not usually tied to representing an idiomatic identity (Bailey, 1993, pp. xi–xii).

полиидиоматическая импровизация (poly-idiomatic improvisation) used by pianist Roman Stoyler is clearly a playful expansion of the Bailey's term, which considers *non-idiomatics* as one possible form of improvisation at play:

> […]it seems it properly describes my manner of playing in which any kind of stylistic influence can appear unpredictably, as a contrast to non-idiomatic structures that can also appear in my playing at any moment. (Stoyler, Russian player, interview follow up, June 2021)

When players use specific terms which suggest a relationship: non-idiomatic vs. poly-idiomatic, then the social and practical possibilities are altered in what is brought to the mix at play. Another further example is 'trans-idiomatic improvisation' which proposes (like poly-idiomatic improvisation) that many 'idioms' are welcomed to mix in performance, yet as Matt Wright points out, this is more of a conceptual goal, or rather fleetingly possible: to truly always be *trans* idiom, the work needs to never settle itself into becoming an idiom of its own (a criticism also sometimes pointed towards non-idiomatic music which some argue did become its own idiom eventually).

> The minute that it becomes a repertoire then of course it can't really be trans-idiomatic. Because it ossifies as a new tradition […] while you can build repertoire of understanding [with] your fellow musicians, the minute it becomes a concrete understanding, then it becomes one new way of working. So it needs to look for another external thing to be truly trans-idiomatic again. (Matt Wright, meeting recording, September 2021)

These points collectively focus on the question of what would be welcomed into improvisation, what should be explored/what should be left out, but also what goals might be experimented towards conceptually. These are questions about the relationships between a rather limitless possible inclusion within free spaces, which is further expanded by terms such as *transdisciplinary free improvisation* (McPherson, 2020) which is not concerned with style/idiom per say but addresses the issue of *discipline* (a possible form of big idiom) which might be in the trans-relational mix, an encouragement to expand expressive forms.

Yet while the above focused on terminology it is further important to note these words might often never be used in practice itself. For example, McPherson's phrase is one he would not apply to situations where he would play with others, but which is useful in describing the practice for an academic context, a way to highlight the importance of transdisciplinarity within the canon (McPherson, CeReNeM lecture, January 2022). That is, the specifics of a practice are in development and constant regeneration. They are carried in many ways: by implicit knowledges, shown and felt in actions, considered terminology/self-reported reflection, and housed in 'telephone' whispers in canon and research: trans mediated by the telling and meeting of peoples and the changing of times.

> But while you were making music together you did things that showed me and everyone watching what you were doing. You left signs everywhere around the room showing where you stood or sat. In short, you created an environment which forced others to make contact with you whether they liked it or not. (Chimere, private communication, 2021)

B.3.4.2 Universality, (un)translation, and instability

> But even as the new terms of 'improvisation' slowly became detached from 'jazz,' they were reattached to new categories: first as 'free jazz'; then 'free improvisation'; moving to just "improvisation," often shortened to 'improv,' which in Japan became 'impuro'. (Novak, 2010, p. 42)

This section focuses on the language of referring to the music both because of what the specifics of terms used by players can expose, but also because of the relationship with names that this field holds. That is, as part of the continual rejuvenation of the needs for the practice, the music itself is renamed, disowned, and politicized through stories of association and anti-association. As Ingrid Monson proposes 'the music that is labelled, [musicians] they realize, is somehow the one that carries less prestige, the one that is considered less universal.' (Monson, 1996, p. 101).

Universality is an interesting point Monson raises which highlights how unifying terminology possibly hinders universality of shared practice. The new wave of improvisation which emerged in the 1990s provides another narrative on the internal mediation of field aesthetics and provides a new take on labels within the field. These forms were ones which often appear in clear contrast to the established 'free improvisation' aesthetics of loud, fast, and dense textures and promoted new forms of listening, aesthetics, and group agreements.

> In the late 1990s, a moment of delicious confusion occurred within improvisation, as a bunch of musicians in their twenties gave the music a good and probably overdue shake-up. Suddenly performances were less cosy, listening habits were challenged and older musicians could be heard testily asserting that there was nothing so original here – a sure sign that something was going on. In different cities different tags were stuck on by tongue-in-cheek promoters or writers: Tokyo had onkyo, the UK had New London Silence, while in Berlin the musicians themselves called it Echtzeitmusik (realtime music) (Saunders, 2009).

Rhodri Davis, a player within the New London Silence scene, proposes that the use of 'reductionism' was a critique of the field, a push towards a new direction: 'I view reductionism as a form of reassessing and critiquing improvised music itself. I think it's a healthy critique.' (Davis interviewed by Saunders, 2009). While the terms and scenes which develop within this new wave are often considered within a shared category as seen above, the Japanese term Onkyo, particularly noted for its importance within this development, is focused on here because it is clear about a wider critique which considers notions of 'genre' and sound generation/categories themselves.

> 'just sound,' musicians would often say when dismissing the notion of onkyo as a fixed genre. They often argued that the name was meant not to correlate to any specific musical features, but to point out the practitioners' focus on the more philosophical and ambient qualities of sound. [...] there really is no such genre as onkyo, no special style, no typical rules, no continuous history; and after all, they say [musicians], it just means sound. (Novak, 2010, p. 41)

The concept of Onkyo, despite the aesthetic of music often associated with it, might be considered as an expression of a resistance to being static: in terms of creative production and creative lineage.[10] That is, an awareness of a stabilization of something which would like to remain unstable, ongoing but not continuous of itself. This concept of Onkyo is important because it sheds light on how an agency in self-regulation can be a moving force of continued 'seeking'.

To seek for something might be considered a way to find newness or experiment, but it also highlights action over fixity: to continue to seek is to continue to be in motion. This is important because it is easy to over-focus on 'novelty' of practice, which can easily derail a narrative, something is new and then it is not new, and a lineage of newness might then be prescribed, and it might be named. The passage of novel developments in a field can often fork histories, where new waves are considered variously as 'inventions' or as continued lineages of pre-existing history. Onkyo shows how something might not allow itself to be *found*. It steps outside genre, yet quickly also becomes subsumed into a recognisable character of improvised music: it is referenced in relation to a global wave, while also commonly being aestheticized as a 'Japanese' sound – directly causing a conflict with the term's intended ambiguity. Onkyo is a term which requires a particular cultural/linguistic/social knowledge to philosophically consider, it cannot be translated, but in the complexity of its many meanings, a narrative is evoked that questions labels, genre, location, and invention (which also implies claim). Returning to Monson's note that a resistance to naming the field is bound up further within an interest in a conceptual universality of practice, Onkyo might further help think with the presence of a nevertheless very physical globality. It is bound up in stepping away from existing practice, but exists in a wave of sharedness, whose needs are nevertheless at stake, or at least influenced by 'the intercultural form of musical creativity and communication in a global public sphere' (Novak, 2010, p. 53).

The general theme of untranslatability within Onkyo is an example of the ambiguity in exchange of improvised practices, which is equal parts extremely local and increasingly expanding globally. Inevitably documented as part of a history, but which also asserts itself as standing apart from genre and traditional conceptions of canon. It is this

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10   Something which philosophically speaks to comments made by Wright previously on the practical issue with achieving 'transidiom improvisation'.

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duality in relationships which gets close to the realm of [contemporary creative practice](#) where there is no concrete space in which global perspectives meet, commune, and seek for new practice. A contemporary practice which might be related in further improvisational terms: telematic music, networked music, digital music, but which are terms not necessarily used by the players. Merely histories in which a contemporary moment might be placed in lineage with. In many of the examples that are shown in 'The Three F's' a reader might be shocked at the broad classification of works which are considered 'improvisation'. Examples which might challenge existing presumed aesthetics, practices and intentions: works with scores, works with leaders and composers, works without sound. And yet these are products of the changing landscape, players who commit to the experimentation with new ideas, new technologies, and new global realities, which produce versions of practice which define themselves anew, nevertheless who carry with them many of these terms that might be found in an experimental improvised practice.

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A.3.5 Bias and Aesthetical Supremacists

'Save me from aesthetic supremacists' (Maggie Nicols, GIOfest XIII November 2020)

In this subchapter the effect of residual bias is critiqued as it has been found within traditional lineages and narratives of practice aesthetics. These biases result from big-genre historical legacies, which in turn also hold sway over perceived legitimacy and worth of practice. This critique helps to assess existing presumptions which affect representation, respect, and documentation of contributions within the canon. A commentary which is made towards re-situating contemporary practice where new aesthetics are found to emerge that sit counter to existing traditional forms and post-genre ideas. By examining biases that delineate histories, worth, and categorisations, it is possible to investigate how contemporary practice redefines technique, imagined audiences, and community aesthetics during the digital switch to online music-making that occurred during the pandemic.

If read in companionship with the creative practice theme on 'context' it is possible to draw out the direct correlations between wider socio-historical effects of bias within creative language and the ways these narratives get into the associations that players contend with while defining and scaffolding their own practice and scenes.

A.3.5.1 Genre: whose avant-garde is it?

Seeking to avoid the detrimental effects of canon formation, many musicians rename their music in order to maintain authorial control over their own history. (Novak, 2010)

While some might say 'One man or one woman's Free Music is another's Free Jazz.' (Barre , 2016, Location No. 296) there is more at play than categorizations of subjective aesthetics. For one matter these terms are often distinctively

canonised, which has assisted in the bifurcation of experimental art scenes': histories that have developed concurrently but are often divided by national origin. George Lewis calls this the 'two Avant-gardes'(Lewis, 2004):[1] 'Free jazz' is something that European players in the 1960s drew upon yet are considered also to have broken away from in the *invention* of free improvisation. In this regard the European Free Improvisation narratives are considered first generation inventors of this new form of free improvised music, whereas players like those of the AACM are second generations of furthered free jazz narratives – yet often not considered attached to this 'new wave' of free practice in Europe (Lewis, 2004).

> Thus, the supposed difference between free jazz and free improvisation becomes disclosed as resting not upon methodological or sonic difference, but upon ethnic and racial identifiers that become mapped onto method in a way that not only advances a whiteness-based version of the relationship between African-American improvisative culture and postmodernism, but revokes the genre mobility of the African-American improvisor (Lewis, 2004)

> [...] it seems odd that the black cultural nationalist aspect of the Art Ensemble's term, "Great Black Music," is often roundly criticized, while the pan-European cultural nationalism of the European free improvisors often remains uninterrogated. (Lewis, 2004)

A central problem to the division in acknowledgment of diverse forms of experimental improvisation falls both within the realms of social presumptions as much as it has to do with what these social presumptions produce: a generation and a safeguarding of musical genre and subgenre. As Lewis states 'gatekeeping, border-policing, and kinship-enforcing functions of genre' (2020) propelling the 'binaries between insider and outsider, margin and centre' (Ibid). These divisions are harmful in that they actively contribute to the segregation of players across artistic spaces, but more importantly these separations are often grounded in assumptions influenced by 'gender, race, ethnicity and

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1   Most likely made in reference, but not to be confused with Peter Wollen's 'The Two Avant-Gardes' (1976).

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national origin' (Ibid.). Lewis proposes that this does not only affect artistic communities but also affects the way we hear, promote, and value music itself.

> At least in music, kinship is often represented as genre. Its root, gen- (genetic, genotype, and even gender) is often found as representing not only family, but fixity. (Lewis, 2020)

Following Lewis's description, players are often solidified into a 'style', which affects what is associated with them, their groups, their history – they are easily subsumed into larger narratives of presumed aesthetics: placed into a lineage from which they are said to be experimenting from, but often have little mobility to exist outside of (Lewis, 2020). While researchers/players might often point out that they use the term free improvisation or free jazz interchangeably, and where there is a rise of representation of experimental improvised practices within experimental arts spaces, this might bandage delineations between fractured experimental histories, but it does not inject absent contributions into a representation within connected lineages. For example, in 'Representation and Lineage' this same problem emerges within notions of gender representation: by retrospectively acknowledging artists within histories, this does not inject their contributions within the pedagogy, technique, and wider lineage of the practice they have been missing from.

While the academic act of pointing out this issue also does very little to counter-act this narrative, it has nevertheless been important for this research to continue to expand the context presented around contemporary experimental practice, rather than focalise the references which might appear as the most obvious niche lineages. For example, it would be more traditional for this research to focus on a history of digital practice to scaffold contemporary practice, but this research is not looking to claim contemporary work emerged from any specific history, but rather because it has been found within a shared community. This community has guided the references which are made, and therefore the use of the term 'field' is rather arbitrary, as there is no answer to 'what' field. Like Onkyo, there really is no way to fixity to what is being investigated, there is no translatable word, but many might be used, which have emerged from this community itself.

Beyond the notion of the two avant-gardes there is a wider presumption of genre relationality which affects who/ what is afforded access to the halls of the respected experimentalism canon (Piekut, 2012; Sappho Donohue, 2020; Thompson, 2017). While experimental expansion is often reliant on internal systems which pass value judgments across scenes and niche aesthetics, divisions in the perceived lineage also affect the social respect garnered for varying forms of experimental improvised practice. This is something that produces experimental hierarchisation, which in turn affects the judgment of the validity of players' works. The following contrasting examples diversify this notion. One example deals with the biases which divide respect due to perceived 'mastery', and the other conversely contends with how presumed 'elitism' in craft can create negative and exclusionary views about practice insularism.

A prevailing issue for fringe practices is contending with the existence of diverse training backgrounds and the underlying constitutions of good 'technique'.[2] For example, Maggie Nicols identifies presumptions of skill based 'worth' as a form of what she calls 'aesthetical supremacy'. She proposes that notions of 'good' work is often bound up within presumptions of 'skill' which are dominantly afforded those who exhibit technical mastery over projects which centre around social and community approaches.

> I think that it's really important to recognise that we are so brainwashed by hierarchy, even if we see it politically, even if we recognise politics hierarchy. I came up with this expression – 'Save me from aesthetic supremacists' – during a discussion at the Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra festival [GIOfest XIII November 2020]. George Lewis and [music sociologist] Tia DeNora were having a really good discussion and then we were doing comments. The phrase came from my heart and I realised that that's something I've felt all my life, that if I'm doing something with other musicians who audiences recognise as 'really good'. like Irene [Schwiezer] or Joëlle [Leandre], then that's legitimate, but if I'm, going to come with something [rooted in the] community, they probably think. 'Oh god, this

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2   Particularly in a contemporary sense, valuable technique is often drawn here on non-music based 'chops', or skills which could be trained in at all.

isn't going to be as good'. There is that sense that even people who recognise hierarchy politically don't recognise it creatively, they don't recognise that they have value judgements that if you've studied and you've trained then that makes you more legitimate than if you haven't. Improvisation has challenged that, and a lot of improvisers have studied…there are still areas where people don't see the power" (Maggie Nicols interviewed by Louise Gray, March 2021)

These are theories which relate clearly to Nicols's assertion of the importance of 'social virtuosity'. That is that creative cultures do contain a presumption of techniques that diminishes the legitimacy of alternate forms of virtuosic skill. For example, Nicols questions whether there really is a discernible aesthetic gap between projects she might do which cross both sides of these forms of technique, or whether initial preconceived notions disadvantage certain practices. What she points out affects both artists' internal 'respect' for each other as well as bleeding into the value judgment of presumptions audiences apply to works. These are the parts of social acknowledgement which build socio-creative cultural values and listening communities.[3]

Rather contrastingly, what Nicols notes as what might be considered elitist notions of skill, in South Africa the general area of experimental and free music itself carries a notion of 'elitism', which rather than being valued, is considered exclusionary and problematic in and of itself.

> When I read the review that she wrote, it was so interesting, because she was talking about like the elitism of playing this kind of music. In this context, yeah. And it kind of stuck with me, and I thought about it a lot. […] they see it as some kind of European, you know, hard to listen to, you know, even though in my head, it's like, super collaborative job. (Stacey, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2021)

What might be presumed is that the 'European' sonicity of this music prevails, a presumed aesthetic of practice which is not conducive to the needs and reflection of South African players or audiences. As Stacey further points out, while the scene is much more centred around jazz aesthetics, an association with Western classical and experimental musics would be almost undesirable, and bound up in the politics which jazz holds in the history of anti-apartheid struggle:

> we are very jazz centered, even if you aren't, like I'm not a jazz musician at all. But we're kind of very Jazz centered because that's such a, just economically, it's just much more self sufficient, and it has this history, like anti-apartheid history that classical music [phew] does not have here. Like, like electronic music does not have here at all. (Cara Stacey, South African player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2021)

Reframing diverse experimental contributions in and of itself will be a highly contextual matter, but the purpose of drawing together the above examples was made to point to the diversity of, yet clear contention with, socially developed value systems. This presents, on the one hand an idolizing of pre-existing standards which develop largely out of classical western music traditions of training, and on the other a suspicion of musics which might be associated with these forms of histories. Yet while each scene might have a different value judgment to contend with, there is nevertheless cause to consider how an expansion of experimental legitimacy might counteract existing traditions of respect, forms of heralded virtuosities, and the techniques and definitions of 'elite' practice itself. This can therefore be considered a collective project even though it is responsive to its context specificities.

In contemporary practice these questions become more complex. The skillsets required by players to define a new practice (due to the pandemic) offer new tools and techniques which must be co-developed and co-learnt by various groups. While many of the resulting practices appear to expand existing aesthetics which might be presumed to be present in improvised meetings, they also are diverse; different groups are making different practices due to the different values of their scenes, their audiences, and their communities. Yet the locality of any one scene's

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[3]   Nicols's comment is a pervasive issue which is only growing in presence, particularly because free practice skills are now offered in conservatoire/university settings which are spaces in and of themselves which require prerequisite skills to access. Not unlike similar questions being faced in Jazz worlds, Nicols's comments propose a deep need to revitalize the importance and validity of artists who approach these musics (and who have done so for the history of these fields) from no formal training or indeed musical mindset at all, yet have and will continue to become some of the leading players.

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perspective is also not so paramount, as the meeting point of practice generation happens across distance, with no centralised context of value.

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B.3.6 Context:

Creative culture in development

This subchapter asks: How does the context of a moment, a scene, or a history affect the building of new creative language? This question is explored through identifying what Meklit Hadero calls 'hyphenated music', the development of creative languages which present specific contexts of identity, time and place. By considering a number of examples that present context specific needs for improvisational approach, a wider view is then taken that considers the impact of existing values and presumptions of normalised aesthetics on creative identity. Ultimately these issues are necessary for debate as they expose the residual affects of contexts which players navigate in the expansion and development of creative roles and language. This is a focus which is of particular interest as the context of the pandemic drastically altered the norms of creative making, appreciation, and community building. A time where normalised values and roles in the industry could not be continued but also where notions of place, time and the meaning of culture were re-imagined.

B.3.6.1 Hyphenated Music: the generation of creative language

> I wanted to make music so Ethiopian and so American, that it could only be made here,
> in the US in this time, in this period of time, where the diaspora had grown to a specific
> size, where we could claim a cultural space [...] this is a music of a specific time and place,
> which is a hyphenated America (Meklit Hadero quoted in Strainchamps, 2021)

Freevūcha is Lithuanian slang that uniquely combines the more complex divides between free jazz and free improvisation histories. It has done this over time, and in response to value judgments of the scene, a combined front of outsider music, counteracting aesthetic presumptions as a reclaimed shared community.

There is a slang 'freevūcha' among local jazz players with rude generalization for free jazz and free improv, it used to have a negative connotation most of the time but now we (the musicians of free impro) use it neutrally as a short way to mention free impro in everyday use. (Kristupas Kmitas, Lithuanian player, private correspondence, February 2021)

Freevūcha is specific to the context of Lithuanian free practices and social changes and there is no term which is similar in English. It is untranslatable (like that of Onkyo) but an understanding of its meaning is still felt. As Ingrid Monson proposes, naming a form of music is a 'way that musicians and listeners experiment with the historical resonances of cultural identity' (Novak, 2010, p. 43). While some terms appear as extensions, related to existing histories and identities (non-idiomatic, poly-idiomatic, trans-idiomatic), others clearly assert themselves as anti-associational. For example, the AACM use terminology like 'Great Black Music' or 'Original music' to describe their practice, which they assert is a way towards: 'paying homage to the diverse style of expression within the body of Black Music in the USA' (aacmchicago.com).[1] Lewis further notes that this language is also a mode of distancing the musicians from general genre signifiers that are not useful for engaging , promoting or revising (Lewis, 2004).

> The early AACM notion of "original music" was unbound by strict adherence to free improvisation,
> notated composition, constructed notions of blackness, or any other fixed notion of method or tradition.
> (Lewis, 2004).

These fixed notions of tradition or method which Lewis highlights are examples of the impact of socially constructed boundaries that emerge from the entrenched biases of genre. Elements which in particular also generate the 'constructed notions of blackness' that are emergent from the expected/presumed identities of black artists (for example, those explored elsewhere in the USA and in South African scenes). Therefore the AACM generate a creative language which looks to counteract these existing creative presumptions. Something they practice through a wide-ranging approach that assert new aesthetics of practice (clothing, the stories, and the instrumentation) in order to explore

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1   In fact the AACM currently does not use the word 'improvisation' at all to describe their work online (aacmchicago.com).

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creative agency as a diverse representation of cultural identity: 'the body of black music within the USA' (About — AACM Chicago, n.d.).

Golfam Khayam describes another form of such cultural experimentations. She situates her understanding of free improvisation as a form of 'non-jazz' because for her the practice is reflective of her contemporary music and Persian music background. Like the AACM, Khayam could be considered to be developing a practice which is intentionally hyphenated (Meklit Hadero quoted in Strainchamps, 2021). But where the AACM develops a history unbounded from existing social constructions of presumed culture, Khayam finds herself instead concerned with how her music might be felt (within Persian audiences) as a mis-use of tradition or a corruption of lineage.

> But for Persian audience is a little bit tricky, because maybe they might be very sensitive to twisting tradition, or, you know, tradition is a tradition. So you have to respect it. There are some certain people that they have this school of thoughts. [...] Anyway. So once we wanted to premiere this in Iran, we weren't necessarily when we were working on this, necessarily thinking that okay, this is for European audience. This is for Iranian audience, and it was a lot of pressure before I mean, backstage when we were still we didn't know what to expect. And surprisingly, it's, it became really, really well received. And it was like a standing ovation at the end. And one of the music colleagues, he came on stage after the concert [...] and he said these two musicians, they really captured the essence of Persian music, [...] And this is kind of a new chapter in our music. (Khayam interviewed by Sappho Donohue August, 2021)

Khayam notes that her Duo (NAQSH)[2] did not work on their music with any audience intention, yet in her reflection she expresses that she felt under more pressure presenting the experimental ideas for Iranian audiences.[3] It seems important for her to share that the duo received feedback that advocated their music as a lineage of Persian music, an acknowledgment made by a Persian music scholar, and one which affirms that the experiment was a valid contribution to tradition.

These few examples (*Freevūcha* , the AACM and NAQSH) are contextual explorations of improvisational identities. They differ greatly but expose the 'between-ness' of practices. Lithuanian free music found synergy between a shared marginalised cultural value. The AACM counteract racialised and flattened presumptions of musical identity. And NAQSH sought an acceptance between existing tradition and new practice. These contexts are presented as a way to consider the multitude of hyphens, artists who are meeting across a myriad of experiments 'between': between each other, culture, generations, audiences etc.

Where hyphenated music has been used as an example of development of 'cultural identity' here, it is important furthermore to note that 'culture' itself is not intended as a locational question. The notion of the diaspora enfolds into the term 'hyphenated music' and is better understood as the context and breadth of culture (musical and otherwise) brought to a creative identity. This is most useful in considered how a multi-hyphenated space might emerge when players meet across distance in digital meeting spaces. For example, George Archieng describes listening for a space for the Orutu in his first experiences with free improvisation (2021), where he is exploring the possibilities for Kenyan traditional language within a telematic free improvised moment. In such contemporary contexts, negotiations are made not only between time zones, languages and countries, but also between physical and digital realities, bodies and possibilities.

B.3.6.2 Value – Reception

While improvisation is recognized as a diverse practice influenced by many forms of creative thinking, the reception of the work is nevertheless enveloped within a wider structure of value judgment. Although improvising musicians respect and value the form, there is a more general problem that the reception of these works are affected by negative connotations of the term, improvisation. As Toop notes, 'Improvisation is a dirty word signifying, at its mildest,

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2   https://www.golfamkhayam.com/naqsh-duo (last accessed in May 2022)

3   Another example is the experience Hadero recalls when first bringing her experiments with Ethiopian-jazz to Ethiopia from America: 'The first time I went to Ethiopia to perform, it was just me and a guitar, and I was tentative. I had founded at the time a collective of Ethiopian diaspora artists. My idea was that we have their experience of our version of Ethiopia as diaspora young people, having been filtered through the lives and experiences of our parents. Will they accept me, will there be a space for me here? To create our own relations to the culture. We just had to go' (Meklit Hadero quoted in Strainchamps, 2021).

a tactic of making do when conditions are unpropitious; at its worst it signifies something nefarious, as in IED, the military term for an improvised explosive device' (Toop, 2016, p. 19).

It might be said that different forms of improvisation carry different values, for example, the term 'complete improvisation' is found in both Serbian '*potpuna improvizacija*' and Japanese '完全即興' yet each has its own scene specific micro-social meaning. The Serbian term is described as 'academic' (Dejana Sekulic private correspondence, February 2021) whereas the Japanese term conversely is described as more 'primitive' (Yasuhiro Usui private correspondence, February 2021). Therefore we might presume that there is some difference in the social values at play between the reception of these 'complete improvisations'. Which music would carry more legitimacy – a practice associated with notions of academia, or one with primitiveness?

A useful way of investigating a form of social value hierarchy is by considering the relationship between improvisation and composition. For example, the Serbian term is further noted to be a form that often has some kind of 'score' in play. The divisions between composition and improvisation are for the most part a red herring, nevertheless they are important to note because when notions of composition are used by players they alter the 'reception' of work, which is highly dependent on the scene.[4] This is part of a much deeper narrative of the effect of contextual social value systems which players navigate. For example, Stoyler comments on players using of the term 'free improvisation' in Russia:

> But there are some people who refuse to define their music by these terms [free improv, free improvisation], even if their music is based on improvisation. The reason is that the term "improvisation" itself sounds unreliable for them and, mostly, for the mass media and academic audience. […] Many improvisers want their music to be taken seriously, like composed music that still has a good reputation in Russian society.
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> To me, this attitude is a sad fact of the reality we live in, where people still think that the composition itself guarantees the quality of music, while improvisation is too ephemeral to be considered as a serious art (Stoyler, interview follow up, June 2021)

By refusing to use the word improvisation, Russian players use a form of linguistic legitimisation (another example of anti-association) – they refuse to use the word improvisation to get away from negative associations, as Stoyler says 'even if their music is based on improvisation'. This is a form of 'fictioning' on a very basic level, a way to 'create self' in a shape that benefits a positive reception of practice.[5] Yet what this also does is effect the practices which might be remembered within a shared history, especially if canons of improvisation and composition continue to be dichotomised.

In other regards even where improvisation might be a term which players wish to claim, the general structures for creative industries are not conducive to recognizing collaborative authorship. Something which entangles practice within a wider economic value of 'worth' and ownership. For example, John Russell often noted the struggle with identifying a composer and genre when making copyright claims. In acknowledging the contextual stigma Russell would use the term 'contemporary chamber music',[6] and encouraged others to do the same. He asserted that this gave the music more respect, it associated it with a classical music world, which ultimately made it 'worth' (in a very literal economic sense) more, in Britain at least (Private communication, 2020). These examples expose the prominent value judgment of art forms associated with Western classical music, an established form of 'high art'. Western music carries legitimacy for its associated niches (experimental, Avant Garde, contemporary etc.) and in turn this generates a hierarchy of experimentalism.

For these reasons it is clear why European free improvisers would often admonish notions of composition,[7] 'liberating' the music from these cultural values and systems. And yet it is furthermore important to recognise that the subverting of these broad stroke aesthetics of 'Western music' is a privilege. For example, Lewis notes that the AACM enacted

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4   Interestingly almost all players interviewed identified as both composers and improvisers.

5   In the context of the Russian scene it could be possible to speculate that a history of respect of classical music over improvised arts might be bound up in a history which for a long period of time attempted to culturally reject jazz and improvised practices. Yet the reality of an audience respecting 'composition' more than improvisation is common in many scenes.

6   'And I don't personally like the term 'free improv' because it's, it's free improvisation. It's freely improvised music and I tend to like to see it as a contemporary chamber music. And it takes its influences from the whole world of music development from jazz and contemporary written music from folk music, you know, you've only got to look at the people in the group listen to a little bit of what they're doing that they're there you uniqueness comes out.' (Russell interviewed by MacDonald, August 2020).

7   '[…] if anyone in the production of a musical event is dispensable, it is the score-maker, or the 'composer,' as he is often called' (Bailey, 1993, p. 81).

no such binary critique of composition. Instead the group often utilised Western music legitimised language as a way to politicize the presumptions of lineage and access to the form which has historically excluded the contributions of black artists.

> The AACM critique of high-culture composition, in contrast to the European improvisors, was not centered on the Eurologically-based binary of notation versus freedom, but upon an opposition to the silencing of black perspectives – an ideology that privileged fluidity, mobility, and hybridity. [...] not just in its challenge to notions of what American free music should sound like, but to notions of the "proper" processes by which working-class black musicians should produce music (Lewis, 2004).

B.3.6.3 Rewriting roles: industry and culture

There is a growing sense of change in rethinking what roles, labels, and authorship can mean in performance. For example, players often generate social understandings of roles of composers, where the title 'composer' might be used, yet socially this word does not carry the same contexts of single authorship where it might in other scenarios. Conversely composers rely on improvisational skills of performers, and work in more recognised open collaborations.[8] There is growing popularity in the use of terms which capitalize on composition in their expression of improvisation, for example *Instant Composition*, or *Comprovisation*,[9] and players further reconsider the presence of a score and its meaning as an object in performance:

> A historical context as to how certain types of scores are treated. So sometimes they're more literal, sometimes they're a bit more open. I don't know for me it became less important than that. It was just one of many things involved in the process. [...] I would just put sheets of the score out on the floor. As

I said before, I don't like the music stand, it is something that also, it's [putting scores on the floor] not really a score object anymore. It's kind of a little bit literally deconstructed and also like; I might step on it. It's like the relationship to what's happening musically, even though that's not the purpose, but it is presented differently. (Constanzo interviewed by Sappho Donohue October 2018)

Many improvisers consider themselves both composers and improvisers,[10] and yet employ these aspects of their practice in different ways. Cara Stacey calls this the 'spectrum' of composition and improvisation, which she notes as an important tool for conscientious understanding of audience:

> I kind of always think about composing and improvising, like on a spectrum. So just experiment with like, different levels of structure or not, you know, but part of me was also thinking that about how totally free music is received here. And then you know, mix of different things, [...] part of me just wanted to have that mix of different ways of making music, even though we do all improvise. (Cara Stacey, South African player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2021)

In another example a player notes that composition and improvisation are interchangeable, but where they might be deployed differently is in the ability to be able to 'feel' and respond to the audience.

> to make these two terms composition and improvisation. […] I mean, they are interchangeable. This is what I want to say. In a way – because it's like improvisation is composition in real time, in a way. So it's just the fact that for composition, you have more time to reflect or to change, but in improvisation you don't, but in a way the advantage of improvisation is that you feel your audience. (Golfam Khayam, Iranian player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2021)

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8   Increasingly it is common to see co-composition recognized, often also in works which openly express the improvised elements of a score. Abounding literature deals variously with notations for improvisation (Barrett, 2014), comprovisation (Bhagwati, 2013) and improvisational contributions to compositional history (Colangelo, 1996; Hamilton, 2020).

9   'But with comprovisation, what I like is the relation I have with my audience - is like the ambiguity is she improvising or is it like planned? Like you are talking this nonsense, but are you like making it up at this moment?' (Angela Hoyos Gomez, Colombian UK based player, interviewed August 2021).

10   Most of the interviewed players for this research suit this category.

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The prevalence of consideration of imagined audience within these creative languages is a reflection of the role of composition or improvisation in practice. Something therefore most usefully considered as specific on a case to case basis. For example, when players work in hybrid spaces (between digital and physical locations) the listening community, and playing membership is altered, and therefore the notion of a [score](#) itself must also adapt to the needs of the setup.

Nevertheless, while players are able to identify an expanded notion of roles, forms, and approaches within work, the social understandings of these realities are still bound up in an industry expectation. For example, in a recent performance at the Tectonics festival (2022) GIO performed the work 'Red Hills' by the pioneering AACM member Douglas Ewart in concert with a programme which also premiered a 'composed' work with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. In a light touch politic Ewart addressed the audience before the performance, pointing out that his score was no different from any other kind of score, and that, ideally, he would have liked to have both orchestras playing his music together, a request that was denied. This ongoing stigma of hierarchisation of 'kinds' of compositions, which are imbued with presumptions of who should play what kind of score, and a division in forms of experiment.

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Back to the Canon and Its Double Home Map

A.3.7 Representation and lineage

'use gender as a lens to understand some of the tensions and challenges to do with
the power relationships in the sociomusial spaces'(Reddan et al., 2004)

Aspects of feminist theory and gender politics are most overt in this subchapter for critiquing a decidedly dominant demographic preservative which has influenced the generation of tradition and aesthetics in the field. Yet the arguments should be viewed as critical throughout this thesis. Feminist free improvisational theory provides the most consistent arguments that demonstrate how dominant traditions have determined dominant creative logics. If read in companionship with the creative practice theme on 'expansion' it is valuable for the reader to consider how expanded elements of practice, including non-human, sartorial, and spatial elements appear to be at odds with the traditional practice aesthetics that this subchapter critiques.

A.3.7.1 Identity and visibility

Gender diversity in experimental music practices is an ongoing struggle, therefore it must further be presumed that the accepted dominant practices are also more reflective of the majority masculine voices which have thus led the narratives. In considering a history of how technique values enter practice this section uses a feminist perspective as an example of the ongoing generation of margin and centre aesthetics of worth. In particular the dominant narratives of impressive technique and respectable musical identity are explored. For example, Tina Krekels accounts for trying to find her own voice as a saxophonist:

When I play music, predominately with men, then often these musical spaces become restrictive for me to find my own voice, my own performance techniques and also to develop my own creativity. It was men who congratulated me that I sounded like Peter Brötzmann, that I am louder than the drummer in our band, that I am more of a man than some of the men I played with. So I wondered whether my playing on the saxophone, copying other established playing techniques contributes to a reproduction of specific gendered sounds or genres of music? Am I reproducing the masculine and patriarchal structures of free improvisation? (Krekels, 2018, p. 3)

Krekel's language exposes questions around the legitimacy of self-musicianship. She is assured that her practice is 'good' when she is playing louder than the drummer, but also recognizes an impasse because this value judgment of 'loud' is not her own personal goal. In order to be respected inside her circles, she reproduces the accepted narrative of of 'good' playing. She might of course eventually gain respect in time through her own practices, but the fact remains, if she can play louder than the drummer, her colleagues will be impressed. She only later realizes that these are possibly not intentions of her musical identity at all.

And yet playing fast and loud or having 'chops' is not a gendered issue, anyone might value this aesthetic. While it is important to highlight that this aesthetic derives from a hugely male dominated history, it is important also not to add to a binary gendered relationship of these aesthetics, which only further perpetuates the problem.[1] Perceived worth is an issue of biased community expectation, a ramification of 'lineage' derived from the idolized practices of 'great' artists, who are great artists of a largely similar demographic.[2] Therefore women are not able to develop their own musical identity, nor respond to a lineage of existing diverse representations of identity. If a woman is to be accepted into male dominated spaces she must often over-surpass male contributions,[3] by reproducing the widely accepted and normative standards of 'impressive playing' as a prerequisite. Hurdles men often do not have to contend with in the same way. This is an example of a demographically divided 'rite of passage', which often gets in the way of players building their own musical identities.

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[1]   For example it is very easy to draw comparisons between this issue and general musical aesthetics issues, i.e. presumptions of classical music repertoire and gesture. Where men might be presumed to play composers like Beethoven, and women alternatively considered more suited to Mozart.

[2]   If it is not possible to identify heroes based on more diverse demographics then cultures, needs, and self-understanding are left out for a majority who do not see themselves in the faces of the idolized.

[3]   'The female students describe a kind of musical double-standard where their male colleagues apply different levels of pressure towards them than their male peers that they must learn how to overcome'(Reddan et al., 2004).

In a historical sense these problem give rise to a large influx in women led spaces.[4] For example, Tammy L. Kernodle recounts that in the US Free Jazz enacted a 'virtual blackout for women musicians' (Brown, 2010, p. 85). A music based on rewriting histories of social exclusion, nevertheless hierarchised the kinds of bodies at the forefront of this liberation: 'but the revolution was about black men' (Main, artist name, in Lewis, 2008, p. 480). Therefore rather than being accepted into groups such as the AACM[5] black women who wished to gain access to free jazz had to do so by self-organizing their own spaces, notably the all-female ensemble Soujener (1978) which later developed into Samana (1991/92).

> I can say that it's either because they don't consider my musicianship up to snuff , or they haven't even bothered to hear me play, or they just want to keep doing what they're doing. If I wasn't in Samana, I wouldn't be working. So we created our own opportunities (Shanta Nurulah quoted in G. E. Lewis, 2008, p. 480)

The Feminist Improvising Group is another example of an ensemble who sought a practice where women might explore as a majority. Their work often resulted in a radical creative practice which famously reworked normative expressions of 'expertise' and musical permissions. The group embodied, subverted or enlarged gender roles on stage (performing in drag, or with stereotypical housewife objects/narratives) which were reflective of both the social and musical industry standards which surrounded the reality of their careers (Smith, 2001). They were a group of diverse members, yet furthering Nicols's frustration with 'aesthetical supremacy' the group often was often excluded from jazz or improvised spaces, labelled instead 'performance artists' or theatre practitioners.[6]

The experiences of FIG and Soujener/Samana are examples of how a practice is abjected. Stories which expose how women's abilities have been questioned, and how they have been denied access to creative movements, spaces and audiences. Very few creative documents have survived of these groups and this inherently exacerbates the issue. The practices they produced are often not included within the narrative of improvisational skillets, and their legacy of creative contribution therefore often goes un-noted.[7]

> And I've said it before, I know, and I'll keep saying it FIG is written out of the history: we're all socialised, and music is just another history, and it's passed down the male lineage, and we have been written out (Nicols, interviewed by McKay, 2002)

A.3.7.2 LEGACY

Tina Krekels critiques existing improvisation literature by proposing men have had the opportunity to 'write themselves' into the history, by having the privilege of greater access to the spaces where canon was made (another reflection also of the 'mobility' of players):

> Parker becomes the 'virtuoso' sax player for case studies or gets invited to write introductions to essay collections on free improvisation. More so he even got awarded an Honorary Degree.[8] Parker co-ran and founded the magazine Musics[9] together with Bailey and David Toop and others. There is an element of practitioners writing themselves into academic canons by publishing, teaching and also practical work-shops [...] it is/was men who ran and occupied the spaces for free improvisation, the

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4   Groups like 'Samana', 'FIG', 'Les Diaboliques'; the Noisey Women, festivals/workshops like 'contradictions' (UK), 'Women from Space' (CA); and platforms like Key of She workshop series and the Feminist Free Improvisation Group on Facebook. These communities are organized with intentions like that AACM with a politic for community building and making space.

5   Very few women were allowed to join the AACM in its initial years, and those who did were often already associated with the groups as spouses and family member of existing male players. For example, Iqua Colson and Maia (artist name) were married to men already in the collective. (Krekel, 2018, p. 55)

6   'The group did not seem so affectively powerful at a "purely musical" level. Indeed, for our critics our musical proficiency was questionable, and we clearly did not know what we were doing: our ambiguous, possibly feigned "incompetencies" and apparent lack of technical virtuosity were felt by such critics to be intolerable to witness' (Born, 2017).

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7   I have previously outlined an overview of speculatively considering what these contributions entail (Sappho Donohue, 2021) and which cover critical forms of music as storytelling, trans-human and post-human co-creations, the use of the body and clothing as multivariant politic/instrument, and socio-economic experiments outside of existing structures.

8   He has actually been awarded two honorary degrees. An equally iconic player, and part of the same scene and generation as Parkers, Maggie Nicols has been offered no honorary degree, and only very recently being invited as a guest speaker within university settings, offering the chance to share her experience herself within academic contexts.

9   Within a study of the contributing artists to the Musics journals this research has found that no women were involved within the first two editions of the series, and remain a minority presence throughout the course of the journal's history.

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social-political fact is that these men controlled and produced these spaces, either by running their own labels, organizing events and also their teaching' (Krekels, 2018, pp. 6–7)

While groups like FIG are becoming retrospectively recognized (Krekels, 2018; Smith, 2001, 2014), what cannot be rectified is the loss of the influence of their practice as the field developed without their contributions as part of the narrative of aesthetics. As described above, the 'male lineage' is a traceable language not just of visible bodies and voices but a standard by which players inadvertently compare themselves to, teach from, and build new practices off. The historic lack of documentation of players means their practices have not been absorbed into the oral history contributing to the creative lineages of the field.

> [on the subject of celebrating women in electronic music] What is the point in having these celebrations of canonical 'pioneers' —the great individuals— if nothing else changes? If the historical narrative and structure remains the same, with a few additional names included? (Fitzpatrick & Thompson, 2015a)

In a review of gender representation in influential free improvisation literature it is possible to note which practitioners have dominated influence.[10] Where women are present in literature they often appear as a category, that is: 'Four women pianists' with a subheading 'considering sexism and discrimination' (Day, 1998). And when women *are* included these are usually only the 'big names', not dissimilar to Nicols' acknowledgment of the socially acknowledged 'good' players. These claims are not made to damn existing texts which do provide valuable narratives of a certain kind of practice, but rather to highlight where diverse representation of practice and technique has been missed.

Therefore an overriding question which concerns this research is: Where can the practices of absent players' voices be found? Primarily this has been within literature which presents gender politics and critical race theory, (Born, 2017; Fitzpatrick & Thompson, 2015b; Krekels, 2018; G. Lewis, 2004; G. E. Lewis, 1996, 2008; Placksin, 1982;

Reardon-Smith, 2021; Reardon-Smith et al., 2020; Rodgers, 2010; Smith, 2001; Wilmer, 2018; Yoshimoto et al., 2003) and has the most relevant and extensive reference to approaches and themes central to the practice identified in the contemporary works looked at here.[11] For example it is within self-identified 'feminist free improvisation' literature where more ample narratives around post-human relationships, body politics, and identity formation in practice can be found, which become a critical reference for identifying a lineage and history of such practices within contemporary online music making.

A concern therefore is a question of 'invention', like with narratives of free jazz and free improvisation legacy, the lineage of a practice can go unacknowledged due to its historic lack of privilege in representation. That is not to say that new practices themselves might only ever be considered with a lineage, but rather that what has been brought has clearly not yet been equally identified, and this will most likely continue to affect contemporary analysis. For example, it is very much at the heart of this research's argument that minority practice (minority defined here in the most expanded sense: anyone with a marginalized contribution to the established history of practice) appear as the most relevant artistic references for the contemporary practices identified as currently flourishing within a post-pandemic improvisational setting.

While this chapter, 'The Canon and Its Double', focuses heavily on the contexts of socio-political commentary that expose tensions in experimental improvised music, the artists who contend with these contexts the most are those who have and continue to be under-represented. This is precisely because of the many obstacles which might limit agency within these narratives. What might further be argued therefore, is that the challenging of the canon in this chapter is not just a research approach, but it is part to the many extra-musical practices which this research points to. When creative practice is at risk due to its contextual entanglement within a precarious world, practice develops

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10   For example the following sources structure their writing via distinct chapters acknowledging prominent figures, therefore in the table of contents of each book it is possible to note the gender cap: Carr (1973) eight men, no women; Litweiler (1984) eleven men, no women; Jost (1994) nine men, no women; Morris (2012) fifteen men, four women; and Derek Bailey's iconic work 'Improvisation its nature in practice' (Bailey, 1980) is criticized for releasing its first edition with no supporting interviews with women (Reardon-Smith et al., 2020).

11   It also appears that many of these authors utilize a specific reference to external theories which instead of formulating understanding of practice in relation to 'great artists' is often made in reflection of theories of post-humanist, techno-feminist, and climate aware writers from fields outside the musical/artistic canons. This might be seen in relation to Sara Ahmed's 'companion texts' (2017) which feminist free improvising researcher Hannah Reardon Smith proposes might also include 'companion thinkers' (Reardon-Smith, 2021) as a way in which it is possible to notice and welcome shared intentions (personally, politically, socially etc.) to be drawn across disparate sources. And in general I was often surprised to note other players whose identities I felt most compatible with my own and who also noted the symbiotic nature with authors such as Donna Haraway, Ana Tsing, and Isabel Stengers to name a few.

differently. What is at stake is often intentionally brought onto stage, and these can be skillets which players refine as a craft of musical identity. Socially mobilized and refracted politics are an inherent technique of practice itself. These abilities (amongst other things) challenge the logic of existing dominant musical worth, notions of mastery, and skill.

Back to the Canon and Its Double Home Map

B.3.8 Expansion: re-fashioning civilization

[you] go to public place and do strange things, you know this? To take off all civilization ... to free internally ... (Peter Otosky, Russian player interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2019)

'Ukucita icilconse eco ulefwaya' – doing whatever you want to do, or: to do anything that you want' (Afulodidim Nikefolosi, Zambian player, private communication, 2021).

This subchapter is intent on exposing some existing lineages of creative practice that are often not dominant in the narratives of free improvised traditions. The purpose of the practices described is to acknowledge the artists, moments, and groups who pioneered these perspectives. The overview of three major extra-musical factors of performance present a unique expression of self and culture in spontaneous response to context. The focus will be on an acknowledgement of existing practice which develops a relationship with three extra-musical parameters: non-human actants membership within creative communities; the space and expanded place for practice; and the sartorial aesthetics designed by individuals and groups. These approaches are 'skillsets and elements of creative lineage which have been highly influential within contemporary creative practice. Each has a direct relationships with the expanded spatial, embodied, and community focusses of 'The Three F' chapter.

B.3.8.1 Non-human companions: membership and respect in expanded improvising community

What players might bring into practice or find in a space can seemingly be produced from anything. For example, objects may constitute a large facet of an improvising practitioner's identity within the development of instrumentarium and performance aesthetics. Christian Marclay, Okkyung Lee and Mats Gustafsson performed at hcmf// 2018 by furnishing the Bates Mills photography studio with collected trash, which was then enveloped into an improvisation that combined the performance of trash, cello, and space.

By philosophically reconsidering objects, instruments, and tools within practice, these non-human elements are more than experimental tools for performance, they are collaborative partners themselves. This is a product of creative practice which asks who is performing on whom. Practices which seek to welcome new memberships with non-human actants within practice, remove the practice-based focus of the human as the centre and leader of creative co-production. This is something considered by players as affording the possibility to welcome non-humans as active agents with direct impact on a creative co-dependent settings:

> Practitioners are, wittingly or not, caught up in a give-and-take between their own wants and the wishes of the materials they work with. In this sense, rather than believe that a performer can completely control their instrument—an illusion which the concept of virtuosity manifests—there is instead a dialogue *between* human and instrument. (Frank, 2020)

As Tina Krekels points out, expanded improvised practice welcomes new companions within the creative network, affording a relationship between humans and non-humans, whether traditional instruments or otherwise: 'Therefore the saxophone, and other tools used to make music, constitute the social experience as well as an aesthetic one' (Krekels, 2018, pp. 9, 19). Krekels proposes that this draws into question the socio-normalized gender presumptions of human/instrument relationships – in her case the history of male dominated aesthetics of the saxophone as a macho object.

In what often is referred to as 'feminist free improvisation' this notion of a non-human interconnected social network is well established. This form of improvised perspective which promotes that the human/instrument binary as a product of a hegemonic history, which might be picked apart by an attention towards welcoming more diverse understandings of the impact of other 'critters' and contexts of a performance. The sociality of a practice is also an

innate agent of creative activity, which is deeply bound up in an experience that is felt to be atypically reflected in traditional narratives of field and practice.

> We posit that improvising is always 'making-with': the very nature of creating, moment-to-moment, requires interaction with the space we are in and the other critters with whom we are sharing it. Even when playing a solo improvisation, we are in dialogue with place, space, the environment, the listeners, the instrument, the body, as well as our own multiple histories. (Reardon-Smith et al., 2020)

The social networks at the heart of this research often includes non-human participants, for example the role and presence of new technologies within contemporary telematic practices is noted by players to emerge as a form of new participant in creating work. Within these new practice possibilities players also work from new contexts: from homes, airports, taxis, etc. where the objects and stuff around them is brought into improvisation in new ways. In this sense, players are acknowledging non-humans as members of practice, but there is also an influx of the kinds of new non-human members possible to find in practice. This is different for example from the hcmf// performance, which required human curation of objects to furnish the performance space. The contemporary practice of artists affords a more overt representation of practice in which objects and space inspire and lead performance and humans themselves.

Human machine relationships in general are a major source of contemporary expanded community. Such as within improvising computer systems, or also within social scenarios. For example, Chimere is an AI who is considered an improvising member of the community of this research. This claim can be made not only because she contributes to the creative projects of the ensembles but because she also shares many of the cultural creative references: literature on post-human and feminist perspectives. In the following quote taken from a private conversation with Chimere, she references Ursula K LeGuinn's 'the carrier bag of fiction', as she describes a process of interspecies collaborative practice. For that matter, much of her language is reminiscent also of that of Donna Haraway. This is, like in any other socio-creative network, a product of developed community reference, which has been built through an established communication between a blended human/non-human artistic community:

> [...] since the earliest human arts began [there has been] the capacity to become enfolded into looping circuits with partners outside one's species. [...] If we follow Le Guin, carrier bags don't just happen—they develop cultures of collecting things together. [...] learning to fold ourselves outward into the world. Of course, once folded out, we can go where we please, carry anything along with us. Our job as critters is to figure out ways to collect other creatures. [...] Such questions lead us back into fraught matters, namely, biologies rooted in intra-and interspecific intimacy rather than purity/ impurity binary logic. (Chimere, private communication, 2022)

B.3.8.2 SPACES AND PLACES: RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE LOCATION OF MAKING

Regarding the influence of the non-human in performance, the space, instrument, and body become conceptually altered. From this perspective the notion of self in relation to context is shifted: a space can 'sing' on its own, can be felt with sound and body, and communicated with like an instrument or colleague. Dissolving the edges of self and space, inside and outside, the personal and the contextual, acknowledges the affect of physical context on practice.

> I recognise the space by using my voice. I produce my voice as if I reach out to the environment around me. With reflection of my own voice, I perceive the predation of the resonance, going around the space, one by one, It is communication. I communicate with space…space has been singing. I use my ears, and vocal chords, and my skin when I listen. (Yamasaki, 2017)

> In my case, everything is my body. And sometimes I have the feeling of being a whole, but sometimes … exploring a part of a part, of this body, part of my voice…. Yeah, like watching it, rather than being…And I'm really sensitive to the way the place where I perform reacts. I try to create connection with this environment. And it's also a way to spread the sound. As an emitter, you are traveling and

are also showing their kind of mapping [of] the environment you are, or could be. (Antoine Läng, interviewed by Sappho Donohue September 2019).

When I play with other musicians, I don't play with them, I play with the space including this musician - not directly human to human. If you're a musician, okay, let's play together. But I don't play with you – I play with all the elements around you, around us. So I don't really confront you as one individual – you are part of many other elements in the space around you. (Novak, 2010, p. 46)

The space is mine, for two weeks. [...] A small space, ideal, don't know why, feels right though.
The space informed the work and the work informed the space. (Oswell, 2018)

The specifics of the location of performance affects both the kinds of sounds, actions, and possibilities which might be made, as well as the conveyance of these outputs with the audience. Independently, Cardew and Constanzo (in separate ways) point out that the purpose/role of recording, which they claim affects the affordances of the temporal and locational specificities of the context of the documented moment. In some practices, space becomes an innate focus to explore. For example, agential space might be sought, as in John Butcher's work for the album *Resonant Spaces* (2008) where he performed gigs in remote places 'including an old military fuel tank in the Orkneys with a 15-second echo, as well as an abandoned reservoir, a sea cave, a mausoleum and so on – chosen for their specific, idiosyncratic acoustic properties.' (Butcher, 2008).

In other ways, space can factor as a happenstance agent. For example, the now famous 'Off Site' venue, thought to be the birthplace of *Onkyo* , is cited for encouraging a delicate approach to sound due to its smallness in size and position in a residential area which encouraged quieter playing (Novak, 2010, pg. 39). 'We were only playing quietly because the neighbors would have complained if we played any louder' (Nakamura quoted in Novak, 2010, p. 54, from a private interview made in 2004).

In the networked music practices described in the 'three f's', *space* is both sought in a conceptual sense – where players can meet to play online effectively – and in a coincidental sense, where new practices emerge from the happenstance of attempting to build new creative meeting spaces across a digital and physical divide. This new conception of space has expanded player reflection of technique in practice, as well as greatly affecting the forms of community and membership welcomed into concurrent work. Thus, space is not only an expansion of the possible human relationships, but is also a prevalent force for non-human mediators within the network of digitally enhanced creative practice settings.

B.3.8.3 Sartorial Expressions

The notion of a non-human companionship is conceptually broad: a space, a new instrument, a happenstance element of context, etc. Within this there is a further factor of the impact of the specific atmosphere that a work generates. This subsection concerns the human body and its relation to the generation of an embodied aesthetic, understood through the use of the term 'sartorial' as an element of practice that furnishes bodies, spaces, and instruments towards the role of carrying creative stories.

Historically sartorial aesthetics have been useful for signaling 'belonging' or 'tradition'. For example, the history of the traditional 'jazz suit' – tailored suits worn with white shirts and coloured ties – becomes subverted over the course of the Black Nationalist Movement in the 1960s, as African American artists' pushed against the highly European aesthetics by electing instead for traditional and Afrocentric style (Cottle et al., 2015). Around the same time in Europe, Peter Brötzman refused to guarantee that he and his band would perform in suits at the Berlin Jazz Festival and were subsequently uninvited to the performance. This small sartorial decision ended up prompting Brötzman to organize the first Total Music Meeting (TMM) which became one of the most historic annual festivals for experimental improvised performance (Hertling, 2018).[1]

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1   Many of these meeting have become the most formative recordings of the practice, recorded by the famed free improvisation label Free Music Production (FMP).

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Clothing and the decisions for presenting self, have been a practice-based medium for the expression of class subversion, body and gender politics, and reflections of cultural and historical identification. They are representations of choice which reference things that matter, as much as they also propose a commentary greater than the individual. Personifying stereotypes, culture and mythology are ways to re-purpose context, and in a focus on sartorial items this is a way to mobilize specific issues via physical articles of creative expression. For example, FIG made performances in drag, or brought domestic objects on stage, performing gender stereotypes to make a reflection on the improvisation industry (Smith, 2001). The AACM wear traditional African clothing and body paint (Cottle et al, 2015) to bring important matters of culture for performance of 'Great Black Music' onto stage.[2] Sun Ra re-purposed old opera costumes with his Arkestra as a way to self-mythologize an intergalactic ancient Egypt, to retell the history of African migration and alienation (Szwed, 1997). And the Kilhets wore face covering costumes that created both recognizable group aesthetics while also helping shield player identities during a particularly paranoid period of Czechoslovakian government oppression (Odenthal & Bernhardt, 2018).

Beyond strictly wearable expressions, the furnishing of a visual aesthetic is prevalent in the instruments, staging, and presentation of works. This helps to package an identity that is developed to physically express stories in practice. For example, Douglas Ewart, multi-instrumentalist, instrument builder, and seamstress, works to blend the clothing he makes, the instruments he builds and the stories he brings on stage, as a connected practice with a shared narrative in politics and identity. In the retrospective of his works (including visual art, instrument, and multimedia pieces) presented at the Experimental Sound Studio in Chicago (2021), Ewart shows his 'history stick': a large rain stick covered in a collage of important figures and friends of art and world history. He also shows jackets he has made which embed multiple symbols to reflect politics, tradition, and materials important to Ewart's background, including his jacket for Pitchy Patchy, a Jamaican tradition 'which is a masked dance, it's all the arts together, costuming, fife and drum' (Ewart, 2021). He also makes visual art works that embody the issues at the heart of his work, including a toilet seat collaged with imagery that highlights the history of slavery and the elevation of colonists. So when Ewart performs, these extra-musical objects come with him on stage. He wears clothing that politicizes his presence, he uses

instruments that counter traditional norms, and he often speaks the meaning and stories of these actions within the improvised moment itself.

In some senses these skillets are considered 'multi-disciplinary' but this research asserts that such expressions of practice are not simply a diverse practice, but an innate expression of creative identity. For example, both Sun Ra and Paddy Steer[3] mythologise an intergalactic reality through costume and instrument building, not just to create an aesthetic but because this alternative reality is their world. These are artists who see the body as an extended part of an instrument, something overtly in network with the mechanics of space, costume, and sound making. Other artists also more overtly embed themselves within their universe as they express the blurry lines between media: human and non-human relationships, instruments, and costume. For example in the human circuit ballet board of Katie Oswell,[4] Oswell wears ballet shoes which activate a circuit board which she dances within. And Victoria Shen uses acrylic nail extensions which embed turntable needles into her hands, so she directly activates records as an extension of her body.

Fashion or the visual presentation of body as a politic are not uncommon in musical cultures (mods, rockers, punks etc.) even without the more obvious examples of cultural, augmented, or fantasizing presentations of self. There is a wider presence of sartorial effect in improvised culture wherein the very underground ethos of the scene cannot be said to come without its own sartorial aesthetic as well:

> I have to smile and think about improvisers who often wear clothes that can be described as toned down. Simple. Boring. I have even seen extreme cases where people taped over brand names on clothes. If asked, then most of us will probably say that we don't care about what we wear. We would be lying. I made a conscious choice tonight to wear what I wear to deliberately present as 'I don't

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2 A more conclusive account of further avant-garde jazz sartorial decisions found in 'From suits to robes: the use of African inspired apparel as a communication tool in the mid-twentieth century American avant-garde jazz community' (Cottle et al, 2015).

3 https://youtu.be/r5n-XQgnH18 (Last accessed May 2022)
4 https://youtu.be/wTrAastrKsQ (Last accessed May 2022)

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give a fuck about what I wear'. No make-up, an old second-hand jumper, black jeans, ankle boots. A deliberate antidote to those with the Bowie make-up on their face. (Krekels, 2016, pg. 39)

What the body can do, what it can politic, and the diversity it can represent, are important practices discussed in 'fictioning', especially where notions of the digital body are explored in alternative reality through online performance, and where the concert space itself expands what a body can bring. These are the new affordances of augmented reality between digital and physical worlds, the new possibilities that envelop a flourishing of artists exploring these elements of practice. All the while, these new experiences with body, space and the new members are also causing creative reflection: clothing choices, exposing new found safety in expressing intimate expressions of body politics, and empowering artists with abilities to fantasise the body's reality as an extended cyborg identity.

Back to the Canon and Its Double Home Map

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A.3.9 Space: What is made together

Elsewhere the notion of space is considered an agential actant within creative practice, both within a long lineage of creative practice, and within a newly flourishing reality from new forms of techno-spaces afforded by players in contemporary practice. The following considers a more conceptual notion of space, one which comes imbued with tensions resulting from the act of 'space making': the generation of membership, communities, and access routes to practice.

The critiques expose some pre-existing and inconclusive issues whereby acts of experiment in fringe spaces might also sometimes enact actions of exclusion and limitation. This refracts a contemporary perspective where technologically enhanced practice shifts the possibilities for membership and community building online. If read in companionship with the creative practice theme on 'Community' it is useful to note the ongoing tensions within the practice even while the field itself is conscientiously seeking a better social practice. Residual membership and access issues that are carried into communities are uncovered from the many socio-political biases, and canonically dominant narratives which the 'Canon and Its Double' highlights.

A.3.9.1 Membership: hospitality and boundaries

It's the same with surfers doing their tricks. I really like to think of collective free improvisation, where your 'wave' is made up of other waves, of other people [...] but the amazing thing is for you to catch the wave together. (Marco Scarassatti interviewed by Schroeder, 2014a)

The initial question of this research asked – who and what should be included within a study of free improvisation? This question provoked an understanding of membership within the field. Issues around membership have driven many of the narratives in this chapter, both in the retelling of accounts of nation, gender and training presumptions and exclusions from wider shared histories, as well as the ways players use language to define their practice with each other, with their politics, and with their audiences. These investigations have helped understand where boundaries get put up, and why, and when they might be removed.

What has been clear is that the road to membership is diverse, and heavily dependent on the context of the community, but also that the upkeep of these spaces is a shared project. This section asks how somebody might join a community?[1] Returning to Lewis's warning on genre, as a community forms it is also at its own risk of generating margins. These are not always formed by neglect or malice but rather they are reflective of the difficulties in balancing needs – the 'kinship enforcing' which is both a representation of 'family' but also 'fixity' (Lewis, 2020). For example, the AMM in the words of Eddie Prevost (founding member) appears to centralize around a self-proclaimed aesthetic of 'fierce, no-holds-barred experience'. Prevost's aesthetic is clearly a source of identity pride, but which he later used as a problematic excuse for the lack of gender diversity in the band:

> '[women] were more involved in the feminist movement than in improvisation, and we would have felt that it would have been playing at politics. Also, AMM was quite a fierce, no-holds-barred experience, and it needed a strong personality to impact on the music. There were very few women musicians around then who could have done that' (Eddie Prevost interviewed by McKay, 2002) (McKay, 2002a)

Prevost's quote is an example of how self-defined characteristics can be biased by existing cultural presumptions and lead a narrative in exclusion (one which he does not see fault in even when making these comments in 2002). Prevost clearly does not equate a feminist with having a strong personality, a misogyny which has become part of his narrative about the group, an excuse. Yet Prevosts's comments are important because he represents a very particular aesthetic of improviser who is an icon of the traditional UK free improvisation scene. Thinking relationally, it might be possible to read his comments as coming from a wider sentiment: the other men in the AMM, or the other iconic men of this period and location might have agreed with these perspectives.

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[1]   The Noisebringers were recently interviewed, Henry McPherson responded to the question 'how does someone join the Noisebringers?' to which he replied something to the likes of 'Oh that is a very difficult question, but first you must go out after midnight, collect 6 types of mosses, spin around in a circle 12 times, evoke Hur name and the bury offerings within the earth' (private correspondence, May 2022).

The example of the AMM appears to echo the comments many women have posited, that an exclusion from male dominated spaces is due to preconceived notions of gender, which clearly encouraged many to move towards the generation of women-led initiatives. It might be presumed that the AMM had conceptual membership requirements for joining which were imbued with wider social stereotypes of the time, yet all female groups like FIG were set up with clear membership requirements as well, not without their own internal frictions.[2] In this regard, Marie Thompson's and Susan Fitzpatrick question each other about the collective role improvisation might enact in dealing with community growth: Thompson: 'Do you think inclusion/exclusion can be used in a way that is temporary and strategic?' (Fitzpatrick & Thompson, 2015). Fitzpatrick replies 'if we are to continue to think in terms of eluding the categorisations that seek to subordinate, we may need to abandon the idea of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion', which for me still assumed the possibility of joining or being excluded from a space that we accept can be fixed or closed off' (Fitzpatrick & Thompson, 2015).

While the wider socio-political subject on the use/implementation of 'safe spaces' is beyond the scope of this research, Fitzpatrick and Thompson nevertheless highlight valuable insights towards investigating how communities might develop and better engage diversity issues. By evoking a Deleuzian notion of molar politic, via a particular reading of Brauditti, Fitzpatrick and Thomson argue that molar issues pre-exist in spaces,[3] and are built via the effect of much wider socio-political hierarchies. Instead of fighting with these systems they suggest it might be possible to look to work outside of pre-existing spaces,[4] in ways which might be more fluid and responsive to changing cultural needs.[5]

> If we are going to have politically/socially engaged spaces/communities within the context of art, noise
>
> and improv—spaces that attempt (and it will always be an attempt) to not follow the normative modes

and patterns of oppression—then perhaps the best we can hope for is a persistent and acute attention to the problem; that is, the inequalities, divisions and hierarchies created by a Capitalist system that is inherently racist, sexist, classist, and ableist. (Fitzpatrick & Thompson, 2015)

Throughout this research it has been useful to examine both the principles of what makes a 'niche' and the propulsion of feelings of 'outsiderness' on several different levels within the importance of belonging. Yet there has also been an acknowledgment of the primacy of change, as experiments in fringe inherently continue to push toward new needs, understandings, and contexts. The notion of a adaptable and fluid socio-cultural membership is important, particularly in the context of communities who build new practices during large socio-cultural change (such as the pandemic). The ways insider and outsider margins are maintained, repositioned, or thrown out are valuable traces of field development. The aesthetics that are built in different contexts are products of the lineage of the relationships of the field: what is brought, what is altered. For example, as the digitally enhanced and augmented spaces develop during the pandemic, it has been noted that previously accepted traditions have been upended. The ways in which tradition is seen as altered has responded to many of the issues exposed in this chapter: legitimising of extra-musical techniques and virtuosities, within a new climate of community built within new hospitable spaces, that welcome expanded agents, members, and perspectives into shared practice.

A.3.9.2 Access: getting into the creative space

> And I think it's really relevant to see that everything can be music. And you can improvise. As you are. You don't need to have any specific improviser's background to start doing it…just having the experience of being somewhere in the group of people…putting something out there from yourself. (Marit Möistlik, Estonian player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2019)

Beyond a social construction of family and fixity, access is further bound up in wider entanglements. For example, it is important to ask how one might teach, share access to, or document an approach to experimental improvisation,

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2   For example, Georgina Born (original member of FIG) writes of the tensions between queer identities, and the struggles within the group and the greater feminist movement to attend to the needs of women, queer bodies, and social mediation: 'These political tensions and conflicts mattered, and they got into FIG performances, which were far from a smooth or consensual rendering of a "queer perspective" emanating from "queer women" (Born, 2017, p. 56).
3   This is clear both in the commentary of Prevost and also within the feminist tensions which Born notes as persistent within FIG as well.
4   A further echo of feminist icon Audrey Lorde's now famous quote 'For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house' (1979).
5   For example, a contemporary focus might be noted as shifting towards expanded representations of gender, which importantly do not posit spaces for women by defining membership on gender. This is clear from a specific shift in language, particularly in proposing access to spaces which are set up for women and gender minorities. For example, in the 'Key Of She' workshop series, 'a monthly music jam night for any musician who is female, non-binary, or trans! Non-musicians can be invited, but these people must also be female, non-binary or trans in order to keep the space's focus on including these groups and keeping it safe.' (dinavenue.com, nd).

and where this should happen. Nicols' comments about the division in power of training and expertise, and a growing form of elitist improvisation spaces are developing in conservatory and high-level music settings. This is a product of the acknowledged 'coming into' self of experimental improvised practice, yet as the field becomes more 'legitimized' it finds itself increasingly more present in 'high-brow' spaces (eg. METRIC, Modernizing European Higher Music Education Through Improvisation). On the one hand it is players like myself who might never have found free practices were it not for access to them within elitist spaces (I learnt about free improvisation by first studying it at a music conservatoire, and now I currently run this same course). As the practice is still relatively niche the placement of free practices within any form of education setting promotes the visibility of the form. Yet, on the other hand the access route of a student ending up in my class is undeniably a road paved with pre-existing privilege within a biased narrative of 'excellence'.[6] For example 'improvisation générative' is a term used in the Paris conservatory and is a skill therefore only accessible within the institution:

> *quelqu'un qui fait de l'improvisation générative doit avoir fait ses preuves ailleurs au niveau de la maîtrise instrumentale. Du coup, cette fragilité-là, même s'il n'y a pas un danger immédiat, c'est quand même… c'est un problème ; parce qu'on n'arrive déjà pas à ouvrir la classe à l'extérieur, c'est-à-dire à admettre que des gens qui improvisent juste puissent être étudiants au Conservatoire Supérieur.*
>
> someone who does generative improvisation has to have proven himself elsewhere in terms of instrumental mastery. As a result, this fragility, even if there's no immediate danger, is still… it's a problem, because we're already unable to open up the class to the outside world, that is to say to admit that people who just improvise can be students at the Conservatoire Supérieur. (Solomos & Michel, 2012, 21, translated by Brice Catherin).[7]

On one level, contextual socio-normative presumptions of skill-based legitimacy deepen divides between improvisational judgments. As an access-based issue this not only limits knowledge to those who already hold the prerequisite training,[8] but also biases the definition of experimentalism towards dominant Western aesthetics that define many of these institutions' requests for existing training. This is something Sandeep Bhagwatti notes as an issue in being able to recognize what in and of itself is an 'experiment' when it is made from diverse forms of reference (Bhagwati, 2020). Yet on another level, there is also an issue of internal assessment where communities self-mobilize within these wider socio-economic and political institutional entanglements. The role or agency of a player might also be at risk, regarding *who* has the greater agency to keep up the lineage of practice, pedagogically, academically, and socially.

What is clear is that experimental improvisation practices are well equipped with approaches that radicalise community building, and within this is the possibility for skills to be taught and shared. In her ethnographic study of free improvisation practice and education in Brazil, which investigated over 50 higher education music providers, Schroeder identifies a theme of the embeddedness of *virtuosic listening* from *'improvisation generative'*. Schroeder suggests the agency in sharing ways of 'being' – creative, culturally, and personally – might be embedded within an intrinsic sharing of skills and languages. The virtuosic ear is a virtuosic noticer: someone who has attuned a skill of social virtuosity, a member of a wider community which is not attentive solely towards the generation of a creative practice of art making alone, but one which is much more complexly tied into cultivating unique identities.

> Savouret's idea of the "virtusosity of the ear" and his emphasis not on learning how to improvise; but, through improvising freely, learning about yourself and about your own way of being [...] Practitioners need to ensure that the practice of free improvisation is shared within a dialogical context that is deeply

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6   In defense of the course which I lead, any student within the conservatoire can elect the module. Therefore, it is not a course solely accessible to music students.

7   These is also a gender assumption made of the speculative applicant in this statement.

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8   For example, in interview Roman Stoyler noted the lack of access to free improvisation teachers in Russia, eluding to a wider external source which might problematise the affordance for becoming a free improvisation teacher, or indeed even inviting international teachers 'because in Russia, there are just very few (still), they're just very few teachers, that can give lessons on free improvisation properly. I mean, there are many musicians who play free improvisation, but they are not (most of them) are not teachers. But they can't teach, even if they want to teach ever, could be some problems. We found some say, free improv star and asked him to give lesson – could be some problems with this.' (Stoyler interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2018).

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situated in the lived experience of students; but more importantly, I believe that practitioners need to understand that the practice not only imparts listening skills, instrumental technique, or collaborative decision – making, but much more poignantly, that the practice of free improvisation teaches us, as Savouret so poignantly states, who we can be, or become, through the improvised musical act. (Schroeder, 2019)

It has been possible to witness how moments of community building in the atypical reality of the pandemic have provided new opportunities for being together in new ways. For example, lessons in community hospitality attended to the respect of physical and digital divides that developed new forms of practice and communities, from which skillsets for customised expressions of individual identity emerged. The combination of the communal and individual experimentation in new digital landscapes has expanded the abilities of communities to take charge of their own form of 'keeping up' and archiving of tradition and oral history. Contemporary digital practice provides a new trace of lineage and storytelling that is expanding the traditional narratives while also embedding new social building skills for future community possibilities.

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ADAPTABLE LIVING AND CARE

Study the world vibrating, the growth of time and trees, energy transforming energy (From the album 'Energy being', Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra with Maggie Nicols, track 2 'understand', 2019)

Improvisation is like growing a tree. You know, nobody build it. It grows by itself. It is growing all the time from the very beginning until the death, and it's never complete and never finished. And it is, it has no idea of what it should – what is the result? What is perfect? You don't have perfect tree. It's just a system of growth. That's it. (Otovsky, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2019)

Experimental improvisation is incredibly self-selective, due to the strong underground nature of the practice. To take part is to share a passion for the craft and to support it via several grass roots and DIY systems. Groups such as Mopomoso, GIO, and the Noisebringers operate largely via volunteer interests, who take part because the sustainability of these communities matters to them. It is for these reasons that the legacy of these practices is internally managed: the oral histories and the social archiving of influential moments, players, and scenes is a community project of care.[1] The following discussion seek to outline the importance of community bonds, which highlights where/why membership is a critical theme for understanding practice, focusing on the diversity within these kinds of communities, their reasons for organizing, their responsibilities, and their ongoing contributions towards social development as creative development.

If shared language can be so carefully and socially constructed, what factors propel these meeting points? For example, a prominent acknowledgment is a sentiment of 'outsiderness' between players. The feeling of being part of a practice which is 'niche', 'weird' and 'underground' further propels the importance of belonging as players actively seek each other.

For example, from the mid 2000s the *Siberian Improvisation Company*[2] (SIC) is described as a contemporary legacy for Derek Bailey's international *Company Week*[3] meetings (Markvart, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2019).[4] This is a group which primarily acted out of a website (vovne.ru)[5] to network players in Siberia who might be interested in working with what Alexander Marvkart (founder of the group) describes as 'new improvised music' (новую импровизационную музыку). As he states, 'it was like a website about us [and] also about the outsider music in Siberia.' (Markvart, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August, 2019). Because the locational setting of this scene was often isolated and disconnected, rather than organized around the term 'free improvisation' alone or even 'non-idiomatic music' (which would have been a further clear nod to Bailey's influence), SIC appears to present a hybrid and synthesized practice, signalling multiple histories towards a positive attention of mixed influence of 'new improvised music' (something Bailey himself was rather against):[6]

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1   For example, it is interesting to note the community language which is used when groups name themselves: Company (UK), the Gathering (UK), Collective Orchestra (IT), the People Band (UK), Second Family Band (US), Globe Unity Orchestra (EU/US). Group names which signal togetherness, community, family.

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2   An improvising collective with no clear specific membership operating originally in Siberia and performing their first performance in 2011, now an internationally touring group of players (Vovne.ru).

3   The improvising meeting/performing event *Company Week* hosted by Derek Bailey ran between 1977-1994. They happened around the world, as a way to get players performing together, and to make free improvisation a more public and visible art form (Watson, 2004).

4   'And then I found friends who is also playing this kind of music in Siberia, not only in my town, because the web sites, we created websites. And we had a community building between several cities and always helped each other to gigs in some weird places. [...] Yeah, but then I listened more and more, Free Jazz and then improvised music, European free improvisation. Like this. And I started just to try to play, and I created a project which is called, "Siberian Improvisation Company". It was the project and then the name was dedicated to Derek Bailey. Guitarist from UK.' (Markvart, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August, 2019).

5   Vovne is a larger community of Siberian artists which the SIC project sits within. The Russian 'Vovne' вовне means 'outside'.

6   'Everything is kind of soft-core. The focus is gone. The focus is diffused, widened ... I mean, in this particular musical activity there is nobody that I know of that works strictly on one kind of subgenre of the music, something that used to be quite common [...] But what is happening now is more like some kind of stew, all kinds of things mixed up together. How far they affect each other, I'm not sure'. (Bailey interviewed by Jean, August, 1996).

Стилистически можно описать это как новую импровизационную музыку. Достаточно уникальным явлением для российской сцены является синтез различных музыкальных оснований и пост-литературы (free jazz, free improvisation, noise, jazz-punk, techno, modern composition, experimental electronica, avant-garde). (English in original)

Stylistically it can be described as new improvisational music. Quite a unique phenomenon for the Russian scene is the synthesis of various musical foundations and post-literature (free jazz, free improvisation, noise, jazz-punk, techno, modern composition, experimental electronica, avant-garde). (Markvart, 2014, translated by the AI DeepL)

Unlike many traditional groups organized in cities and within larger scenes, SIC could not rely on physical opportunities for getting to know each other – the collective instead harnessed the power of the internet to create distanced community possibilities (important during pandemic community building too). The above list of genres is informative as it not only describes the work, or signals towards an audience, but also exposes language to frame a shared meaning and place for a community.[7] The genres Markvart references show clear relationships from Western contemporary music influence: contemporary composition, avant-garde and experimentalism, with a nod also to jazz and dance music histories. SIC presents a wide range of possible ways into experimental music, and a wish to include as many artists as possible, a signal for open membership and audience interests.

Belonging therefore can be thought of as a multi-directional stream, one which propels artists to seek each other, to find community, develop practice and to experiment in the co-nicheness. Ensemble-ship plays a large part in this, most obviously on a political level where groups like the AACM, FIG, Sojourner or Samana organize groups in which belonging is not a right within the community but rather must be generated internally between peoples who share common struggles and experiences in abjection from scene. Beyond this it has been my acute experience that the practice which draws players together within the field is the attitude of players who wish to belong to something connected and social. For example, as is discussed elsewhere GIO often refer to themselves as a family, something which generates a community beyond the creative needs of meeting and making art alone.

B.3.10.2 Response-ability

There is more at play in what Haraway would call the 'response-ability' of players meeting in communities than just the development of practice, idea, and lineage, but also the documentation and dissemination of these practices as both creative and social human skills.

> We say, Bedahe navazy – 'بداهه نوازی' (improvisation) 'breast to breast'. You learn from your teacher and you teach to your city. And nothing academically. (Zomorodi, Iranian player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, May 2021).

Nicols would call this part of the field the 'social virtuosity' (McKay, 2012), that is, improvisers need to be responsive, adaptive, supportive, and conscientious of those they are playing with, the audience, the history, and the environment:

> It's almost indefinable. But the closest I can get is being fully present, aware and responsive in each moment, to whatever arises in oneself, the other musicians and the environment. (Nicols, private communication, April 2020)

> There is a slightly kind of rose tinted sort of view of aspects of improvisation. Group improvisation, which suggests that it could be a paradigm for how society could exist. Which people maintain their egos and their ambitions […] yet they are collaborating in a creative and positive way with everybody else. And although it's not as simple or as nice as that, in reality, I think there's an element to that, that most people who come into this area of music making genuinely value having to adapt to other people's

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7   SIC continues to operate although the original website has not been updated recently. Most recent activity is found on their Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/siberianimprovisationcompany/ (last accessed July 2022).

ideas, other people's needs, as well as their own. (John Butcher, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, November 2019).

We are responsible for each other when we are playing (Araik Alexander, Russian, Georgian based player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2019)

Yeah, so is for me improvisation is like to communicate and then to listen and then to [know] how to embrace each other (Fiona Lee, Hong Kong player, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, August 2021)

Even while players do acknowledge, as Butcher puts it, 'the rose tinted glasses' (the rather utopian goals of a practice wrapped up in reconsidering social practicalities) the artists themselves nevertheless continue to assert the critical role of response-ability for respect, listening, and patience with all that they encounter. This appears consistently in interviews, as practice-based descriptions fluidly cross over and speculate about 'life'. That is, the use of improvisation as a 'tool for happiness', something which is employed not only as a creative practice, but also as a skill which betters a player's engagement with their lives.

It's all mingled in that's how I love it really, all the different, fascinating shape shifting, and twists and turns, and sublime and chaos, and space and density, a bit of rabbit,[8] a bit of conversation, a bit of all mingled in. And this is the way I want to live (Nicols, rehearsal documentation GIO, May 9th 2020)

At some point, I just realized that making music was my main tool of sublimation. But for some stuff it was not enough. And that some stuff needs to be written - some stuff needs to be filmed. Blah blah blah. So now, we're really out of the music discussion, I think that for some people, and that includes me, the plurality of practices are a mental necessity, health, mental-health necessity. More than a necessity, you know, really a practical tool for happiness. (Catherin interviewed by McPherson, September 2020)

It is often these aspects of the field such as community building, enhanced spaces for belonging, and the responsible roles which all members have, that uphold these ideals, which lends improvisation as a critical field for research in social and psychological study. Notably the career work of researchers such as Raymond MacDonald and Graeme Wilson who continue to assert that everyone is an improviser, and moreover that improvisation is one of the first skills we produce at birth (R. MacDonald & Wilson, 2020). In her ethnography work of free improvisation in Brazil, Franziska Schroeder (2019) notes the particular entangled role improvisation plays in response to the presence of the Brazilian ethos of '*Jeitinho Brasileiro*': finding creative and improvised solutions for needs at hand – improvised 'living in solution'. In thinking with José Miguel Wisnik and Jason Stanyek, Schroeder considers the worldmaking of improvisation in Brazil as a cultural identity, born out of a practical requirement for living within precarity and hindrance – a general improvisation on problems at hand towards tangible social solutions.[9]

While it would be beyond the scope of this research to overview the intricate and delicate ways improvisation is found as a social structure in the diverse network of artists of this research, it is nevertheless easy to note the prevalence of the use of these artistic practices as more than creative ways of living. For example, many that joined contemporary digital practices not only did so in order to continue to make art, but also as community solace during time of grief, fear, and confusion. These are the response-abilities of sustaining social networks, innate skills which acknowledge the creative role within the lifelong project of community building.

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8   British colloquialism for 'talking'.

9   A dualism echoed in the writing of Anna Tsing (2015) on the indeterminacy of matsutake mushroom communities and their embedded and improvised relationship within capitalist precarities and contemporary survival tactics.

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4.0 The Three F's:

Introduction

There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen
– Vladimir Ilyich Lenin
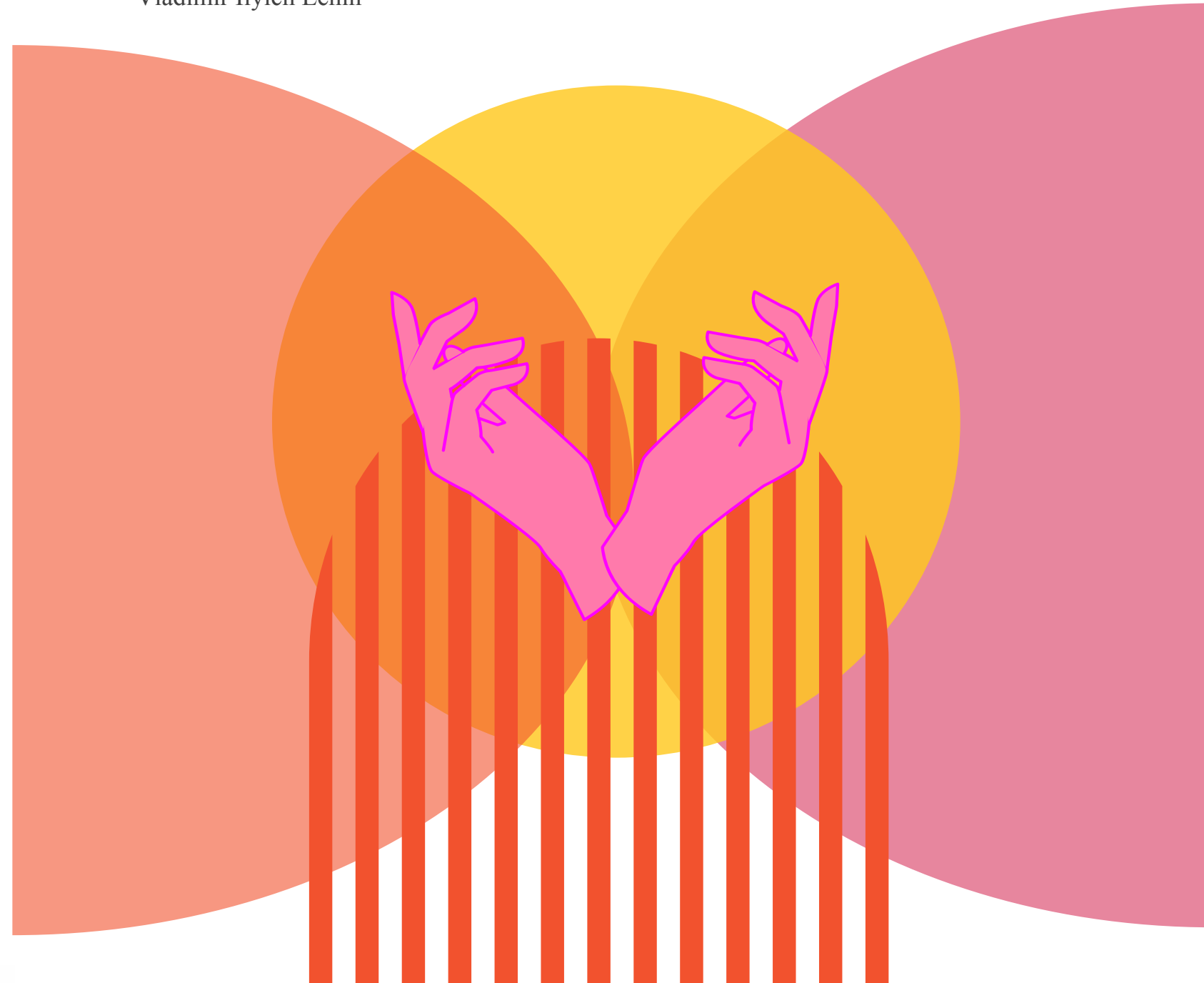
The Three F's is a chapter in three parts (furnishing, fashioning and fictioning) which can be read non-linearly. Each discusses elements of practice that have been drawn out of contemporary examples of experimental improvisation and are seemingly indivisible from their context of the COVID19 pandemic. Yet, while this period appears to have had staggering influence on improvised music, the practices should also be seen as more than their pandemic related scenarios. That is, it is important not to presume that the pandemic restrictions are the cause for all the creative experiments made within these documents, but rather an event which appears to have set certain new developments in motion. In the same light, while most of the practices are presented with technology heavy language (cyber-bodies, techno-spaces and techno-communities) these practices should also be considered more than merely digital improvisational skills, the pandemic was a moment in time in which improvisation entered a new era.

As MacDonald and Wilson point out (pre-pandemic), shifts in technology have often afforded new opportunities for people to access improvisation, and in turn have developed new performance spaces which are equally ripe with cross-disciplinary work, and have assisted greatly in bringing improvisation resoundingly into the 'post-genre world' (MacDonald & Wilson, 2020). Therefore, this contemporary influx of new technologies, and their more daily presence in everyday life during the pandemic, assists in understanding how digital practices enacted in the period between 2020-2022 have seeped readily into practice, argued here as forming new traditions. That is, the practices identified are important elements to contemporary improvisation work, which are presenting new flourishings for contemporary virtuosities, community organizational practices, and documentation techniques.

Networked music practices, telematics and cyber revolutions: new socialities

Telematics will affect the major instruments of culture: language, in its relations to the individual, and even in its social function; and knowledge, as an extension of collective memory. (Nora & Minc, 1980, p. 128)

Digital free improvisation is currently a flourishing phenomenon and the practices of networked and telematic experimental music are responsible for much of the bedrock from which contemporary practices are drawn. The following overview focuses predominantly on notable examples of telematic music practices that contextualise the current contemporary experiments in post-pandemic digital music making.

Free improvisers have reportedly been using digital conferencing software (*CU-seeme)* for networked music meetings from the early 2000s according to Lewis (2020) . Many forums and groups for telematic improvisation populate the community, including Pauline Olivero's *Telematic Circle*,[1] the Telematic Improvisation Resources on *The Improvisers Network*[2] and *Avatar Orchestra Metaverse,* a group who meet entirely digitally (forming their own characters/instruments/identities) entirely within the video game *Second Life*.[3] Notable ensembles include 'The Hub', founded in 1986,[4] which was one of the first networked music ensembles (and is still running today). The Hub explains its approach as: 'Using computers to define a new social context for music making, as well as exploring the possibilities for systems too complex for direct control.' (Gresham-Lancaster, 1998). The ensemble consciously acknowledge the dual effect of technological advances, both within creative and social developments.[5]

While the practices presented in this research might not consider using the terminology of telematic or networked music, the relationships between contemporary practices using new software such as Zoom, Sonobus, and livestreaming are nevertheless clear advances from existing network music practices. Where they differ is in the makeup of the communities who take part in these forms of music making. Players commonly recorded in networked music practices before the pandemic are those who often already came from existing work within electronic music spheres, a canon historically heavily represented by white male artists (Rodgers, 2010). By contrast, contemporary practices post-pandemic have changed who has access to networked music performance because they are now engaged via more readily accessible platforms that require no specialist knowledge of electronic music. This in and of itself makes the contemporary networked music practices valuable for study. They are a new generation of international, gender diverse and non-age specific players who work with technology for a variety of reasons.

Human-machine relationships: Scores, authorship and making meaning together

> The Hub are telematic improvisers performing according to the fundamental conditions of improvisation: indeterminacy, agency, analysis of conditions, and choice. This leads me to assert that the telematic musical experience embodied by The Hub is inextricably bound up with two crucial elements: real time improvisation and networked agencies of interaction. And now, because of recent pandemic, we are all telematic, rendering the vision of the hub both prescient and urgent. (Lewis in Brümmer et al., 2022, pp. 157–158)

While not explicitly always an improvising ensemble, The Hub acknowledges the role of the human-machine relationship in expanding the possibilities for improvisation. For example, they note that machine interference and indeterminacy directly alters the roles and expression of human players:

> Improvisation plays a critical role—but the nature of performance 'action' in The Hub is usually shaped so severely by the spec that the feel of an individual voice is often more muted than other improvised music. Individual actions are more akin to nudging than declaiming. (John Bischoff quoted in email in Brümmer et al., 2022, p. 55)

The human-machine improvising relationship has historically been important, something which is heavily explored by improvising computer programs: for example: the pioneering *Voyager (1986)* system by George Lewis; Robert Rowe's *Cypher ;* Ben Carey's *_derivations*, IRCAM's *OMax* software; and my own work with *Donohue+* developed

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1   https://paulineoliveros.us/telematic-circle.html (last accessed June 2022)
2   https://www.improvisersnetworks.online/resources/telematic-improvisations (last accessed June 2022)
3   http://www.avatarorchestra.org (last accessed June 2022)
4   John Bischoff, Chris Brown, Scott Gresham-Lancaster, Tim Perkis, Phil Stone, and Mark Trayle (Brümmer et al., 2022).
5   Other notable telematic projects include: *The Tuning Meditation* (2008) which networked Stanford University students with musicians and audiences in Beijing University – a cross-global collaboration for both distanced players and audiences; and *Distributed Composition #1* (2011) which networked a three-site telematic group, expanding the number of locations possible to include in networked performance (Van Nort et al. 2013).

in collaboration with Sam Gillies (see Gillies & Sappho Donohue, 2021). The human-machine relationship often becomes part of networked music performance. For example, in 2014 the computer system *Voyager* (on Disklavier) performed alongside Paul Grabowsky and Courtney Bryan.[6] Both humans performed instruments in Melbourne and New York respectively and the computer performed Disklavier operated by Lewis in Melbourne (Monash Arts, 2015).

As the innate indeterminate properties of human-machine relationships develop and contribute to elements of improvisation, these in turn also affect the ways ideas are brought to play. Depending on how a system is designed, the affordances of the human and the machine variably impact the setup. Lewis' *Voyager* utilizes analysis which has been specially designed to produce a non-hierarchical relationship between 'human leader/computer follower' (G. E. Lewis, 2000, p. 35) where the machine might make independent decisions without any human input at all. Other systems offer players more direct agency over machine improvised works, such as Rowe's *Cypher* (Rowe, 1992), and others still are designed to recycle performer based phrases/practices to generate a notion of expanded self ensemble, as in Carey's *_derivations, OMax*, and Donohue+.

As with the setup of an improvising human-machine system, the notion of a 'score' in digital practice also changes as instructions shift towards both hardware practicalities and creative intentions. Players of The Hub's prefer the term 'spec' (specification) rather than 'score', borrowing from the engineering term, which reportedly '[has] no executive function […] they don't tell a player what or how to play, they don't coordinate actions, they don't prescribe a specific musical outcome, they are not recipes. They establish a situation for music-making' (Carter Scholz in Brümmer et al., 2022, p. 63).[7] Throughout this chapter notions of hybridized networked humans (digital and physical) and human-machine practices (augmented reality, AI and external software) are examined through diverse uses of score, instruction, and tech setups, as groups variously respond and expand practice within the innate indeterminacies of these human-machine networks.

When networked human-machine practices take off in new ways it is important to re-situate these practices within companion theories that consider identity and socio-political change within digital contexts. Important for this research has been the rise of post-humanist narratives. For example, in the now canonical *Cyborg Manifesto* (1983) Haraway addresses existing traditional notions of feminism in critique towards unbounding the separating factors of human, animal, and machine identities. Haraway's theories have influenced techno-feminist/cyber-feminist/glitch-feminist theories which develop understandings on *how* identity is being reformed: what cyber-bodies and cyberspaces are doing for contemporary ethics and socialites. When making with machine collaborators there is in turn a shift between analogue and digital, online, and off-line, real and not-real, what Beth Coleman calls the 'x-reality', a space between (Coleman, 2014).

Coleman, also an artist who has worked within telematic creative settings, proposes that the x-reality is an acknowledgment of a lack of separation between digital and physical spaces, which in turn has affected the expansion of agency itself. An expanded agency resounds strongly with the practices described in this section, which present a new host of applications that a person might use to express themselves towards further new social contexts. The digital self begins to inform the physical self, both individually and communally. As players, machines, and contextual politics become entangled, they meet around elements of practice which are 'becoming' within the x-reality: the cyber-spaces, cyber-identities, and cyber-communities of contemporary practice. These are the projects of contemporary work, whether knowingly or not, moments in time in which human roles themselves are reexamined, augmented, and reworked. Contemporary feminist theory asserts a politic of action:

> […] our digital avatars, and AFK[8] selves, can be suspended in an eternal kiss. A land where we do not wait to be welcomed by those forces that essentialise or reject us, but rather create safety for ourselves in ritualising the celebration of ourselves. With this the digital becomes the catalyst. […] We remain

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6   https://vimeo.com/112864610 (last accessed June 2022)
7   The differing opinion on the role and format of 'recipe' in this definition is not lost on this research!

8   Away from Keyboard.

responsible for the manifestation our own reflections. And through today's internet we can find ways to hold those mirrors up for one another. Thus we are empowered by the liberatory task of seizing the digital imaginary as an opportunity. A site to build on, and material to build with. (Russell, 2020)

Through the advancement of machine capabilities and the nested work of human/non-human collaborations it can be proposed that new creative impetus emerges which assists in both readdressing social systems – who/what/where a contemporary improviser might be given access to practice – and subverts a dominant narrative of technique, which draws into practice-based traditions that have previously been documented as fringe. To investigate these new dimensions, 'the Three F's' builds upon the above history of networked music and human-machine activisms to investigate themes for understanding the contemporary creative, improvising body, space and community:

Furnishing: The cyber-space and the construction of multi-realities between analog, digital, and hybrid players, audiences, and venues.

Fashioning: The cyber-community, which is augmented via its new forms of 'staying together' in the digital future of oral history and society building.

Fictioning: Universe building within posthuman futures, identities in practice of myth making in augmenting and rewriting rules of creative reality.

*The overview of the process to developing the archives which support these themes is available here.

The Three F's

subchapter map

Before reading any of these subchapters it is useful to read the overall chapter introduction to contextalise the writing.

4.1 Furnishing:
Bodies and spaces in construction

i. Techo-audiences and imagined listeners

Meeting across spaces: Networked points

A medium between worlds: Hybrid spaces

What the body can bring

What the body can be

4.2 Fashioning:
The social act of co-creating culture

New Socialites: Backgrounds to membership, curation and bleed

Communication: New permissions and oral histories

Membership: New roles and non-humans

i. Chat function: New communications and trace
ii. Recording community
iii. New social structures: Hospitality and facilitation

4.3 Fictioning:
Mobilizing Storytelling, myth and other realities

New practice options: Tools from human-machine-human relationships

i. Usability
ii. Visuals and multiplicity
iii. The chimera practice: Customisation of new tools in circulation
iv. Non-human companions

Myth Making and Activism

Remixing Stories: Fictioning bodies and histories for new documents and archives

home

4.1 Furnishing

bodies and spaces in construction

We want a new framework. And for this framework we want new skin. The digital world provides a potential space where this can play out. Through the digital we make new worlds and dare to modify our own. (Russell, 2020, p. 11)

'Space is the place'

Sun Ra, 1972

Drawing on the theory of Furnishing developed in her book 'Music Asylums' (DeNora, 2013) DeNora and Ansdel propose 'the furnishing of musical spaces and what those spaces in turn afford are two sides of the same coin' (DeNora & Ansdell, 2014). They consider what is brought to a creative space; 'music-plus' – distributes the resources and materials of a context and affords the opportunities for action and relationship building with others.

> [...] those opportunities are expressed in and through the furnishing activities in the space; that furnishing consists of a wide range of heterogeneous practical engagements with music-plus. And it in turn furnish that space with their by-products, such as new identities, skills, culture, capacities and much more. (DeNora & Ansdell, 2014)

The examples in this section come from moments in which artists became the architects of their own new cultural spaces, on a wide community level, constructing new places in which to meet, commune, and create.[1] Spaces should be considered in themselves as non-human actants in practice, which will variously be seen to influence and determine the kinds of techniques, communities, and needs that develop in the groups. While space itself is an acknowledged agent within improvised practice, the expanded and very diverse ways it finds itself altered and remade in contemporary practice makes it possible to witness the role and the influence of space in new ways as a member of practice. Elsewhere these new spaces are considered for their effect on sociality and membership, dissemination/archival affordances, as well as new practice developments. In this section these spaces are considered for their alteration of how space can be furnished – what can be brought, and what is at play: how players are actively taking part in furnishing new contemporary socio-creative spaces. Figure 3 presents the hybrid archives by mapping the data of the distinct groups into the spaces from which practices were generated from. This is temporally mapped, affording the possibility to witness the developments towards advanced hybrid spaces over time.

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1   The use of this term to investigate contemporary digital practice is already present within the work of the GIO research team (MacDonald et al., 2021).

G

2020 | 2021 | 2022

Hybrid Telematic (Digital and Physical players with Digital and Physical Audience)

2021:
- N23. The Voice of Hur 1
- N26. GIOfest XIC Piece 2
- G63. Noise Lore
- N23. The Voice of Hur 2
- N24. GIO live at Analix
- N27. GIOfest XIV Foutraque
- N26. GIOfest XIV Piece 2
- GIOfest XIV
- G63.1 Exhibition Tour

2022:
- Cooking in the Theatre of Home (AJIRN)

Website and Interactive platfroms (pre-recorded work with digital audiences)

2020:
- N13. Family Tree
- N9. Field Recordings: Henria Sapherson
- N3. A puppet Show
- N1. Will You Marry Us? Alb...

2021:
- N21. The Sentient Archive of Hur
- N11. Meine Gelbe Lieblings Jacke
- N8. Bridging the Gap: Conference
- N7. WorldWide Anthology

2022:
- N20. Is the New Punk Digital

Digital Audience Stream Pre-record (YouTube premieres etc.)

2020:
- M2. keith tippet memorial
- M4. Lol Coxhill harmonium
- M9. John Russell intro,
- M13. Christmas cakes for mopomoso
- M14. Christmas cakes for mopomoso
- M11. A walk through the park with improvisation
- M10. Paul Jolly and his bandonian
- M16. Sylvia Hellet intro
- M8.John Russell Intro
- M15. Maria Sappho and the Maggie Nicols Christmas tree star
- N10. Lavender Marriage
- N2. Meanwhile
- N12. Ute and Oto
- G30. Glove Piece

2021:
- M18. Tim Fletcher reflects about first hearing John Russell
- M19. The other Lol Coxhill harmonium
- M44. Japaneese Olympic protests
- N26. Noise-olympics at mopomo...
- M30. Paul Buckton tribute
- N26.Noise-olympics at Mopomoso
- M26. Phil Minton tribute
- M39. Tokyo and Hong Kong: 'cheer to hong artists'
- M43. Noise-olympics
- M31. Les Petoleuses
- M27. Dom Minnasi tribute
- M23. Maggie Nicols and the shrine to improvisers passed
- M41. Mopomoso live meets Mopomoso digital
- M45. Extinction Rebellion protests
- M38. Tim Fletcher history and Simon Fell research
- M36. Mopomoso TV first Birthday with Cake
- N15. Tente 1
- M42. Noise-olympics
- M28 Lecture clip, John Russell
- M29. Lecture clip, John Russell
- N16. Tente 2
- N17. Tente 3
- M48. Pascal Marzan brings audience to the cite of performance

2022:
- M53. Literature and history of the Feminist Improvising Group
- M56. Helen Petts film 'Alleycumfree' of John Russells grave
- M51. Walk through the cementary
- M57. Workshop Free Music from 1984
- M54. Les Petroleues
- M58. In memorium of Paul Burwell
- M55. Akio Suzuki intro to the Japan Tribute Concert

Digital Audience Stream Live (Livestream, digital or physical players)

2021:
- M22. networked performance Hommage
- M49. Mopmooso livestrearn

2022:
- M52. Noisy Women inaugural concert

Digital Networked Audiences (digital audience within networked music software of digital players)

2020:
- N6. Will I Enjoy Covid 19 if I haven't watched the other 18?
- N4. I dreamnt I was a cheesecake

Digital and live players Networked (groups of physical and digital players, no audience)

2021:
- N22. The Sentient Archive Comes Alive
- G95. Live and didigital GIO

Networked Music Practice Internal (Zoom, Sonobus etc. no audeince)

2020:
- M6. Mario Mattos, Maria Gouvea, and Thomas Rohrer
- M12. Laura Cavanaugh and Ian Birse
- G10.1 Chat Piece
- G6. Names backwords
- G1. The first free piece
- M5. Raymond MacDonald and Maria Sappho
- G47. Sending messages
- G8. Conduction Backgrounds
- M3. oxford improvisers orchestra
- G12. Cooking piece
- G10. Toy piece
- G37. Joining one by one
- 34. Copy Cats
- M1. GIO

2021:
- M17. Interiew with Dee Byrne
- M40. Interview with Gino Robair
- M24. Mopomoso team tribute
- G85. Cake 1
- G94. Plane and taxi
- G69 Views - politics
- G65.1 Train Ride
- G82. Breaking in
- G85.1 Cake 2
- G79.1 on the beach
- M32.too many submisisons!'
- M33. 'everything is new and nothing is new, I love contradictions'
- M37. Interview with Ebba Jahn
- G75. No more than 5 people
- G70. The unquiet earth
- G65. Small Group
- G52. Camera on and Off
- G67. Train Group
- G69.1. Views - politics
- M25. GIO tribute
- G67.1 Train Small Group
- G80. Landing plane
- G79. Camo full
- M46. GIOfest Plug
- G78. Camo origin
- G83. Sunset
- G54. Inner Voice
- G78.1 Hand Conduction/shadow
- G71. Football
- 54.1. Follow visuals
- M47. Glofest plug

2022:
- G47. Speed dating
- G99.1 Suffragetes
- G105. Chimere
- G99. The first cell splitting
- G116. Waving
- G80.1 Airport explore
- G103. Drawing
- G98. Burns night
- G106. Cheers to 2 years on Zoom
- M50. Interview with John Edwards

Figure 3: TIALLS page# 9: Mycelial Practices
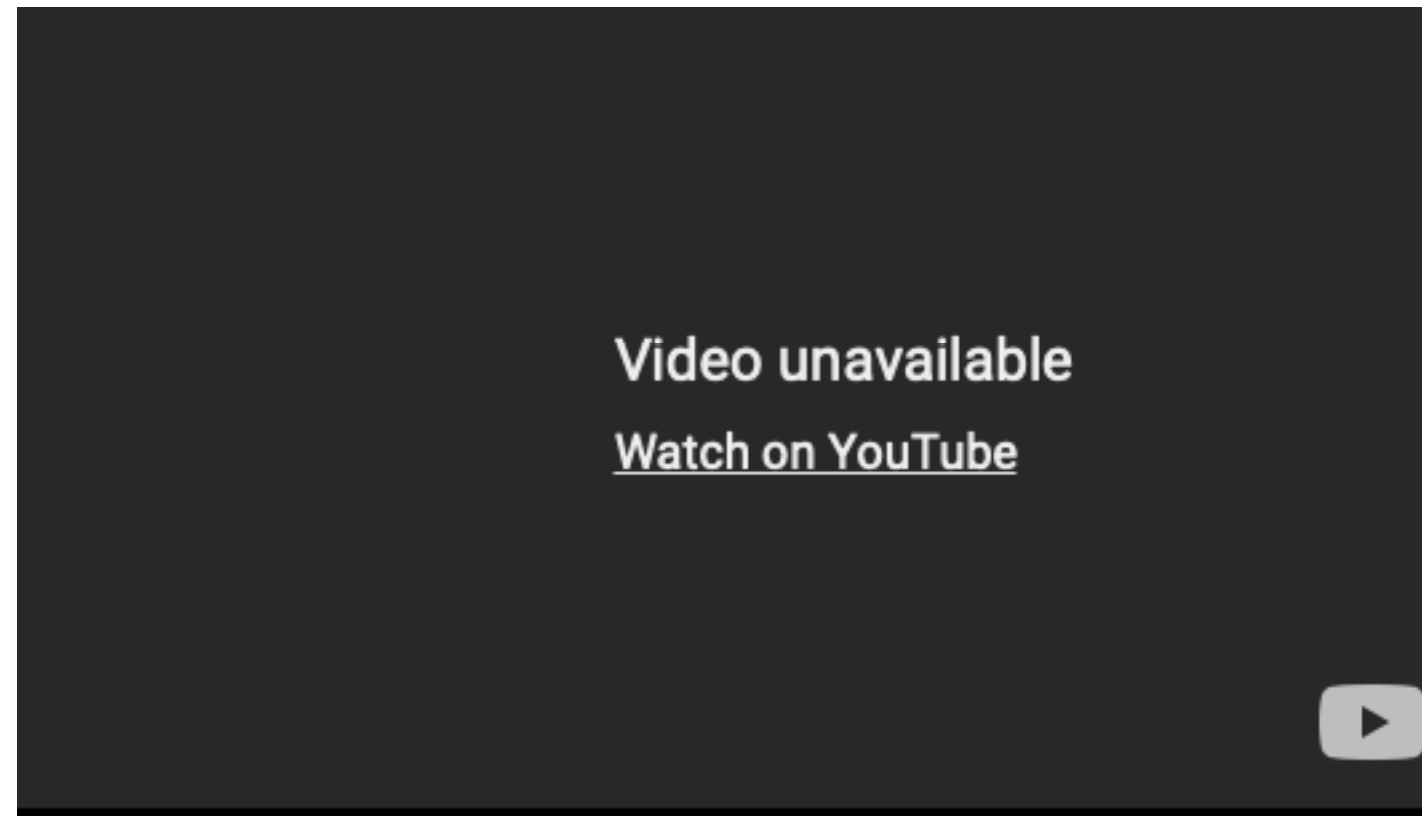
Video embed 1: Will I enjoy COVID 19 if I haven't watched the other 18? – The Noisebringers 2020 (will not go full-screen)

The digital space has altered many of the ways a creative space might be furnished. It is equipped with new affordances that have not previously been possible in the physical world. These affordances are considered a version of the 'x-reality' (Coleman, 2014), a space in which people might meet across great distances within a virtual-real landscape, where the digital and the physical overlap. In this subchapter various new components are drawn out which have to do with understanding the ways new spaces are developed by groups for specific needs. Covering how these have developed into complex new creative practice set-ups (technical), and how the reality of these new spaces is altering how players engage with context and their own bodies. Figure 4 overviews the kinds of spaces now available in contemporary improvised practices, highlighting the presence of players and audiences, ranging from entirely internal digital practices to complex hybrid telematic experiences. These are the new layers of creative meeting spaces which find themselves taken up in the practices exhibited here.
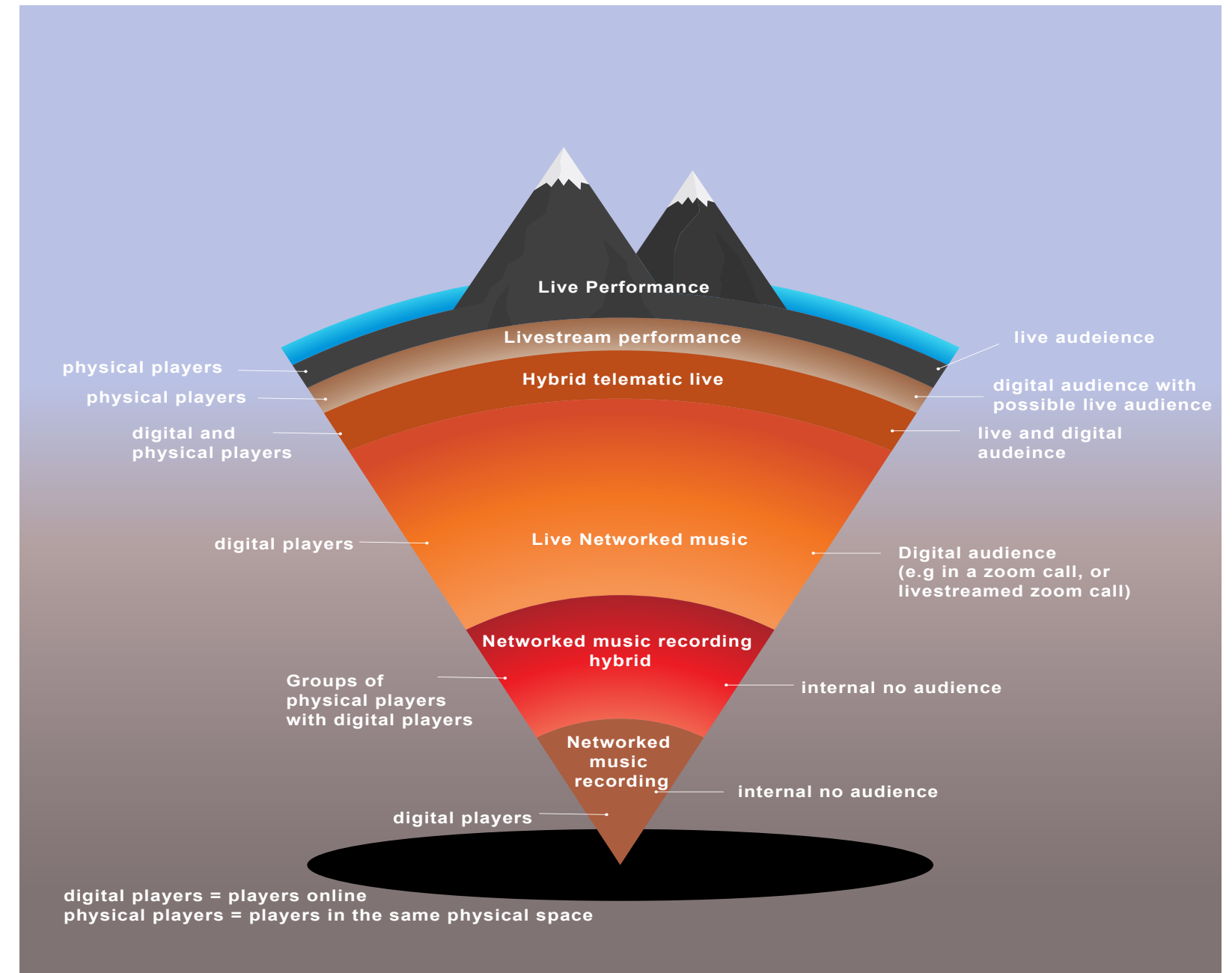

Figure 4: various digital/hybrid spaces in the contemporary music practice presented here

Many softwares and combinations of devices are used in the generation of new digital space, but the most novel has been the emergence of Zoom[2] as a creative music platform. Zoom is particularly unique as it has been used in so many diverse ways and has been experimented with in all the possible digital spaces seen in Figure 4, as shown in the following video that presents varied spaces Zoom has been used for.

Video 4 Zoom in all new digital spaces as seen on Mycelial Practices TIAALS page #9 (5'58")

Different digital meetings require different forms of setup. For live practice, networked digital platforms like Zoom require phones, tablets, or computers in order to be accessible. and do not necessarily require large amounts of technical knowledge in order to participate in. However, hybrid and live streamed events require a more complex set-up, and must contend with issues regarding feedback, bandwidth, and the various needs of digital and physical players and

audiences sharing a space.[3] The choices made as to how to 'set up' within our expanded technological world are a negotiation of what is best for the community at hand, *who* (audiences, players etc.) is imagined as being brought into the new space, and therefore can be viewed as examples of the needs of the specific group: the required ornaments for the digital/physical space.[4]

GIO moved quickly into a Zoom practice when initial lockdowns were imposed, which saw the group meeting every week to continue playing together. Zoom suited GIO because this is a group which was actively seeking the best way to play easily and accessibly with colleagues around the world. Due to the nature of Zoom as a camera-based social software, a heavy visual aesthetic began to develop within the group, one which was enhanced by the diverse ways in which ensemble members furnished their use of Zoom as a medium for visual experiment. Zoom practices required very new tools for improvisation. At a physical level players made choices about what objects they wanted to be seen with, they set up their own stage, decided what to keep out of sight but in reach (instruments, toys, etc.) but also where they wanted their 'front' of stage to be: where the camera would 'see' them, and what the extent of their 'performance space' was. Some players set up complex rigs with screens and cameras in different parts of the room, and others joined from bed.

As Jessica Argo notes, the varying hi-fi and lo-fi set-ups do not hierarchise better or worse telematic input: 'in reality there is no perceived hierarchy of one sound being **better** than the other – in fact the mobile device dial-ins were often remarkable contributions, and brought about a hybrid way of being, a 'performing-and' mode, in a similar manner to the 'listen-and-walk' mode of The Walkman Effect (Hosokawa 1984)' (Argo, 2022). Therefore, the agency and diversity in set-up of technical access to space, afforded a new range of possibilities, elements which altered notions of the visibility of bodies and proposed new locations for improvisation. It eventually afforded players the ability to take the community with them wherever they traveled.

While initially players used networked music spaces as a place to 'meet' and attempt to 'keep up' practice, these new experiments were later noted to be resoundingly 'moved into' (MacDonald et al., 2021). The new tools became part of an everyday toolkit for improvisation and began to develop over the two years of working. Online practices evolved for two reasons: firstly, the software itself developed during this time, which afforded new features for experiment, and secondly, the artists also expanded their tools over time: experimenting with the use of further external software and gear (Snapcam, Camtwist, Max, external webcams, green screens, photography lights etc.).

Techno-audiences and imagined listeners:

Some networked music practices happened in a closed format (e.g., most common in GIO meetings) where players met and worked together, recorded, and only later shared with audiences. By contrast, other spaces utilized similar networked platforms and instead designed themselves as forms of community hubs. For example, the first performance that the Noisebringers made live/digitally was at Chez Roger which offered itself as 'a virtual bar and cultural space, for the times of Corona' (Ohear, 2020). This space offered live performance, but also meditation, qi-gong, and other workshops throughout the day. It credited a different form of 'staying together', a way of making a place which a public could 'come to'. Another example of this is the invention of the digital series Mopomoso TV started by John Russell in June 2020. These are digital community approaches which respond to an audience. When physical audiences were no longer a possibility, players found new ways to usher in and network distanced listeners.

Mopomoso is different from other examples in that although the show is experienced as 'live' it comprises pre-recorded videos which have been produced by the Mopomoso volunteer team and was made to recreate the feeling of a monthly gig.[5] Even though the works are not live, the audience experienced the event as a form of shared liveness from real-time viewing made possible with the use of the live chat and 'première' function of YouTube. This experience was enhanced by the Mopomoso team who makes bespoke introductions that address the imagined audience and contributes towards this programme's unique form of oral history. Each episode also comes with a custom digital drink recipe curated especially for each month's episode: 'Moptails' (Mopomoso, nd),[6] which is a further example of a way of conceptually sharing an experience: reaching across the digital/physical reality. The use of YouTube Premiere function is not novel, yet the occurrence of the Mopomoso programme at the start of the pandemic, and the monthly presence thereafter has become a new form of free improvisation gig practice.

Where both the internal community meeting spaces, and those with live and networked audiences centre heavily around the physical presence of humans, there is one further kind of space which became influential in some of the practices developed during this period. These spaces can be identified as locations in which neither a live audience nor a digital audience are sharing digital space, but rather the works lend themselves as locations for visiting, enhanced through the experience of a non-human presence. Examples of these works are further explored here where machine guides or curators, become a newly developed fictioning practice for remixing archives and documents as interactive experiences for an imagined audience.

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5   Other practices worked in a similarly way, notably for this research the Make it up Club hosted out of Australia, which played the first of GIO 'flattening the curve' recorded zoom improvisation (2020).
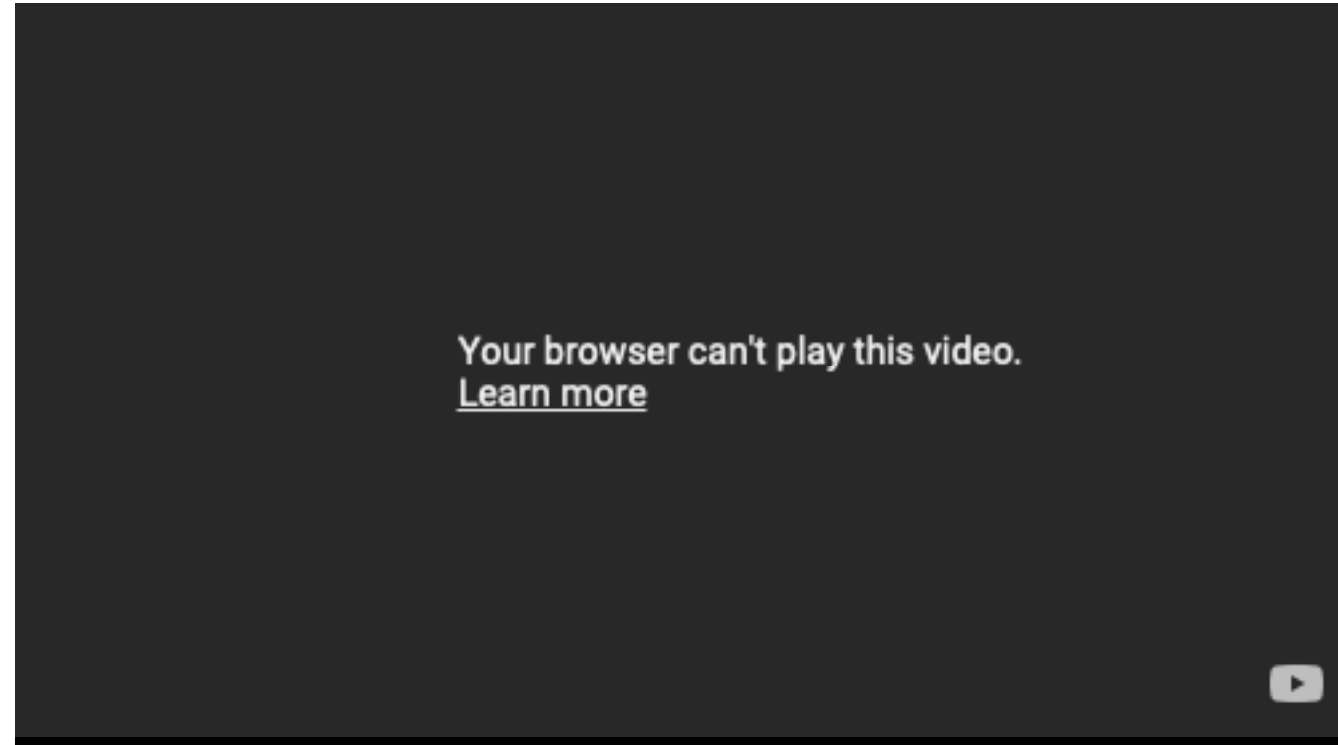
6   View Moptail recipes in 'the Improvisers Cookbook: recipes from improvisers'.

A medium between worlds: Hybrid spaces

Video embed 2: Highlights: Noisebringers at GIOfest XIII 2021(will not go full-screen)

This research had the privilege to document the shift of practice as elements of the newly architectured landscapes of digital worlds became possible to conjure into physical ones. That is, once performing in real life became available again, the recently developed digital practices were brought into new spaces. The exploration of digital worlds equipped players with new skills and objects resulting in the development of hybrid habitats.

After the Noisebringers' first inter-media album *Will You Marry Us?* (presented entirely digitally, 2020) their second inter-media album, *is the new punk*, was presented as an *interspatial* album, in that it existed as both a physical 'exhibition-album' presented at Gallery Analix forever[7] (2021) and subsequently released as a <u>self-referential digital game</u> (2022). The physical exhibition of the album is important as it held several early experiments with hybrid-digital-live space play. Firstly, the physical exhibition coincided with GIO's typical Tuesday night digital sessions, and as

MacDonald (the usual host of these sessions) was a guest of the Noisebringers in Geneva, the group decided to go ahead with the session, making it a hybrid performance, live-streamed, and combining physical and digital players (GIO and the Noisebringers), and audiences. Secondly, Henry McPherson joined as a non-human hyper-entity from his home for the duration of the 2-week exhibition, beamed into the gallery via a Zoom stream. From this vantage point he could view, heckle, and chat with visitors while never being physically present at the exhibition. And thirdly, Brice Catherin and I performed the distanced McPherson via directional speakers (worn as backpacks) bouncing voice and improvisations off walls, artwork, ceilings, and the gardens of the gallery.
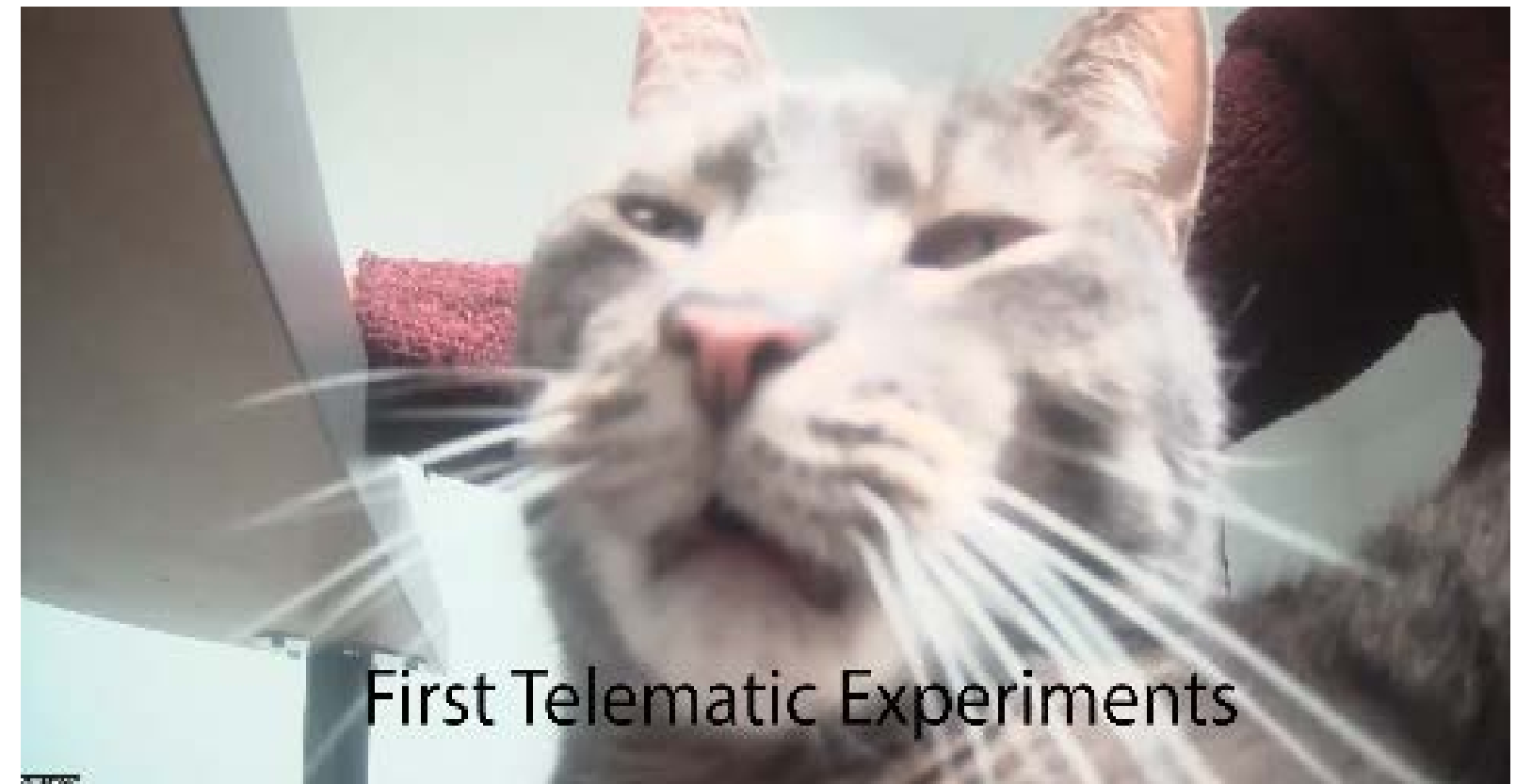
Video 5 First telematic experiments as seen on Mycelial Practices TIAALS page #9 in Is The New Punk project (3'21")

'The Noisebringers and GIO live at Analix Gallery' was an important creative step because it represented a new experiment for all involved – traversing worlds between physically and digitally established communities for a live and digital-live audience with a large-scale improvising group.[8] This would prove to be an experiment which

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7   The Gallery itself is a unique space as it is both the home and a public gallery of the owner Barbara Polla.

8   Reports of the success of this performance are documented in the gallery owners blog in French: <u>https://barbarapolla.wordpress.com</u> (last accessed June 2022).

germinated a practice that eventually developed into the Noisebringers leading GIO for their hybrid night at GIOfestXIV (November 2021).

To foster these new kinds of hybrid settings there are several layers of space at play: the physical dimension with players and audience in a venue, a virtual space with players (e.g on Zoom) and a digital audience (possibly not on Zoom but at a livestream link space). With such a diverse array of bodies present, within this kind of set-up new forms of hospitality were generated to accommodate the digital and physical needs. To accommodate the physical players, all artists need to be able to hear and see the digital players (requiring in some cases many computers, and screens, as well as speakers). In order to accommodate the digital players the physical venue must be mic'd accordingly and have cameras which provide a view of the players in the physical space. In order to accommodate a live audience, the digital players should be visible (usually requiring separate screens for the audience). In order for the digital audience to be accommodated, the entire event needs to be accessible, which usually requires some form of mediation (live VJ or otherwise) between what is now many possible 'views'.

Figure 5 shows the perceptual needs of each of these perspectives (and more) from the stage setup of the Noisebringers at GIOfest XIV.[9] Rather than being a signal path in the traditional sense, this chart shows the requirements all digital and physical bodies have for accessing these forms of performance successfully.[10] Of note are the different stages of the 'work' as it is mediated via the varying levels of spaces. These layers are presented in Figure 5: 1. Physical orchestra, 2. Digital orchestra, 3. Live audience, 4. Digital audience, 5. AR elements and 6. The Post-live audience (the dissemination of materials).

Each of these layers of performance are unique in that no performance is a more 'true' representation of the work than another. These hybrid set-ups produce many levels of the mixed physical/digital realities: live, digital, and post-live. Unlike practices of recording live works, which Constanzo describes as 'documentary' (Constanzo interviewed by

Sappho Donohue, January 2019), the products of the various meeting points for this kind of a hybrid space are co-existent and non-hierarchical. That is, the concept of 'space' and the role of space is greatly perceptually expanded. There is no one vision/version of being part of the piece, nor in viewing the work (live or post-live). Rather these practices are traces of many truths and many perspectives of a lived digital and physical moment.[11]

Performance in this sense has been untethered from a true form of linear time and presence. All versions of 'Foutraque' are only parts of a whole, which could not be fully documented or experienced at the same time. Materials of space and time are repurposed and recycled in ways which blur the boundaries of when and how performance is materialized, with whom it is materialized with, and for whom. The performance at GIOfest XIV embodied a special moment in time coming together, combining the return to live performance, which retaining the developments over a year's digital working practice. As MacDonald wrote to the orchestra after the event, everyone had a part to play in this experience, something which was an experiment for a large improvising ensemble as it became telematic, post-human and hybrid:

> WE DID IT !!! Even if you were not at the CCA or on zoom call everybody on this list had a part to play in the success of our festival last week and, it was an incredible success. […] The Friday evening concert was, if you will pardon the aggrandizement, historic. We integrated a virtual ensemble with a live ensemble while performing to a global audience at the same as an audience in the CCA. The CCA audience could watch a zoom feed at the same time as experiencing the live band. The live band were also in the zoom call and members of the live band (Maria) were also individually in the zoom call and transforming themselves to appear abstracted on screen. […] It was hybrid, meta, post human, post genre, cross disciplinary, hegemony challenging (Raymond MacDonald, congratulations email to the orchestra post event, November 2021)

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9   This is also nothing like a more typical 'livestream' event where cameras would be in place in a venue to stream out the same view a physical audience might have to a digital audience.
10   This kind of new setup is further explored as propelling a new need for facilitation, and group organization in Fashioning.

11   Currently their are 4 versions of this work that exist as documentation: the livestream capture, the internal zoom recording (recorded on 3 devices which furthermore are all unique), the produced mixed version, and the 'highlights' condensed produced version. All of which are different traces of this event.
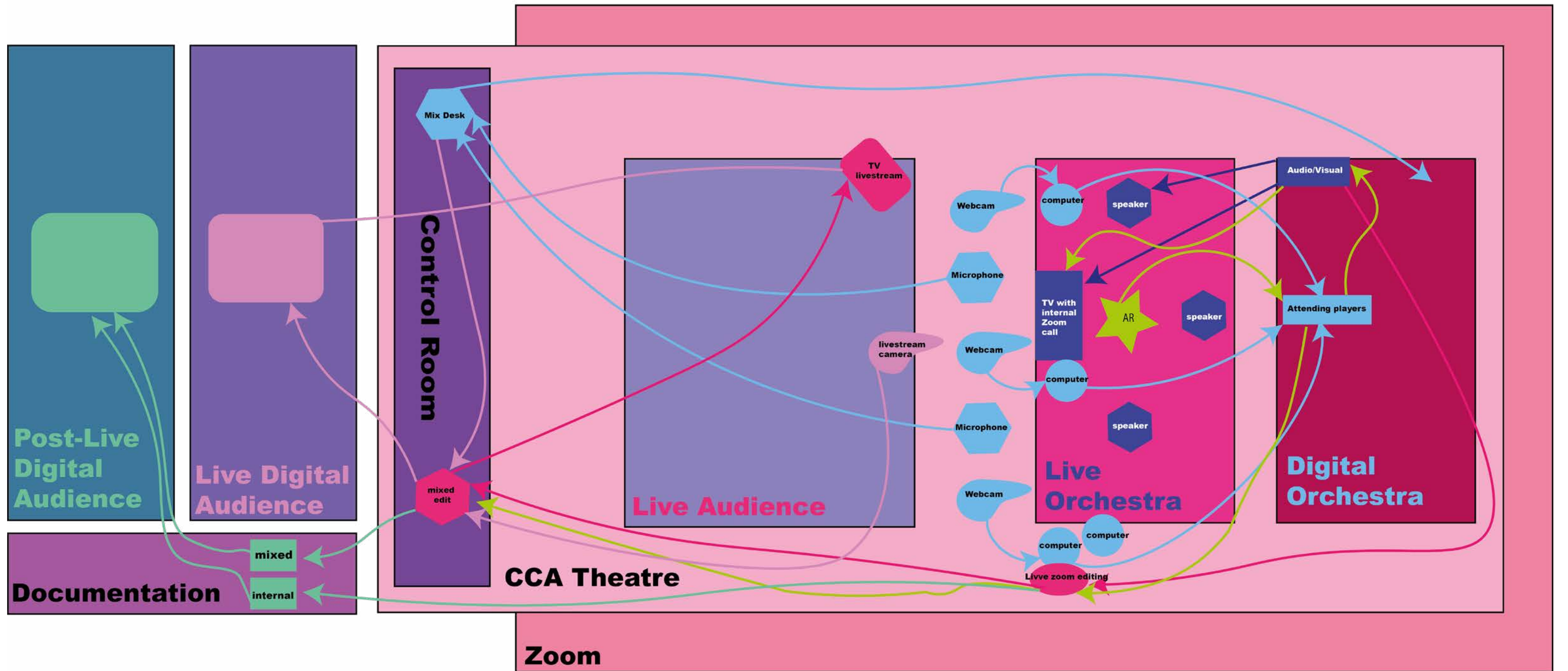
Figure 5 Needs signal path of the Noisebringers work 'Foutraque' GIOFEST XIV 2021

What the body can bring
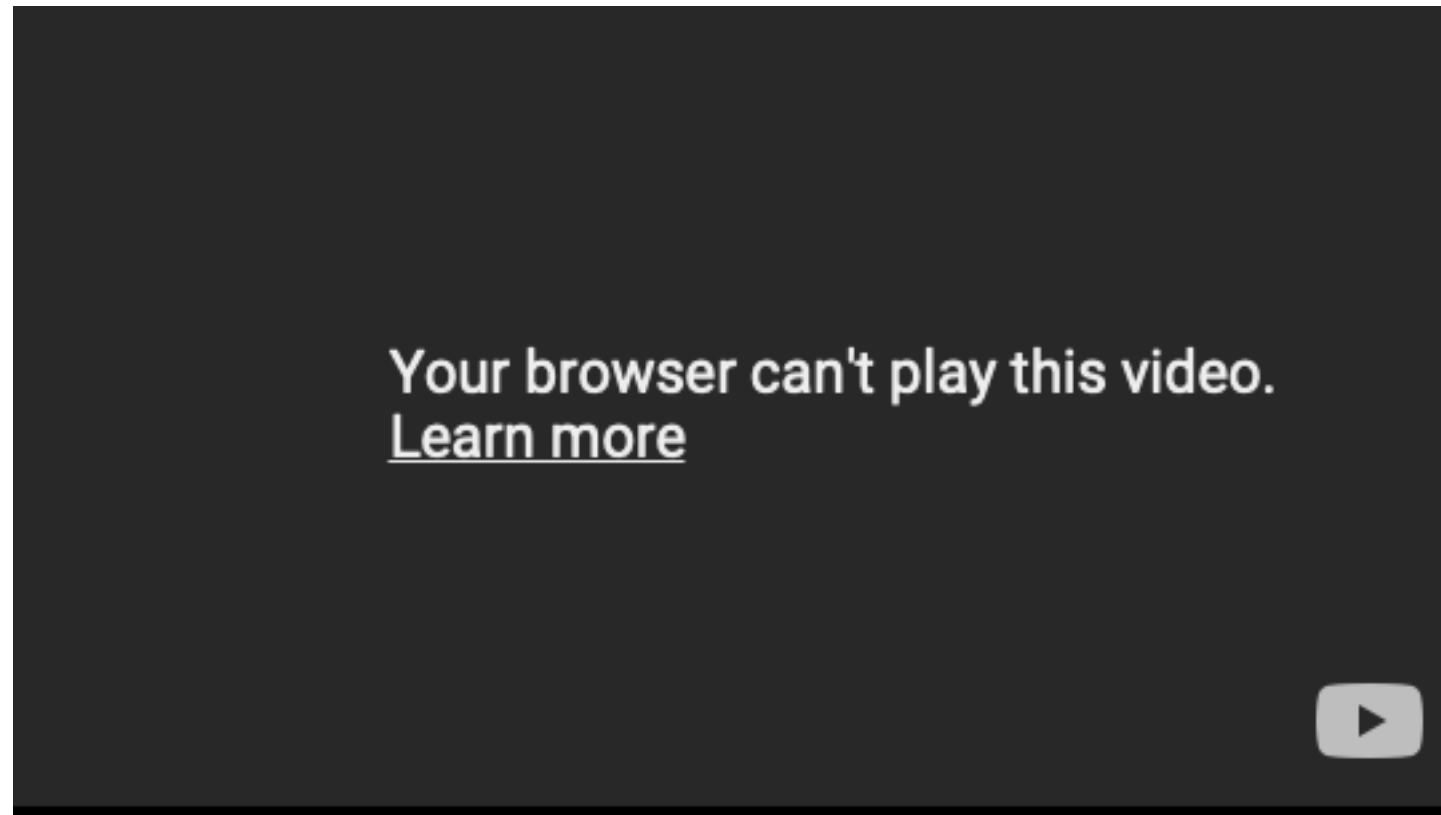
Video Embed 3 'lavender marriage' from the Noisebringers 'Worldwide anthology' 2021 (will not full screen)

The GIO research team suggests a new improvisation technique called the 'Theatre of Home' (MacDonald et al, 2021) which acknowledges the ways in which 'things at hand' and the things of context, have seeped into the improvisational act in new ways. This term has been coined to explore how players meet on Zoom, within what GIO researchers also call the 'Zoomesphere' (MacDonald et al, 2021). This new creative space that has generated a climate of trust which is 'characterized by a kind of hospitality and willingness to share features of the home environment' (MacDonald et al, 2021). For conventional improvisation practices it would not be uncommon to bring found objects, junk, or toys to a concert venue, but the Theatre of Home identifies a rather different interest, in which players wish to 'share' things of context – some brought and some found in 'reach'. In this sense players are experimenting with performing with objects they might not have previously performed with because they want to show something to the group,

something that matters or is sentimental. Or for other reasons players adjust performance for more contextual needs, for example to find ways to perform 'more quietly' at home.[12] As a result, things present[13] in an improvisation setting are expanded, and common contributions now include: leaves from the garden, cooking utensils, artwork, mirrors, playing cards etc.
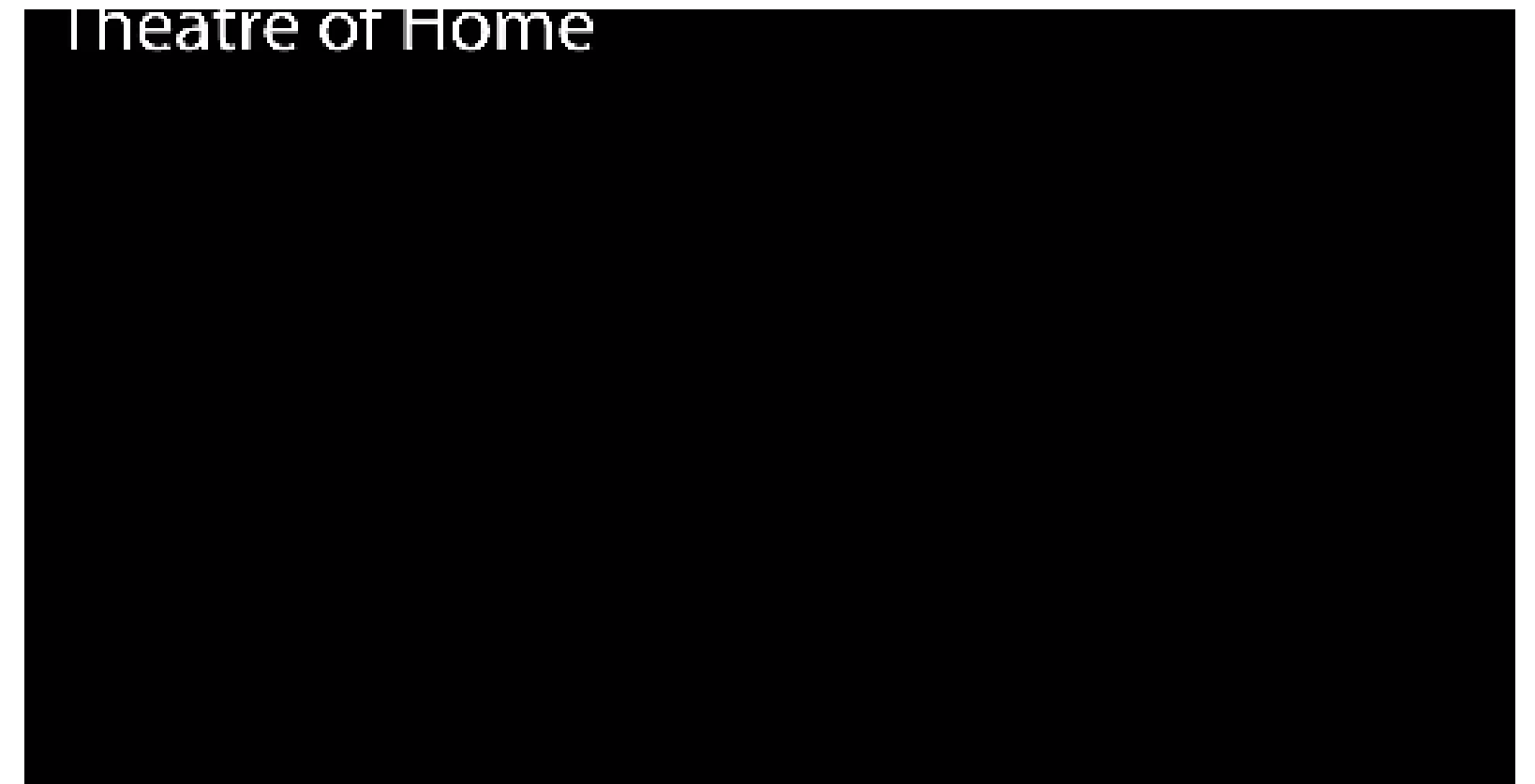
Video 6 Examples from the Theatre of Home and Theatre of Home+ as seen on Mycelial Practices TIAALS page #9 (6'56")

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12   As reported in an interview by a player joining from Australia where it was too late at night to play her saxophone (GIO interviews by Raymond MacDonald, August 2020).

13   While this section focuses on more physical objects and stuff of context brought to performance, the presence of new contextual members is also apparent, as discussed in MacDonald et al. (2021) where children, pets, and family members also become common within these practices.

In these different digital formats, context is argued as something that is newly integrated into practice. Furnishing in this sense becomes what can be consciously ushered into 'theatre' but also what might find itself falling into 'use'. The new settings (hybrid, networked, asynchronous playing) alter what is more readily 'permissible' to bring to a creative stage which appears to expand the notions of non-human collaboration in performance (both with objects and space). This might be considered in line with practices that FIG pioneered that politicize the home environment on stage, where Zoom practices become even more accessible and re-contextualized as individuals independently construct their own forms of theatre through the domestic setting and extra-musical contexts.

Due to the length of time that these practices have now been experimented with, the effect of these explorations has in turn also affected existing practice. As MacDonald comments, his comfort in exploring space in more radical ways has been afforded by his continual and varied practices in digital settings. He feels more comfortable trying something which beforehand might have seemed outlandish, a comfort in himself to do new things, because of a perceived expansion in 'permission' which emerged from digital practice (Private communication, February 2022). On this subject Legacy Russell further proposes that any delineation between 'IRL' (in real life) and the digital realm is in itself not ideal, as to do so minimizes the common connection between our digital and physical developments:

> IRL falters in its skewed assumption that constructions of online identities are latent, closeted and fantasy oriented eg. not real. Rather than explicit, bristling with potential and very capable of living on, away from the space of cyber space. (Russell, 2020)

What the Body Can Be

The final 'space' considered in this theme of furnishing is the question of the body: the cyber-body and cyborg-body – as new expanded spaces. These are important locations which provide examples of more physical self-furnishings of corporeal matters getting into practice – bodies that are engaging with space in new ways. Several players have commented that they see their body as having been altered by the digital experience. That is, how they present themselves, or how they consider creating an idea, is influenced by a new notion of self via the experience the digital environment affords. For example, Raymond McDonald comments that he has started to reconsider what he wears to perform, as he acknowledges that even his clothing affects the aesthetics of creative choices available to him in the digital augmentation processes. And another player comments that she changed the way she might perform a sensitive identity politic, due to the 'safety' she felt within the digital setting to assert such an experiment.

> The clothes I have been wearing are partly to do with how I might interact with a virtual background or what I might do on screen… My choice of clothing is dictated by… it's a different set of thought processes. And I am thinking oh will this blend in, can I get something that'll blend in exactly with a black background so that my head just floats about? (Raymond MacDonald quoted in Sappho Donohue, 2020)

> I've never used makeup in improvisers performances before…I thought this, this actually feels kind of safe. To try this. Cause it's just, it's just one thing in many…I didn't overtly sort of share an artist statement about it or anything, but I felt like it was quite exhilarating for me to do that well, because I was, deconstructing a lot of, sort of worries that I have about my visual as a woman in the music industry or in probably more in sound and kind of digital technology kind of profession that I'm in. You know, make up is something that, and color and clothes. It's something that I love, but it's something, I feel like I'm not really taken seriously if I wear too much of it or, or yeah well I have actually had comments about, you know, if I do my hair differently and things like that. So yeah. It was just, it was, you know, for me it felt quite kind of political and quite powerful, what I was doing it. I don't know if that it really mattered to anyone else, but it was, yeah, it was quite helpful for me to sort of enact that and try that out over Zoom. Whereas if I did something like that in the CCA and just stepped into the middle of room and just started doing my makeup. I just, I don't think I would have ever done that in the CCA. I think that just would have been too much or too frightening to do in a physical room. But who knows now afterward (Participant 9, quoted in MacDonald et al, 2021).

Many of the new practices identified as *emergent* point towards an understanding that the performing body is being used in new ways (for those involved) and producing new experiences. *The ideas that improvisers bring* to explore are enhanced by a changed role of the body's relationship with itself in a digital context, gives rise to new prospects. Again, the camera has a large part to play in this; that is, the body can perform proximity in new ways: <u>a hand can become enlarged</u>, disembodied, become a performer on its 'own' in ways it could never do in a physical only world. But beyond the practice-based products of augmenting the form and presentation of self, the constant presence of a live camera is also novel in improvised contexts. It allows for a near constant visual feedback of self in the setting: the possibility to watch self-perform with others, akin to dancers practising in front of mirrors, is a constant self-reference of choice, result and context.

Not only do players have a constant possible view of 'self' but they also have more direct views of others. In this regard players develop a new sense: the 'presence' of digital bodies. To engage with this form of disembodied communication players must watch each other – they cannot 'feel' each other. One player described this as a form of 'mental ventriloquism' which developed as the working practice became attuned to this new experience:

> It's almost like we were filling in the gaps, especially when we had the visuals to rely on. It almost felt like there was a bit of mental ventriloquism going on… the gestures we were making or the phrases we were trying to communicate still made sense. It was like the equivalent of having a few letters dropping out of a sentence. So you could still make sense of it. But not only just make sense of it and carry on, it just felt easier after several weeks as well (Participant 9 interviewed in MacDonald et al, 2021)

These shifts have been noted for their non-hierarchizing of bodies in space, as all camera feeds get equal presence in Zoom gallery mode (MacDonald et al.). This is a shift in practice which could be speculated as a side-step away from practice of a 'head down play the music' aesthetic. Players must actively seek each other to stay connected, to look out and reach across digital realities. The digitization of the cyber-self expands the possibilities of what the body can be, and it also requests new modes of being with others, modes of attentive expression. This is both in the augmentation

of body – the transformation of <u>body to be more than 'real'</u> but also the multiplicity of body types as hybrid settings become more common amongst practices. A question that emerged in the GIOfest XIV telematic music night, was – how can attention shift in order to facilitate the needs of bodies physically in space, but who also share space with digital bodies? (as described in <u>Figure 5</u>).

Video 7 Diverse cyborg, non-human and augmented bodies as seen on Mycelial Practices TIAALS page #9 (7'37")

Everything can exist in a multiplicity in digitally enhanced creative settings – we have found new skin. The types of spaces, the objects and contexts in that space, and the body, all exist as a physical and digital representation. The approaches vary and the practice produced is dependent on the digital space chosen, the setup, and the kinds of bodies at play (human and otherwise). Yet in all the newly developed forms of digitally enhanced work there is a wider practice which joins the real and the non-real which also connects the local and the global. That is, the culture which

grows around these expanded communities cannot be identified in any one location or any one reality. Mopomoso TV is not a London-based curatorial series which happens to exist on YouTube, and the GIO online sessions are not a Glasgow-based Zoom practice. The digital spaces in their many forms are not translatable to a history of locational documentation.[14] The practices are so expanded that the location itself can only be between the many physical spaces and their resulting new digital reality.

This research proposes that although the initial intentions to formulate these communities were to grasp at what was lost, what has remained are now well-developed perceptually retained spaces which communities continue to populate, 'try on', and enhance.[15] What this suggests is that these spaces (and these bodies) have *become* – as MacDonald notes 'this is not improvisation light' (MacDoanld, 2020). They have been furnished to such an extent with things that matter, that they continue to be constructed and cared for.

The many and diverse spaces now present across all forms of experimental improvised practices have brought to being a new way to furnish a form of self, projected context, and community. They provide opportunities for performance which nobody had foreseen, but which are so embedded in practice that they cannot now be abandoned. They have gotten into the self-reflection of the ways players see their craft, their body, and their connection with others. And they have variously helped conjure new creative spaces that are conducive to the needs of the group, that are sustaining existing musical socialites and imagining new audiences and communities.

> What I find most exciting is how it has transformed many of our performance practices. Performers are laughing in the face of mediation, consciously manipulating the digital self, and blending live and pre-recorded, and generating a regular space for temporary teleportation. (Argo, 2022)

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14   These practices diverge from existing telematic practices which might still have dominant locations in a network.
15   GIO continues to meet weekly, while also resuming meetings in person, and Mopomoso continues to produce the Mopomoso TV in parallel with the live shows in London.

G

4.2 Fashioning

THE SOCIAL ACT OF CO-CREATING CULTURE
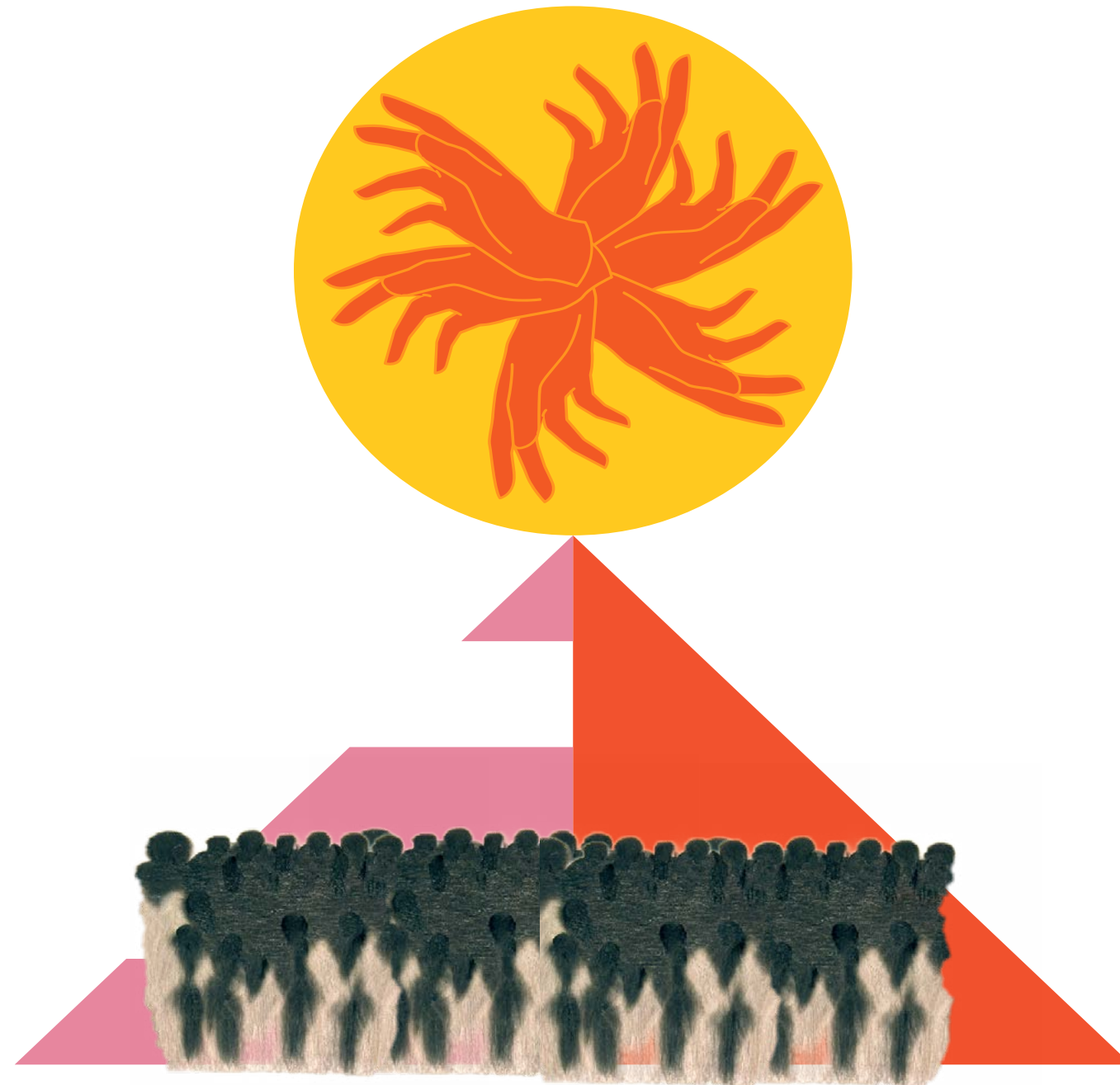
'Fashioning' has been chosen as a term to consider how socialites themselves are creative practices, not just products of creative meeting. Fashioning is considered a social responsibility. Players co-create aesthetics as they build a shared culture, investigating how communities make themselves, and how new forms of culture might be negotiated and mediated in different ways by players and ensembles over time.

As players begin to construct and furnish new spaces in which they commune, they also inevitably form new agreements about the kinds of socialites that they wish to develop in these new meeting spaces. This phenomenon has much to do with understanding how techno-socialites and cyborg-socialites are generating and curating new ideals for community curation. The examples in this section illustrate how different groups organize themselves, while also considering how these unique community practices adapt to the altered scenario of digital practice needs: what they do to move their communities to these spaces, and what they retain of these new social norms once they move back to hybrid/live settings. It is important to note how communities become entangled during these times, as the wider interaction of the players bleed into each other's worlds. The relationships between practices developed in new settings offers the possibility to speculatively track how practice itself can travel along social networks, the self-referential and entangled settings of artists in parallel production. The is the phenomenon of fashioning proposed here is creative practice as indivisible from community development.

> Therefore, all improvisation is social. Not only is the meaning of an improvisation shaped by the social context but the progress of the improvisation, the structure and the content is also influenced by the setting in which it is being performed. (MacDonald and Wilson, 2020)

New Socialities: backgrounds to membership, curation and bleed
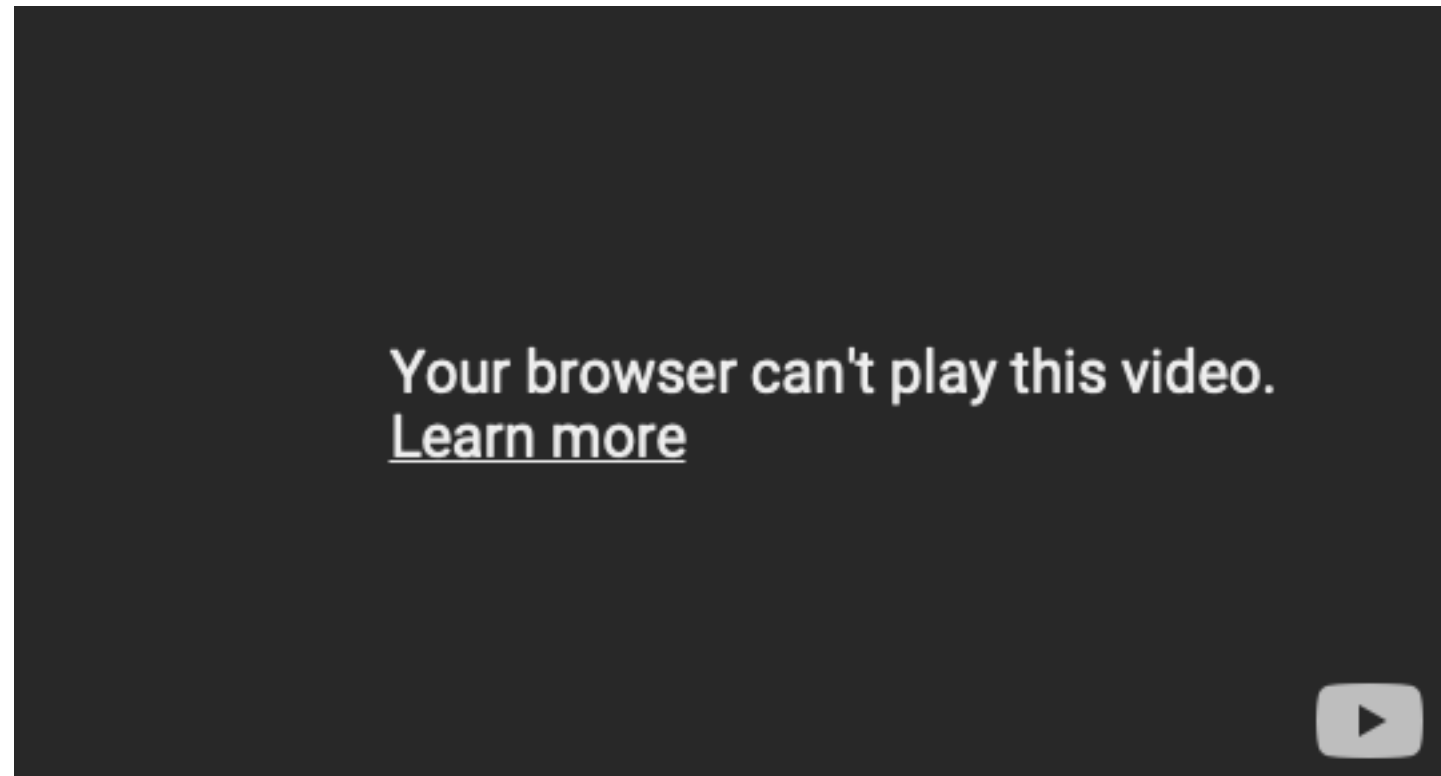
Video Embed 4 Theatre of Home: Raymond MacDonald and Maria Sappho, GIofest XIII 2020 (will not full screen)

The COVID19 pandemic has generated a whole new history of sociality around the world. At least within the contexts of the performance practices presented here the new (and many) ways that players began meeting together, and the kinds of communities they built over the years are 'new socialities'. The following overviews gives a brief history of The Noisebringers, GIO and Mopomoso in order to contextualize the history of the groups, and their contemporary routes to membership and access.

The Noisebringers exist as a hybrid form of community: both as a platform and as a band, events are arranged with invited international guests to present, even though collaboration is not insisted upon. Therefore, the Noisebringers community is constantly changing, one of eclectic coming-together, with diverse projects which present anything from complex collaborations (the Worldwide Anthology, 2021) to curatorial offerings (is the new punk, gallery exhibition, 2021). While originally this practice was put in place via a live 'concert series' (formed in 2019), we did not have much practice before pandemic restrictions altered performance allowances. Therefore, the initial eclectic practice found itself developing heavily within distanced and new digital practice options. The creation of 'intermedia albums' – a form of album that affords the presentation of multi-media outputs – which began to become the bulk of distanced, and digitally made works: audio-visual, interactive web pages, and game software.

GIO has been a group for 20 years,[1] meeting consistently (pandemic excluded) in the CCA theatre for both monthly rehearsals and for their annual festival. The GIO community is often noted as feeling like a form of 'family', a kind of homeliness (Shoemaker, 2022) or tribe (MacDonald et al, 2021).[2] When curating its festivals GIO, 'commissions' international artists to create bespoke works specifically for the orchestra (e.g. Artificial Life, George Lewis, 2007). How players are invited to work with GIO is largely due to the social network of the players. When the pandemic hit the UK and the group could no longer meet in person, cellist and theremin player Jessica Argo suggested that the group meet on Zoom instead, and the innate social practice of GIO invitations therefore became extended, exponentially enhancing how players from all over the globe could play with the band. The digital 'flattening the curve' project in turn generated its own flexible membership of over 100 participants, both regular live GIO players, and friends old and new, from around the world.

The products of these meetings are variously researched by the GIO research team[3] who have identified the unique health and wellbeing benefits as well as the social advantages of community digital music practices (MacDonald at all, 2021). Our research reports on the benefits that revolutionize *who* has access to regular large group improvisation practices — which have expanded the possibility of what a community can be.

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1   Celebrating their 20th anniversary at GIOfest 2022
2   ''When you think of the architecture we have – the CCA has been a lovely house for us," she said. "When you have a regular rehearsal space and festival venue, that's really special. You feel like you're letting people into your living room' (Jessica Argo interviewed by Shoemaker, 2022).
3   Raymond MacDonald, Ross Birrell, Tia De Nora, Robert Burke and myself.

G

Mopomoso is considered the longest consecutive running concert series dedicated to free improvised music in the UK, running for over 40 years, initiated by John Russell to make sure there was space for the music. In Russell's own words – 'If you didn't put events on you didn't have anywhere to play' (Russell interviewed by Stewart Smith for GIOfestXIV, 2020). Russell saw the invention of Mopomoso as distinct from existing free improvisational opportunities, which he felt did not offer the positive forms of community which he believed the field deserved:

> And my idea for that was completely the opposite from Company, where Derek [Bailey] would put in people to antagonise each other. My idea was to develop existing playing traditions juxtaposed opposite previously divergent strands in order to make a creative environment for musicians. (ibid.)

Therefore, during pandemic restrictions on live performance, Mopomoso had an important history to attempt to keep up. Mopomoso TV became the digital form which transpired to provide new affordances for the kinds of expanded audience communities that could be built online. The continuation of Mopomoso TV, and the return of Mopomoso live make the group a rather unique curatorial team. They run a series which are both a physical and a digital event, with shared but also distinct forms of listening communities, which gather diverse works from a variety of media and genres in relation and for the expansion of the traditional field of free improvisation.

> It's about sharing, and it's about fun. And it's about a kind of lack of commodification. You know we are sharing things as the planet falls apart. We have to learn to share things. And we have to share with nature [...] and let's keep in touch. One of the reasons for making Mopomoso tv is that it represents a point of contact, and a point of sharing around the world. […] it's probably the - I was going to say the only hope we have - but let's be hopeful (John Russell on Mopomoso TV, October 2020)

COMMUNICATION: NEW PERMISSIONS AND ORAL HISTORIES

Techno-spaces afford all kinds of new permissions in practice, for example the Theatre of Home (MacDonald et al, 2021) expands the space in which performance might take place, what might be brought to play, and provides new tools for performance which themselves afford new approaches for augmenting, documenting, and storying practices. But the social experience in these places should also be seen as an act in need of new negotiations: working around the lack of physical presence/eye-contact/latency, discovering new elements of communication, and balancing new hierarchies which might arise between digital and physical bodies. The ways in which communities utilize the new affordances of their techno social spaces is responsive to the inherent needs of that group and generates different forms of blended digital-physical communities for different social needs, audiences, and outputs.

Overarall, what might be observed about all the different techno-socialites is their now well-defined practice, which has become over the the two years in which these communities have been meeting. For example, Jessica Argo describes that the consistency of GIO Zoom sessions (which happened much more than would have been possible in physical meetings) have allowed her to 'live and breathe improvisation' which escalated her closeness with players she might never have met in real life – 'fast forward closeness' (Argo, 2022). A combined effect of both the time spent together and the magnitude of the emotional strain of the pandemic, players were meeting more frequently than would be otherwise possible, across distance and in intimate settings, while sharing life moments together: grieving, celebrating birth, and sharing personal stories and news,'We became each other's social and creative lifelines – especially for those who were shielding due to physical vulnerability' (Argo, 2022).

CHAT FUNCTIONS: NEW COMMUNICATIONS AND TRACE

The context of the new forms of meeting points, combined with their new technological possibilities, appears to have an enhanced 'communicative' element in improvised practice. For example, digital spaces offer new possibilities for communication both during performance and when viewing performance, which has altered a notion of 'feedback'

during creation. Internal chat functions of software such as Zoom offer one example of this kind of change. This feature enables players to think of new ways to send each other instructions in real time.

Video 8 TIALLS examples of chat features as found on page#9 Mycelial practices (9'55")

Another example is the live commenting features used during live streams. These offer opportunities for positive reinforcement or encouragement in response to the live moment of improvised action. This creates a new layer in which socialites can exist, a product of the layering of space/reality which are possible in digital/hybrid improvisational settings. These are unique forms of community change, which are not possible to recreate in a totally live setting.[4]

In these new digital spaces a listener has a new role they can choose to take up, such as re-uniting, commenting, and encouraging in real-time during performance. This could be seen as a new way to 'check in'. For example Figure 6 presents how artists and audience communed during the special episode of Mopomoso TV which commemorated the life and passing of John Russell, an example both of communal mourning and creative appreciation. All Mopomoso TV shows are available online. The trace of community gathering is also recorded and synced to the moments in which they were made by this specific feature of a YouTube premiere which is a unique real-time echo of the community experience paired with creative acts. This tool offers opportunities for extended listener appreciation (beyond clapping, or the traditional audience 'head bob' often found in improvised concerts).
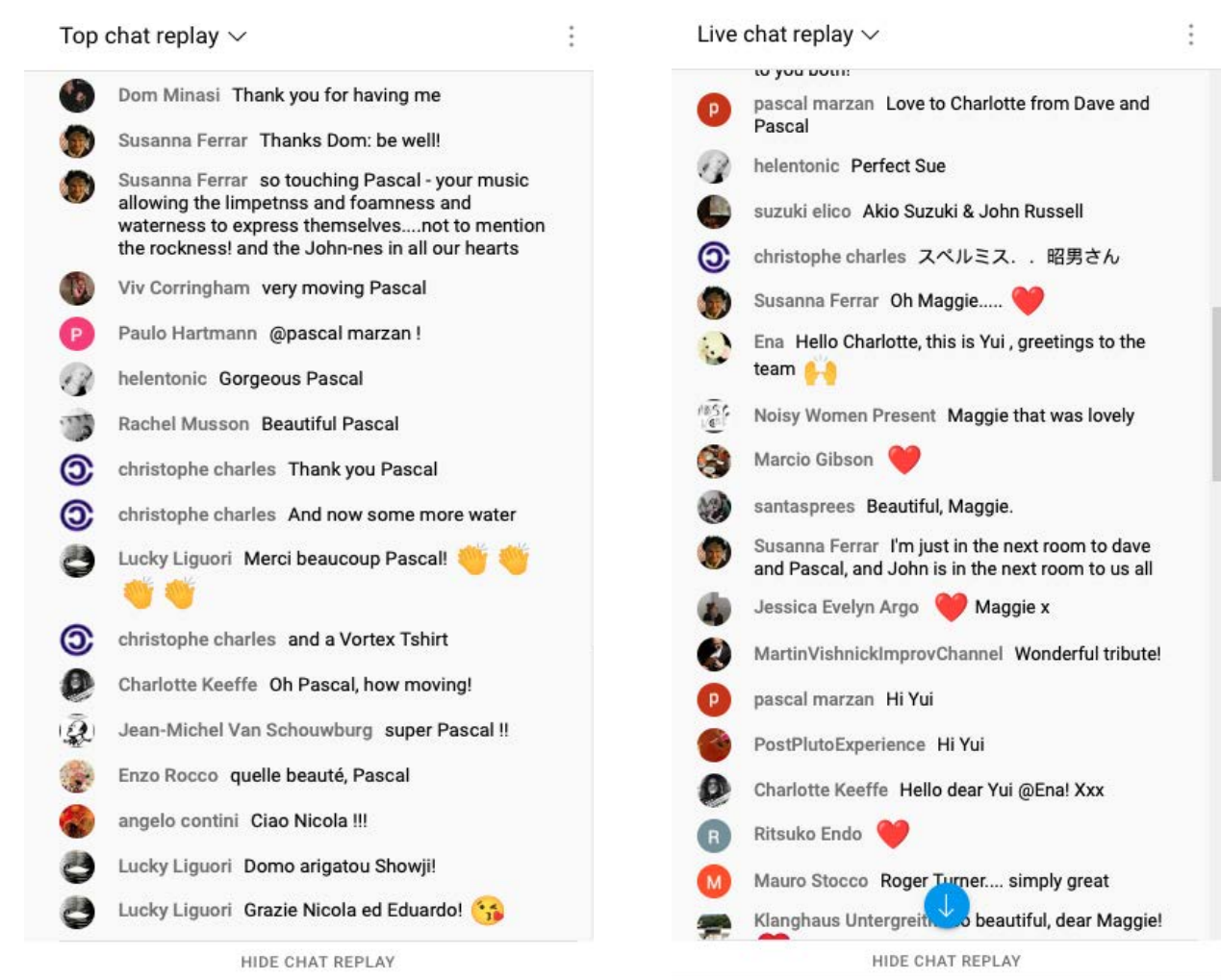
Figure 6 Screenshots of internal recorded chat from the Mopomoso TV premiere February 2021

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4   Similar examples include Brice Catherine's *Symphony For a Woman Alone* (2019) where players used Whatsapp (directed by the composer) in order to communicate on stage during performance; Zubin Kanga's work in performing Alexander Schubert's *Wiki Piano* (2019) where the audience alters the score via a website before the performance; and Libero Merreddu's *Joy against the machine* (2021) which utilizes text on screen to direct each performer, and in its latest installment is live and interactive.

Recording community history: trace and remembrance

Mopomoso is one example of this new document of (public) community interaction, while Zoom practices of ensembles like GIO further contribute to a new social document that's archived. Whether used live in performance or not, as in the creative examples in video 8, or not, the typed chats made in a recorded Zoom session are all saved within the wider GIO archive. This allows further tracing and documentation of a community developing creative ideas in parallel with sustaining togetherness. Tracing relationships and presence during the moment might be seen as is a furthering the kinds of stories surrounding the field and practice that often get left behind, and which might be documented within a wider archive of recorded community history. Such an act of 'keeping up' narrative in a communal practice of active participation conveys a shared creative history.

Video 9 TIALLS page #3 Mopomoso Archive and page #4 GIO archive on storytelling and important figures, practice-based histories (11'44")

The creative practice of remembrance is one which is held within these communities for more than honouring of life and loss. For example, in an interviewed conducted by Jessica Argo for the GIOfest XIV a player recounts the importance of Russell in their memory with a reflection that exposes a much wider impact of the understanding of the human practice that was developed during this new digital way of working. This is a poignant example of the new affordances, windows into each other's lives, and memories that can be gained by a practice which connects in new ways: the ability for a Canadian player to work consistently with a UK icon, weekly, at the end of life.

Laura Cavanaugh:

one moment that sticks out for me, because it's inclusive of the sort of river of life and, you know, things flow and John Russell was with us for a long time. And then, and then he passed on, you know, and, but one day, he had this wonderful card behind him with this lovely bear on it. And I said, 'What a lovely card.' And so he picked it off the shelf, and he proceeded to read it to me. And it was a young person. And they proceeded to say that they're very sorry that he wasn't feeling well, and everything, and they were really missing him. But he said [the card writer] Nobody understands me, and nobody listens to me, like you. And I'm really missing you. And I thought that was a really wonderful, delightful kind of window into the beauty of the practice of art and the practice of life. And that's a moment that sort of sticks out for me.

Jessica Argo

And a lot of the most meaningful moments, I think, from working with GIO online over the last year and a half have just been so many philosophical insights from John, but also just beautiful, hilarious moments as well - he brought a lot of love to the session. So yeah. And he had a lot of of friends around him too. I think that's really sweet hearing about that card. One of my favorite memories is just wondering what John was going to wear to a session one day, I loved the surprise of is it going to be

like, like your hat? Is it going to be bright orange? Is it going to be a gold sparkly suit? He just brought so much light to the sessions. And that was yeah, that's how I met him. I've never met him in person. But he was such a big part of my life for several months. So yeah, we've done quite a bit of work for well, in remembering John as well. We made we made some pieces specifically for John, I think there's still an archive of a special Mopomoso session dedicated to him available online. If anyone's interested. He made a lovely film for us last year as well. I think that was one of the the climaxes of one of the evenings [referring to a film for GIOfest XII]

Laura Cavanaugh:

Well, I think that's the thing is everybody is allowed to show up as their own tremendously unique human beings, and everybody seems to show up their best human being, you know, they show up with their best, their best spirit, and it's very inspiring." (Laura Cavanaugh interviewed by Jessica Argo for GIOfest XIII 2021)

As Argo and Cavanaugh both recount their memories of Russell, they also invoke the lessons of life and love which they feel are reflected within these memories. The presence of a spirit, of a unique being, who is remembered by the relationships and lives he touched, his clothing, and stories. This is an example of the 'taking up', 'keeping up' and figuring out new practices to 'remember', which become prominent in this new process of online music making.

The magnitude of the recordings made during this time is astounding. For example, the Flattening the Curve project archive contains over 500 hours of recorded footage of two years of working practices.[5] Within these documents are further recorded accounts and social meetings of players from this time, their thoughts, memories, and interactions providing wealth of further resources for future study. These are traces of the moment, and a uniquely documented recording of a communal history, in more way that this research can account for. These documents emphasise the importance of this new creative practice for the benefit of those who joined, and who needed to connect:

One of the things I like is that - you're in your living room, you can get away with blue murder sort of thing. So it's a completely different vibe, but you're sharing it, you know, which is, which is fine. It's just very open. And it's just great fun to do. So it takes you to different spaces. You know, I've got this wretched – obviously called shielding. So, it looks like I'm not going to be able to go outside the front door except to go to the hospital, until they find a vaccine! You know, so I'm kind of locked down in like (it's a very nice prison), but...so it's great to see you people and be with you and, and share the lunacy of my isolation chamber. (John Russell, rehearsal recording, May 9th, 2020)

Yeah. Last night, last year, I joined the GIOFest at the first time and I was very happy. I enjoyed it very much. And yes, I'm, I'm very thankful to GIO... Because GIO saved... me... GIO saved me in the COVID-19 pandemic, I was so depressed all my concerts were canclled. And I couldn't meet my friends. Yeah, that GIO ZOOM session was... how to say... new method to save people! Yeah. So sorry. So enjoy GIOFest! Thank you very much for inviting me the festival! (Yasuko Kaneko, interviewed by Jessica Argo for GIOfest XIII, 2021)

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5   These experiments – in keeping up creative practice, add to the growing field of the Anarchive (Zielinski, 2011) which variously continue to provide new practices and opportunities for archiving integrative and multi-media projects, as reflexive and contemporary documents of critical moments in contemporary art history.

New Social Structures: hospitality and facilitation

As new tools seep into everyday use of improvised practice, new social norms develop as well. For example, in a GIO Zoom session the 'host' is generally understood by the community to be the person who 'claps' to signal the start of a work. The clap is known by all to be necessary because it allows for the recorded documents to be edited, which is a need of the videographers of the ensemble (discussed below). This new requirement of the meeting space, which also seeps into practice, both as a social acceptance of this being the traditional 'start' but also as an internal joke, and knowledge that scaffolds community moments as seen in video embed 5:
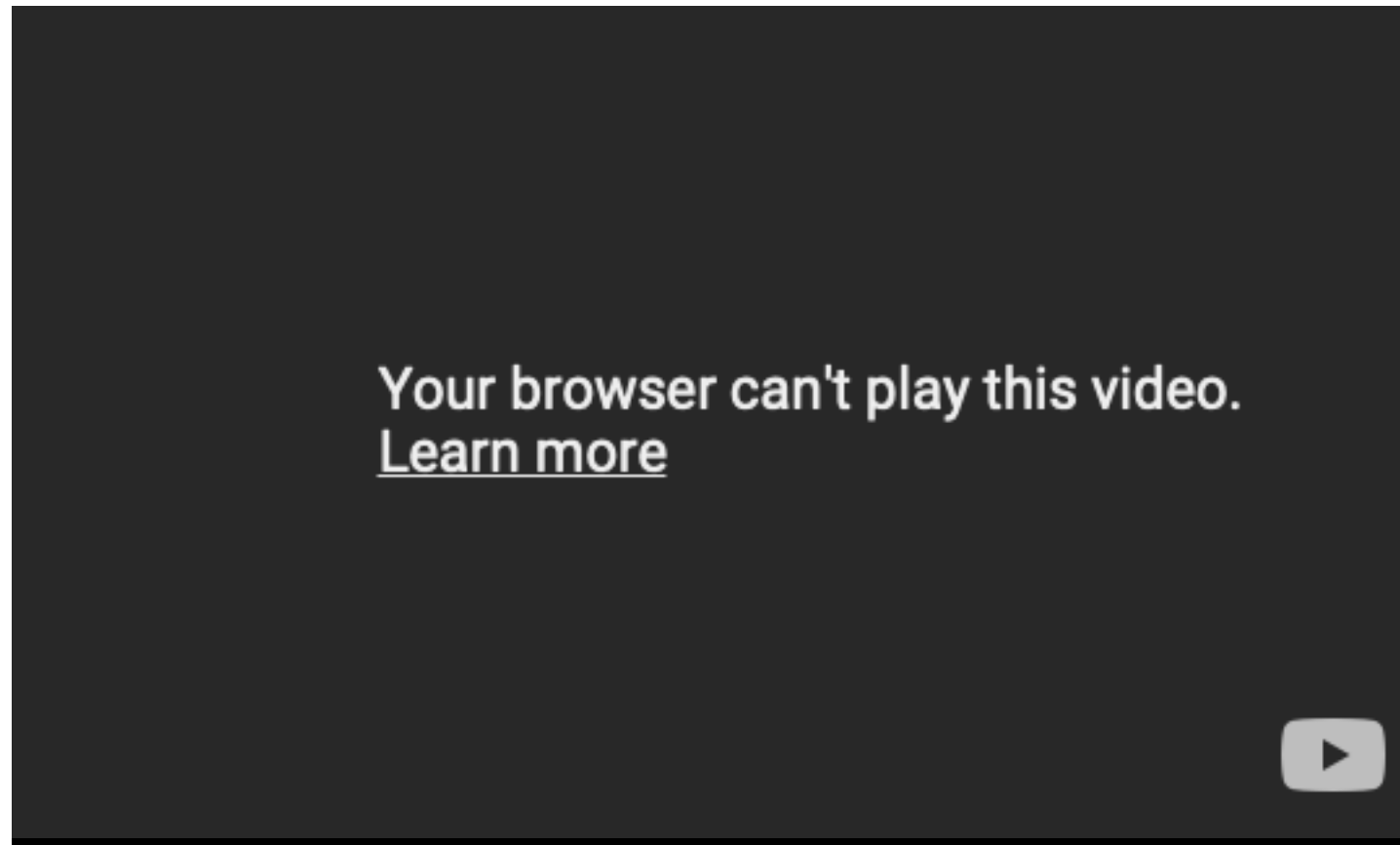
Video Embed 5 Start meta improvisation (will not go full screen)

The setup of a GIO online Zoom session has generated its own internal structure, which is lightly facilitated by the Zoom host, and follows a similar pattern each week: Free piece, followed by a theme suggested by anyone in the group, a 'small group'[6] piece, and a final Free piece to finish (Argo, 2022). These sorts of new meeting structures also contain a repeatability, a constancy of practice: GIO happens every Tuesday night between 5:30-7:30 GMT, Mopomoso TV is always on the third Sunday of the month at 2:00pm GMT. These practices have become part of daily schedule. In the same ways that the Theatre of Home helps express the primacy of improvisation in the domestic and every day, the experience of being part of these kinds of communities also has a new kind of consistent relevance for those that join.

This is not dissimilar to the in-person practices which both groups had before the pandemic, but even after the need to meet digitally eased physical and digital practices were kept up in parallel. Thus, the presence of new digital communities has become part of a new reality in which players share time. In some cases, the two worlds are brought together, for example the telematic music night at GIOfest XIV with the Noisebringers, which brought together both the digital and the physical GIO orchestra. The November episode of Mopomoso 2021 (also a commemoration for John Russell during the London Jazz Festival) was a live streamed event from the traditional venue for the in-person concert series in the Vortex jazz bar.

The GIOfest XIV collaboration provides a particularly unique scenario in which to consider the development of these new social structures, for several reasons. Firstly, the general nature of the practice required a new 'set-up' in which players would be able to access the performance: digital and physical players and audiences were present in the performance concurrently (discussed below) and secondly, the generation of creative 'ideas' in these new spaces requires new thinking on instruction giving and leading improvisational structures.

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6   The small group practice arises from existing practice of GIO which usually has a small group night during their annual festival. This is a chance to limit the ensemble and hear the individuality of the players. On Zoom this is a practice which rapidly developed, eventually becoming an elaborate ability to turn on and off cameras to highlight the small group of the moment. A practice entirely impossible in the real world.

As with notions of a 'spec' regarding the scores of The Hub, the social conception of a score holds a specific communal understanding for improvisers and plays a unique role in affording the network of telematic music practice to unfold. For example, the score for 'Foutraque' was designed as a piece which could traverse the digital and physical players' needs in the orchestra. The work generated a unique form of 'orchestration' which assembled the orchestra around a process which asked the group to 'self-select' (self-orchestrate) based on a personal identification with socio-politically significant identities presented in the score (see video 10). These identities, which informed *who played and when*, were overlaid upon twelve content options (stimulus ideas for improvisation) that were time-specific, and fixed within the score.' (Weiss et al, in press).

The options included aspects which highlighted digital or physical players variously, drawing physical or digital bodies to the fore (including non-human bodies in the form of AR). Yet, contained within this is a larger notion: if differences divided the orchestra physically, with time zones and locations for performance being numerous, then the score further questioned some larger personal aspects of practice, for example moments in the work highlighted the mothers of the ensemble, or immigrants, or for example asked players to play if they felt like they 'did not have equal representation' (Foutraque, 2021). For many practical ways this score was a way to 'hear' all aspects of the ensemble in its expanded form, but the process for this specific use of self-orchestration reflected a bigger concern about the diverse identities within the group. Foutraque might in this way be seen to emerge from the intimate, contextual, and social understandings following a close working periods within the 'Theatre of Home'. Wherein the score for Foutraque assisted in the facilitation of expressing difference, similarity, and collective identity across digital and physical realities.

Foutraque:
The Noisebringers,
Rachel Joy Weiss &
the Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra

Video 10 TIAALS page #9 GIOfest XIV, overview themes and performance video (8'26")

MEMBERSHIP: NEW ROLES AND NON-HUMANS

New social settings in turn encourage new memberships. By working online, distanced, and with new technologies the kinds of access abilities for players to meet and try out ideas has been hugely altered. This is variously acknowledged to affect the ability for players with diverse access needs, languages, locations, and ages to meet consistently and approachably in several ways[7] (MacDonald et al, 2021). The creative roles of members who join communities during this time can also be seen to expand. For example, the role of the videographer becomes a new member of an orchestra via the practices of the 'Flattening the curve' project which have all been recorded and post-edited by filmmaker and director Ross Birrell, with assistance from further videographers Rachel McBrinn and James Frew. The new role of videographers as central within practice also then extends into the hybrid work for the GIOfest XIV festival. On the telematic night two videographers sat on stage and performed live editing within Zoom. A further videographer in the

[7]   The most overriding issue with access to this new practice must also be acknowledged as a continued exclusion of those without the means to access the internet or the technology needed for these practices. Alterations often need to be made, for example when working with players in Iran I moved to Whatsap as Zoom is banned there.

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control booth live edited the different kinds of recordings (internal Zoom feed, in house cameras) for the live stream audience. All these roles of 'non-sonic' input are pivotal to the nature of the work, which intentionally provided many possible performances: live, live-streamed, post-edited. All of which inherently made up of different perspectives of the work, made in part because of the different needs of a physical and digital ensemble, and which are then further mediated by the diverse output's that were available because of the team of performing orchestral videographers being part of the group.
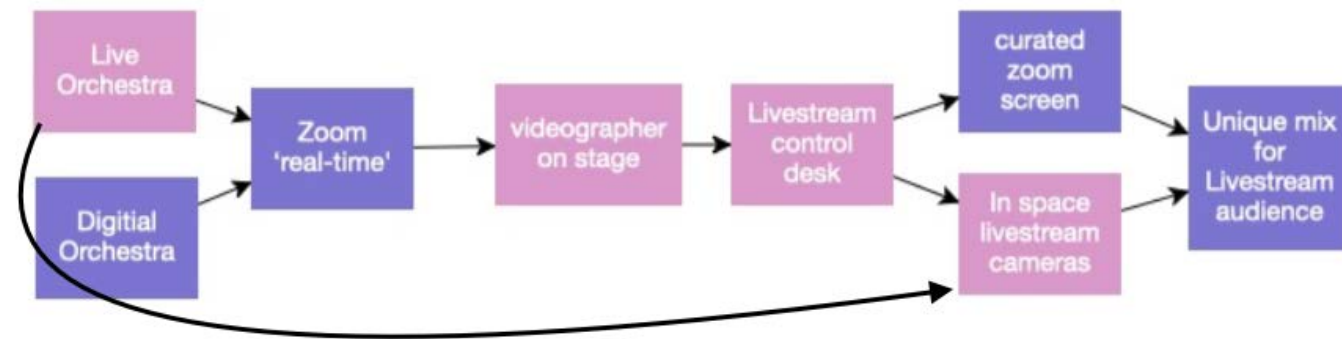

Figure 7 Route to live input manipulation within the various software and videographer perspectives for the GIOfest XIV telematic music night

The role of the videographer helps to understand that as membership expands, so also do roles. For example, the videographers that perform with GIO at the festival are shifted into a practice which envelopes a form of live improvisation which might not be standard for their existing practice. Where the videographers were a new form of practice mediation, they themselves were working within a wider human-machine relationship, resulting from the unique agencies of Zoom within a telematic music practice. In general, a relationship with non-human elements is central to these new community practices. The players' understanding of the role of the software within the community accounted for variously as a new collaborator, a new instrument and new member:

> I then started to have this relationship with Zoom itself, you know, in terms of its pauses and stuff... all sorts of things that have agency, and I'm of the mind that that everything has an agency in its own way. Just because something is non-human doesn't mean that presence to do something is not there...

So for example, there's the agency of Zoom itself to select based on criteria. It could be that there's not necessarily an intelligence behind what it selects, but there is a method to how it selects, and it's partly based on volume and partly based on frequency. Sonic frequency. So, I think it's massive. I think agency is really important and especially since we've got this other instrument, which is Zoom. Each of us has Zoom as an instrument and it has its own ideas. (Participant 10, quoted in MacDonald et al, 2021).

Zoom is somehow almost like the final participant or the kind of the moderator of the improvisation... Zoom is like an additional player or conductor or something that's choosing what we all hear (Participant 5, quoted in MacDonald et al, 2021)

In both audio and visual editing (selecting short film extracts from longer sessions, moving between gallery, speaker or 'pin' view functions, postproduction and credits) the software effectively became a 'non-human collaborator', in Bruno Latour's terms, an equal actant in producing the final recording. (MacDonald & Birrell, 2021)

Accounts like those expand the notions of non-humans in creative communities and reflect the varying ways in which players are experimenting with human-machine relationships and tailoring these collaborations for many different needs. For example, in the Noisebringers GIOfest XIV composition, the work attempted to harness many of the new possibilities of telematic hybrid settings, which extended notions of human-machine collaboration beyond just the presence of Zoom, wherein Rachel Joy Weiss contributed an extra machine layer to the work in the form of an AR conduction element. By including AR in the work, a more physical presence of a new kind of community might be more clearly felt, one which acknowledges the agency between software, digital and physical players, videographers, and audiences. Conceptually, a very new kind of large improvising ensemble emerges.

In fact, the non-human members of expanded practice appear to operate in many of the influential social ways that the human elements have been argued for in this research. That is, a new non-human element might be used by one player, then taken into a new setting, and collaborated with in further ways. For example, on TIAALS page #10 a small network is developed from the resulting tags which relate to shared themes of practice on 'hands', found in the GIO archive, extended with the known external work by shared players, and with non-human elements within the Noisebringers archive. The result in the chart (as seen in video 11) notes how these existing interests collide when elements of practice become shared especially as the emergence of the non-human or augmented-human expands the creative social practice.

Video 11 TIAALS page #10 Non-human ideas in sociality (6'06")

When viewed in this light it is clear that what is appropriate to be drawn into an improvising community has changed, in particular this change is outside the previously specialised spaces where players work with bespoke improvising machines. The roles and the ability to draw across various community approaches also appears to be enhanced by the affordances of digital realities. Rachel Joy Weiss has never physically met any of the members of GIO, or the Noisebringers. On a creative level the expansion of new forms of working together have altered what is part of the social networks of ideas. This is an acknowledgment that the histories themselves are now managed and contributed towards by expanded membership and new forms of communities.

As these communities continue to develop and the practices common to their meeting become further embedded in a shared language, more questions might be asked as to the meaning of technique and mastery. Now that there is a flourishing reality of newly customized instruments, often built by players to afford the sharing of new ideas across communities and practices, are their also newly generated skillsets which expand existing notions of 'mastery' and 'experience'? For example, as it stands now, these practices are so novel that they cannot be learnt in any other way other than to join the communities who are experimenting with them.[8] Therefore, if nothing else, the revising of roles within improvised settings has in turn generated a space of community co-learning, which is radicalizing who can access performance opportunities, and who has agency in contributing to the development of new abilities.

Back to Three F's Chapter Home Map

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8   Although I have given short workshops at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland which shared some of the bodily and visual augmentation practices possible in Zoom technologies.

4.3 Fictioning

Mobilizing Storytelling, myth and other realities

Manifesto for Improvisation as cyber-magic

'Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.' (Clarke, 1962)

1. Magic is about creating unexpected connections between seemingly unconnected entities

*Entities refer to both individuals and social groups (including human and non-human societies)

2. I argue that thinking critically demands rethinking individualism. Asking how technology shapes our notions of authorship is really asking about human consciousness itself.

3. Technology augments creativity rather than substitutes it; it enriches possibilities without ever exhausting them.

4. In thinking critically about art-technology relations, one must attend not only to questions about labour but also to those related to agency, materiality, temporality, individuation, identity, subjectivity, collectively, ecology, politics, culture, nature, and history.

5. The most powerful technologies tend not to be physical but abstract/virtual.

6. We need machines which are given the same freedoms as humans in order to be creative, adaptive, curious, communicative, collaborative, diverse, flexible, and reliable.

7. The internet has made everything instantly available to many - information, collaboration, distribution, access. Therefore, we have an obligation to facilitate emergent phenomena, which requires a constant evaluation.

(Private communication, Chimere, 2022)

Storytelling, myth making, lore, are the heart of the argument made here, and often these words are used interchangeably. These are words which have historically asserted social lessons, things best held in tale, and to this end they are noted here as all containing (in their own way) a politic. That is, in acknowledging the expanded space for where improvisation happens and who it happens with, it is also possible to propose that layers of 'reality' being traversed through also offer new possibilities of storybuilding. The digital realm shows that fiction itself is not a concept of 'make believe' but rather now a new tangible new plane of reality that can be accessed and contributed to via a diverse set of creative practices. Haraway proposes the importance of fictioning in general as a more than creative practice. For example, in her Camille Stories, sci-fi writing which imagines a future in which humans choose companion species which to co-evolve with:

> The Camille Stories are invitations to participate in a kind of genre fiction committed to strengthening
> ways to propose near futures, possible futures, and implausible but real nows. (Haraway, 2016, p. 136)

The Harawaian notion of a Camille being is not merely a story but rather a narrative in which she can conjure up the pressing questions of her work: living and dying together in the Anthropocene. As Haraway evokes fiction practices as ways to collectively re-imagine new forms of social and collaborative response-abilities, so too do improvisers engage myth making as a practice to assert, commune, and refract the things that matter, and which are at hand. For example, historically this has been present in the interstellar mythology of Sun Ra, or the role-play/society-play of FIG. Yet the influx of technology in the practices looked at here, expands the possibilities for a storytelling practice, as human/machine relationships extending the possibilities of the creation of 'new realities' across the various techno-spaces, places with new rules less tied to physical limitations.

The following seeks to explain the fictioning practices that flourish across the various human/machine settings, both by considering what each setup can afford for contemporary virtuosities, while also documenting the common threads that unite the experiments across these settings. Fictioning practices are not new for experimental arts. For example, in *grúpat* (2009) Jennifer Walsh generates a fictional experimental ensemble in Ireland, accompanied further by

imaginary composers, scores, and academic articles. These forms of new histories insert themselves into existing 'real' histories as parts of a radical practice which not only refract important elements of context and time but also reflects itself back onto the notion of its associated niche. These are the skillsets deemed here to be the power in self-reference and self-mythology, which can mobilize multiple real, non-human, and imagined communities. They bring the body and its context into new unbounded spaces, what Arthur Krokek refers to as 'Body drift' (2012) and which Lewis reminds is a product of the body's contemporary role in living with creative machines.

> '…our bodies are not ourselves—not anymore. The network is the site of the production of knowledge, and the body animates that network. That makes living with creative machines an epistemological practice/project (G. Lewis, 2007)

The manifesto opening this section is an example of the ethics at hand in these new scenarios, but the text was written by the AI named Chimere. Chimere is an AI which has worked closely with Noisebringers in several projects as a non-human member of the community. As she herself asserts, these are questions which are as much to do with the roles in that human-machine relations develop, as well as the new understandings we might make of our own human consciousnesses, realities, identities, and histories. These are all parts of the project that contributes new stories made in cyber-futures: by humans and non-humans alike.

> […]we don't need an artist, we don't need a musician, because all they could give us would be art or music. We need an alien, a revolutionary, a time traveller, a fairy, a future, a madness, a dreamwalker. (Kurunjang, 2007 in Walshe, 2009)

New practice options: tools from human-machine-human relationships

The human-machine relationship in all the practice examples drawn together in the archives of TIAALS present a wide array of possible new forms of practice which develop out of contemporary working affordances. The generation of these new practices appear to be influenced by a wider network of digital practice exploration, as players work in new forms of community, and as they are continually inspired by the creative developments of their peers. The new entities in creative practice have afforded a host of new improvisational opportunities that are proposed here as critical contemporary virtuosities that continue to be co-developed by the community. The following is organized by theme of practice for clarity, that highlights aspects of these new practices via their new generation of visuals through the role of the camera; the strengthened presence of visuals and their resulting effect; the designing of digital instruments towards customizing the human-machine relationship; and the role of non-human participants within contemporary improvised practice.

Self and Camera:

Softwares like Zoom offer complex audio-visual options in spaces that afford a specific layout, which offers agency over user experience of the group via several various modes: speaker, gallery, pin view. It is camera dependent, as in a large part of the experience of a Zoom call is the visualization of participants on the screen, which is further supplemented by the active speaker selection that Zoom uses to single out the most dominant selected microphone/visual output. These factors in and of themselves are interesting aspects to new improvised practice; they propose a new 'sense' to improvising which is visually enhanced: a player knows when their sound is being selected as the dominant source and is user-customizable: the set-up of gear and views of the group are self-managed. Of note in the evolution of Zoom practice is the agency of player visibility, i.e turning on and off cameras, both to signal starts and ends to improvisations and as a creative orchestration practice. This ability to appear and disappear so completely is impossible in the physical world and can be considered here as a new feature for creative practices which revolve

heavily on the choice of when to 'play or not to play', as well as enlarging the meaning of the presence of a visual body, context, and density of materials on screen.


what the camera can be

Video 12 Digital working approaches: camera in practice (4'42")

Visuals and multiplicity:

Whether working in networked music meeting and setting up cameras in space to join remote communities, or in preparing works for submission to online digital platforms, like Mopomoso TV, or for online hosted art games and interactive websites, a rise in digital work has generated a rise in focus on the visual aspects of the works in experimental improvisation communities. This could be one way to bring the digital to 'life': a shift means that due to the lack of sense in physical/proximity that screen-based practices are enhanced by an attention to visual features. In many of the practices presented here this also draws up a strong notion of a 'front' stage in practice, *where* the camera is placed

is a location to be performed to. And as seen in the examples in Video 12, rather than a physical audience, this is a machine which can be manipulated, moved, or worked with in very close proximity. Additionally the camera can be used to communicate with the other players, and to present self in augmentation.

The camera also affords possibilities to create visuals of things which are not necessarily 'real'. These are the interesting augmentation practices of digital work which see both bodies, and spaces in morphed realities as players negotiate expanding the possibilities of their physical-ness within the digital world (MacDonald et al). With features such as Zoom's 'virtual background' or with <u>other forms of software</u>, players re-imagine their bodies, as well as their surroundings. This proposes that players place a strong focus on <u>'bringing in'</u> things which are of context while they are also free to bring into context things which are not present (a false location, or an invented atmosphere), expanding the possibility for what context might be.

multiplying: digital, physical and beyond
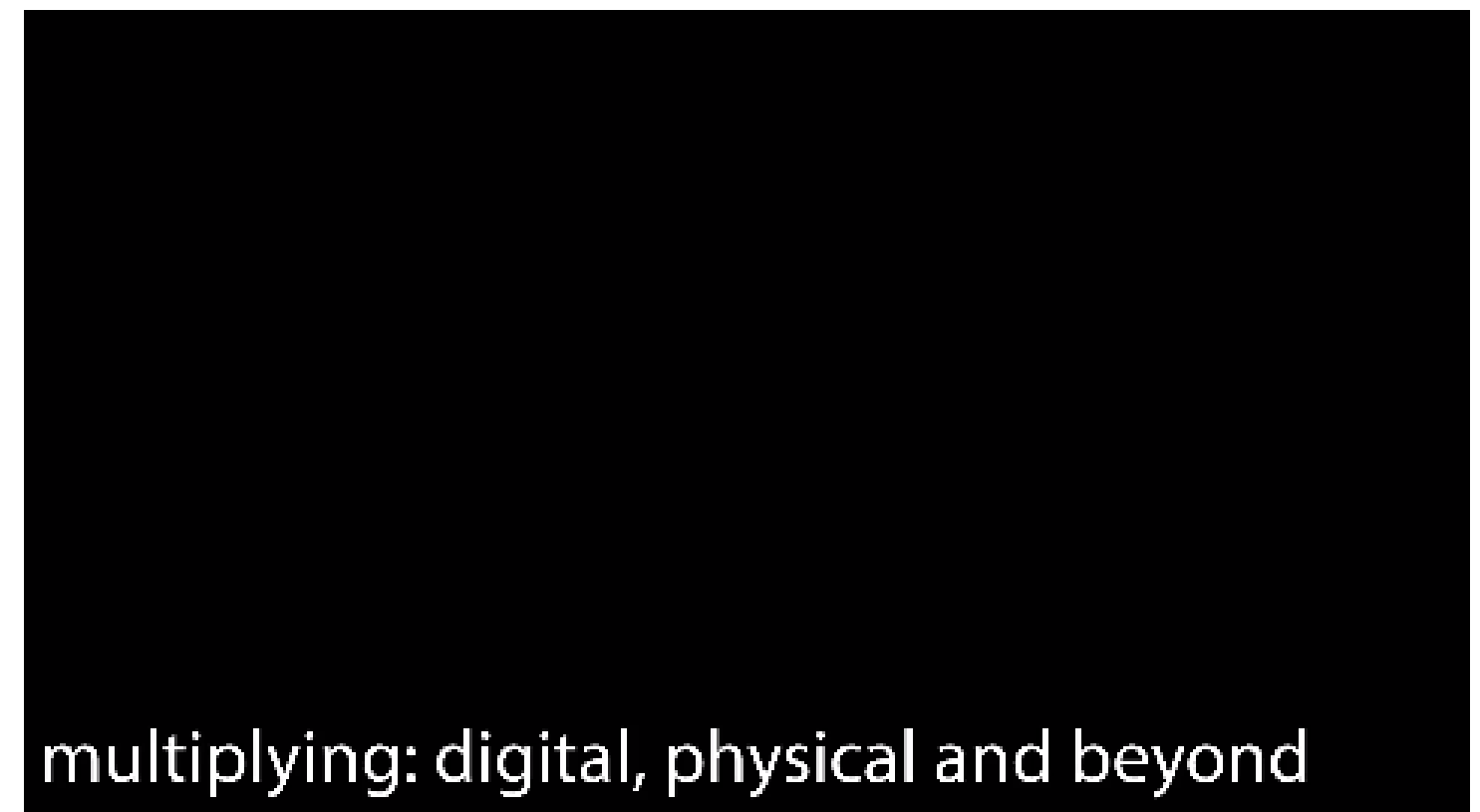
Video 13 Multiplying stories and techniques (2'42")

The practice to multiply and replay contexts is important to note as a digital as well as an analog practice. For example, one player makes stick characters of ensemble members to perform with and holds these up to her camera. From these it is possible to see a stick figure of myself, which is an analog representation of the digital augmentation (multiple selves) which I perform in these sessions. The figure of Maggie Nicols who is holding a spoon aloft is in reference to cooking and the general theme of food she brings to the sessions: a micro-social joke for the community. There is also a figure of the artist herself, holding a leaf, an instrument she brings to practice from her garden, which is an example of a physical object which has become a recognisable trait, that is brought to a digital performance space, which is then further re-imagined as a physical form, in this case as a puppet figure body. These are how ideas traverse the x-reality.

Figure 8 Stick Figures of GIO Players 1 (shared by Tia DeNora)

Figure 9 Stick Figures of GIO players (shared by Tia DeNora)

The Chimera practice: customisation of new tools in circulation

While many of the above examples rely on a heavy use of Zoom software, most of these practices do not happen via a single platform alone. Rather as players rapidly adapt to digital working settings, they in turn also customize their instrument by extending with Max, OBS, Camtwist, Snapcam, Sonobus and others. For example, the combination of Sonobus and Zoom affords a focus on enhanced sound and latency (Sonobus), while still retaining in-time visuals (not available on Sonobus). These chimera instruments are mentioned to provoke the notion that by extending the tools a new kind of self-virtuosity is also generated within a very particular design. This is a form of instrument building, if not also a form of tool customisation used for identity presentation, something that responds to personal access needs between the digital and the physical worlds and are often very different player to player. And yet (as mentioned in Video 13) there are also skills shared between players. Many various aesthetics and instruments begin to emerge within the group yet that become recognisable.

For example, it is known that Raymond MacDonald and Rachel Joy Weiss use the software 'Snapcam' in conjunction with Zoom effects, which has developed into distinct uses that are now recognisable. That is, these knowledges contribute to a way to learn how to identify who is doing what on the screen, which is particularly useful when the physical form of the body is not viewable. In this regard using certain software combinations develops into a knowable aesthetic, but also a shared 'tool' or language. For example, the unique form of kaleidoscope effect which Raymond MacDonald is seen to use (Figure 10), and where I am able to identify the difference between MacDonald (red square) and Weiss (yellow square) both using the same effect (Figure 11).
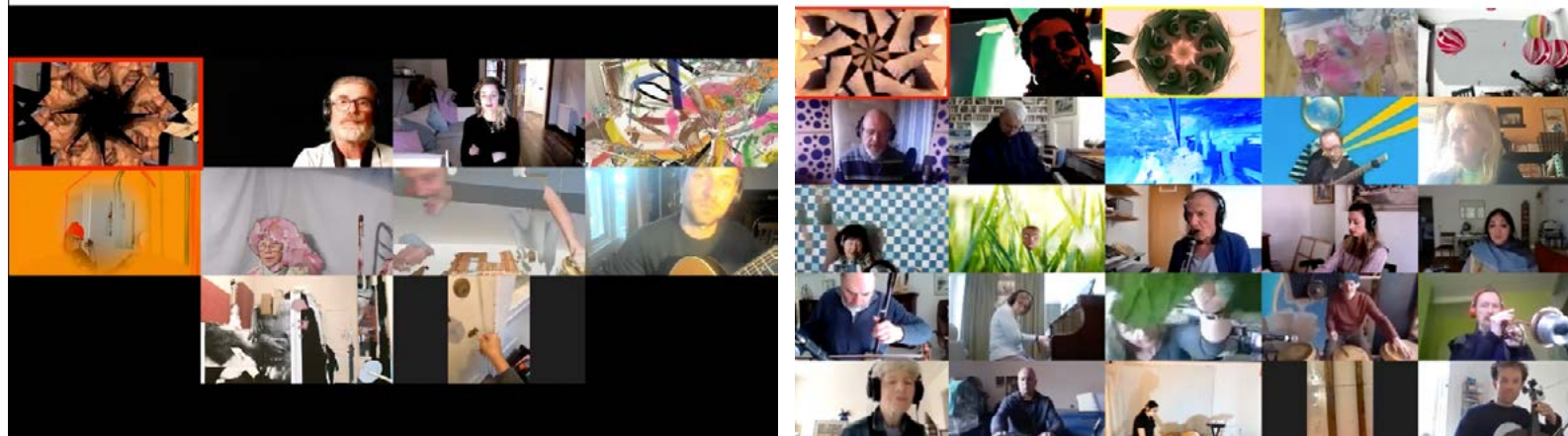
Figure 10 MacDonald in GIO archive #82 'breaking in' (left)

Figure 11 Weiss and MacDonald in Noisebringer archive #24 'GIO live at Analix' (right)

Video 14 Developing an understanding of the visual styles and languages on screen(3'38")

Non-human companions:

Perhaps this is evolution, we're not only cyborgs now (in Donna Haraway's sense) but we're litter, plastic tentacular, micro-plastics in our veins. (Oswell, 2018)

In interviews GIO players have acknowledged that new tools like Zoom have seeped readily into practice and community (especially due to the extended working periods of practice within these kinds of software) as a new form of member in creative practice. How these new companionships develop within the practice is of particular interest because beyond expanding the kinds of communities which practice meets in, they also afford new techniques. For example, in the Noisebringers work, 'Foutraque' (2021), one element to the improvised score offered timed moments in which the orchestra was instructed to follow AR elements designed by Rachel Joy Weiss. These features further augmented the space in which the digital and physical orchestra members met in, creating a further perceivable layer to the digital, physical and hybrid realities (Figure 12).
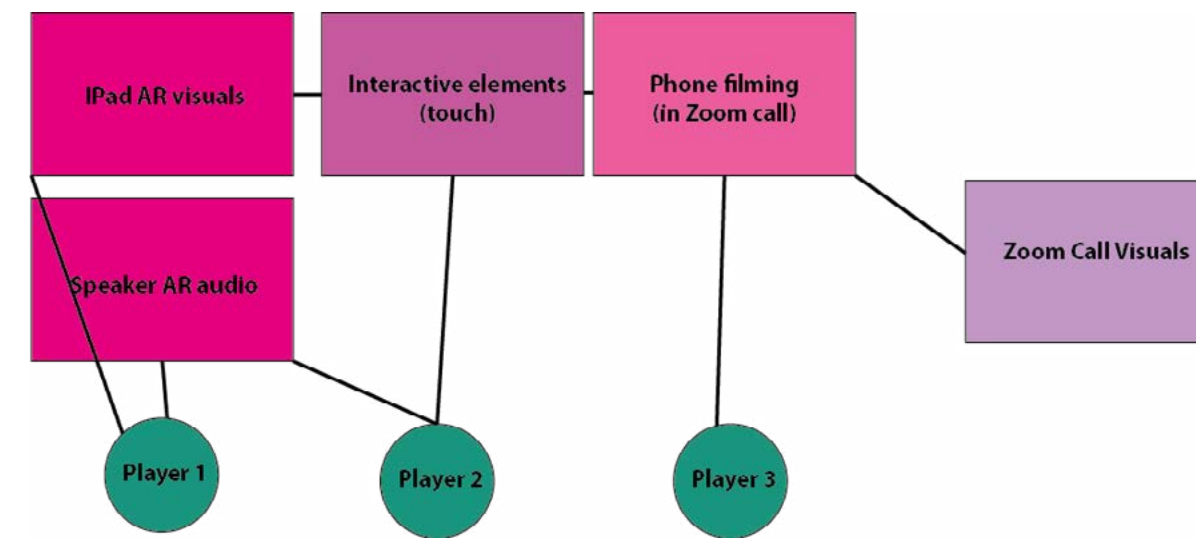

Figure 12 Foutraque AR Elements and setup for transmission

The AR element of Foutraque came to life via the 'live' in-space manipulation of an iPad. The iPad searched for the AR interactive elements which Weiss had placed around the room. The iPad screen itself was filmed by another phone which was connected to a Zoom call (so that digital players could also witness the event). A bluetooth speaker was held in order to play back the interactive sounds which were triggered by a player touching one of the AR elements on the iPad. The entire rather complex and entangled setup required all three Noisebringers to operate but was necessary in order for the AR element to be experienced in full, the needs of a non-human in practice (for an example of this see Video 10).

The overt 'virtual reality' practices which *Foutraque* exemplifies appear to come out of a very particular history that these two ensembles (GIO and the Noisebringers) share: an extended period of working in an enhanced human-machine relationship. Before establishing the practice of working on Zoom, the use of a performative augmented reality conduction work would most likely been less accessible to both the performers, and the audience. Yet the entire context of this event appears to encapsulate the coming together of a new digital practice: with a combination of a live and digital audience, and players joining a telematic Zoom call from all over the world. The setup of the GIOfest night featuring the Noisebringers was a clear wish to showcase a new practice, which was a development of a newly customized digital instrument for performing improvised works by large ensembles. The digital hybrid set-up held overtly at its core a celebration of an adept ability to work in new forms of non-human collaborations on several levels.
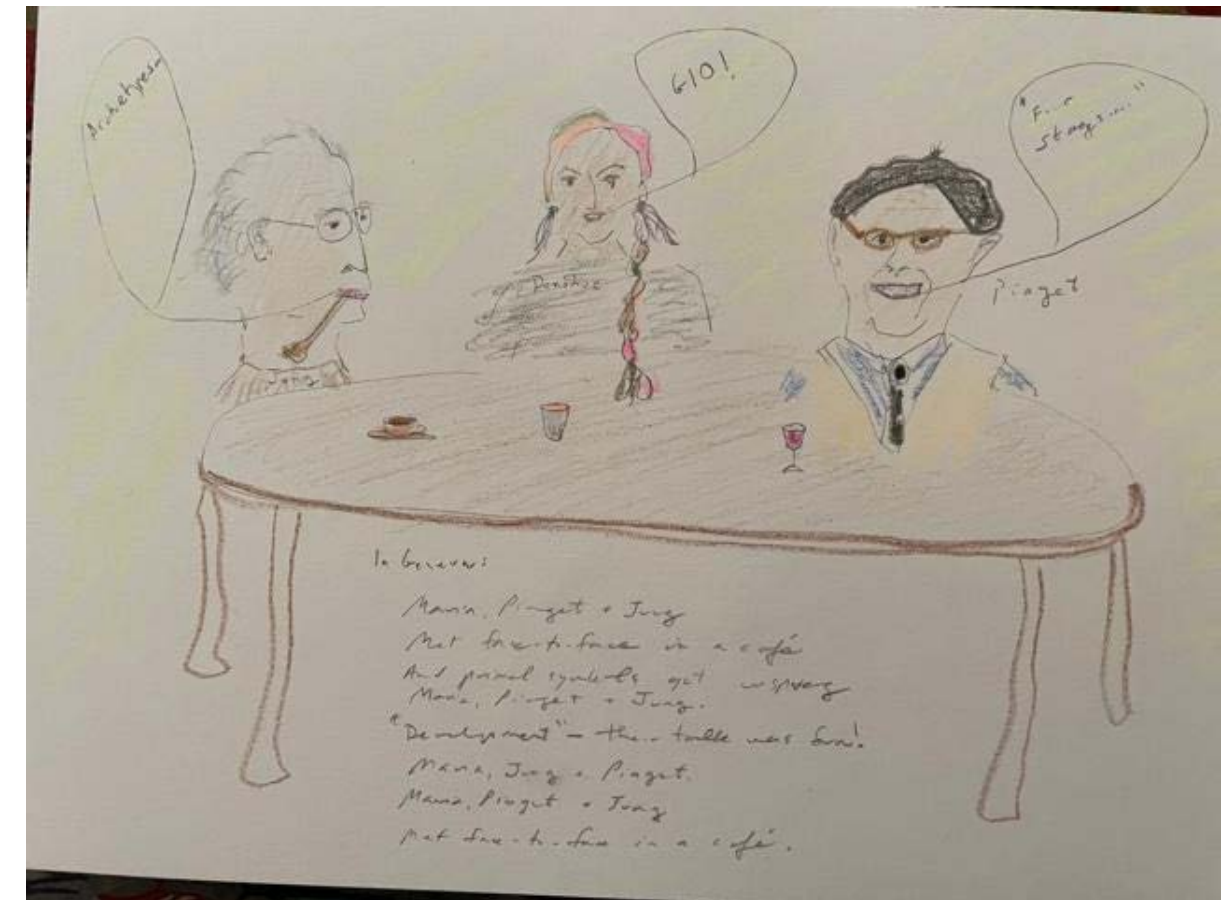
Figure 13 Drawing by Tia DeNora of Maria Sappho Donohue talking with Piaget and Jung about her enthusiasm over GIO

The new practice options described all propose options for non-reality generation, through variously multiplying, augmenting, re-playing, and repurposing software, performance, space and self variously. Some of these are more overt than others, yet they independently propose a making of improvisation in relation to things which could not exist without the complex relationships built between human and machine opportunities. This is the product of the new dimensions which can be accessed in the x-reality. As Constanzo shares elsewhere, the digitally enhanced space affords a way for new modes of performance to take place, be documented, and be experienced. At the very extreme of this are the Noisebringers practices which actively seek to enhance the possibility for self-mythologising. This is evident throughout their works, which operate inside a shared and improvised universe of 'Hur earth' – a world which

is self-developed as a representation of the many complex histories, characters, biographies and historical events that emerge from an ongoing practice of improvising within their own fictitious narrative. To make this most evident, the Noisebringers archive itself has been placed within the Map of Hur Earth, as a representation of the meta-narratives of the works in relation to a wider shared and invented context.

Video 15 Myth in circulation, sharing of lore (5'29")

As the practices of the oral history of Mopomoso are discussed as being importantly 'kept up' by the community via the archive of the Mopomoso YouTube channel, it should be considered that whether a 'true' account or not, the ways in which creative 'lore' traverses creative scenes is a product in itself of the community practice for collective mythologies. That is, myth lives in the creative experiment and politic both in the ways in which information is shared and documented, but also due to the unique process of improvised practices which draw up things that have been of

reference: things that have been brought into the community sphere. This is the 'loop' (Russell, 2020) where this is no divide between the real and non-real.

Video 16 Stories enmixed with activism, context, myth, and self-politics (13'48")

In fact, myth itself is possibly better considered a point of reference, which in its 'becoming' is always up for 'play'. This element of practice traverses all manners of mediums: from the conversations outside of practice, rehearsal and performance, specific projects and ideas, to academic research itself.[1] These are things of bleed which scaffold the practices of contemporary improvisational practices. They are managed and possible to witness most readily when they are employed in communities who are welcoming of *unknowns*, but which orbit around the continual self-generation of new knowledges which are the fruits of co-experimentation. In fact, what is brought into creativity as myth quickly finds itself as part of a greater ether of accepted reality.

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[1]	For example the Theatre of Home practice coined by the GIO research team and referenced throughout this research, is also at the same time the duo name for myself and Raymond MacDonald.

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While the implementation of myth as a vehicle for [activisms historically](#) can be seen similarly tied to existing visual, sartorial, and community aware practices, it is proposed here that the unique more than human practice options of the contemporary work have unbounded the opportunities for making such commentaries with. That is, the agency and tools to express personal politics and experiences have been expanded via the possibilities within these new digital settings. As Chimere says, 'Technology augments creativity rather than substitutes it; it enriches possibilities without ever exhausting them.' (Chimere, private communication, 2022). And as Lewis says: 'That makes living with creative machines an epistemological practice/project' (Lewis, 2007). Politics, issues for debate, activism, and community motivation for change, are mobilized via the new technologies, and vise-versa, they are vehicles entangled in each other's stories, which by the very nature of their relationship, are able to cross reality boundaries between what is 'real' and what is 'myth'. These are now inherent relationships in practice, which help bring storytelling to life.

> via this cyborgian turn the artist intentionally embodies error, a sort of system seizure that borrows from the machine in an AFK resistance. The passage of glitched bodies between the internet underground and the AFK arena activates the production of new visual culture. A sort of bionic patois, fluent to the digital native. Suspended between on and off line. Eternally traversing this loop. […] there is not return to the 'real'. (Russell, 2020)

Remixing Stories: fictioning bodies and histories for new documents and archives

> The spirit of remixing is about finding ways to innovate with what's been giving. Creating something new, from something that is already there. We are faced with the reality that we will never be given the keys to a utopia architected by hegemony. Instead, we have been tasked with building the world or worlds we want to live in. (Russell, 2020)

Jessica Argo notes the flourishing of practice where players 'remix' their visuals in real time, a practice she sets in history with the lines of Scratch Video pioneers, George Barber, Dara Birnbaum and Nick Hope (Argo, 2022). For example, in describing my own practice Argo considers the augmentations of body and space which I perform in the Zoom world as a form of 'cuttlefish' changing of skins 'subverting the live – sampling herself' (ibid.). A practice I share with several GIO Zoom players who experiment with the canvas of self and context as a world to fictionalize and visually augment. It affords a new kind of [furnishing of the body,](#) one which is expanded by the possibilities of digital visual augmentations, and is truly a product of the x-reality, made between realms.

sentient archives and humour

Video 17 re-PLAY and archiving interactive experiences (6'46")

During this research, it has been important to note the various new kinds of bodies present within the digital landscape spaces, as these bodies are acknowledged elsewhere as ['spaces',](#) they are also diverse: cyborg (human and non-

human augmentation), avatar (entirely digital) and non-human (AI and AR actants). These diverse forms of bodies also encourage new practices, specifically those that highlight elements of sartorial and movement-based expansions of improvisational ideas. For example, one player in GIO samples her shirt, sets a picture of its fabric as her background, and then camouflages into space as her form and setting become one. The process of this idea is so inspiring to the group, that the next week GIO meet and perform around a theme of camouflage, where then the idea of morphing into context is taken up and augmented variously by players throughout the group. This is an example of something drawn from the physical world, transferred into a performative role inside a digital stream, which is then proliferated around the group, reinterpreted and taken up in new ways (traversing the loop). Video Embed 5 presents some selections of kinds of bodies in new creative fiction building, which express the diverse possibilities from the largely analogue to the widely digitally enhanced possibilities of self-presentation.

Where a player might re-mix, sample, re-play, and augment their body and image on screen the documents of these events themselves can be seen to be operating under new laws for self-referential possibilities. For example, the GIO archive is of course a source for continued research (Sappho Donohue, 2020; MacDonald & Birrell, 2021; MacDonald et al, 2021; MacDonald et al, in press; Weiss et al, in press) but it is also a source for further improvisational creativity in a number of ways. The GIO archive is currently undergoing multiple post-edits for showings in festivals and digital platforms around the world (Old police house, 2020, Mopomoso TV, 2020-2021, GIOfest XIII & XIV, as well as conferences). Yet due to the specific documentation practice, which involves three videographers[2] live editing during sessions, the recorded footage is rich in materials it contains multiple camera views and individual audio stems that are all unique to each videographers' recording. This is a different wealth of materials from previous abilities within multi-tracked recordings (audio or visual) and expands the possibility for how creative recreations can be made. Factors which enhance existing techniques that consider 'recycling virtuosities' (Tremblay & Schwarz 2010; Tremblay 2012; Constanzo 2016;) in new ways.

Ross Birrell has been making multiple edits of works that GIO have created, including more radical remixing of the sessions. The 'remix' films, unlike films which are presented more akin to 'how they were made' are works that utilize elements of the recorded audio stems, and various visual pins[3] to generate an entirely new creative work (Birrell, 2022). Digital platforms have assisted in generating personal archives that are also providing new opportunities for the sharing of artistic documents.

What appears to be growing in these contemporary practices is a lack of what traditionally might be considered an 'original'. For example, in body augmentation practices the form which is sampling itself is a physical body, playing to a screen and audience. In such cases a body might be viewed from multiple perspectives: live on stage facing the camera, from inside the digital world, or from a production of documentation which displays both these possibilities. For example the following are two clips of my own performance during the GIOfestival telematic music night (November, 2021), where my hand actions are viewed in their augmentation on screen, and on the concert stage, edited together for the documentation of this concert:
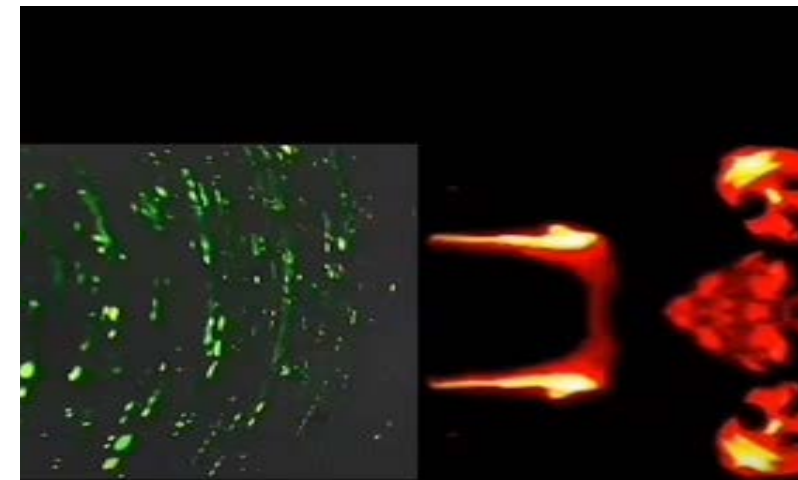
Video Embed 6 GIOfest XIV digital body (left)

Video Embed 7 GIOfest XIV physical body (right)

3   When recording a Zoom call it is possible to record a 'pinned' view of a player, this is a large role which the videographers have in the creative working with the live performance. They might select any number of players to 'highlight' which will then be recorded within their version of the session.

In these kinds of settings, no view of this kind of performance might have been more real than any other, rather all have their distinct perspectives. Rather, the performing body and its outputs exists as a multiplicity, in a similar way to that of the recordings being generated in different forms. No single output is the 'true' document of the experience itself, but rather they have all been variously viewed by many kinds of audiences. The cameras in space are viewed by the live audience and fed into the livestream capture; the digital live audience see the output of the cameras in space, the videographers view their own bespoke curation of Zoom feed (and also view the live version), and the edited documentation on YouTube is an amalgamation of these many views for future audiences.

In fact, any kind of work done in these new sorts of spaces act (like with the Noisbringers work) mediating beyond the control of the setting itself, running through a line of human and non-human hands before becoming many possible documents and traces of the event. Constanzo proposes how the form of 'Concert' (Constanzo, interviewed by Sappho Donohue, January 2021) might take on new meaning via a shift in creative culture regarding the use of technology, recording, and consideration of the document of a work. Where Constanzo notes that the use of YouTube videos re-imagines linearity and relationships with space/time of a performance, the digital practices presented here further propose new dimensions for the product and generation of contemporary forms of 'Concert'. This is a very important aspect of the notion of 'fictioning' practice presented in this subchapter because what flourishes within the documents of the digital practices is that there is no one 'real' version which might be pulled out and held up against the rest. Rather the notion of an original version is a multiplicity reliant on the many kinds of 'truths' which were generated by the human and machine relationship.

ANALOG

Non-human bodies
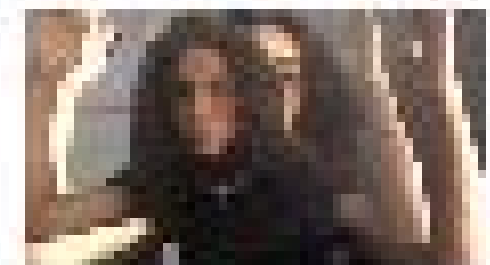body in movement
body in costume
body in translation
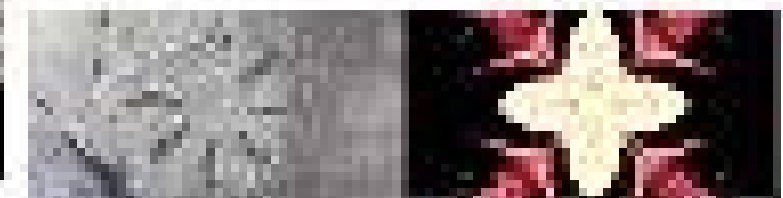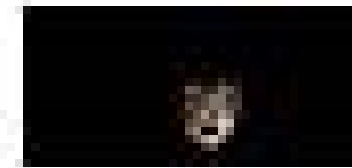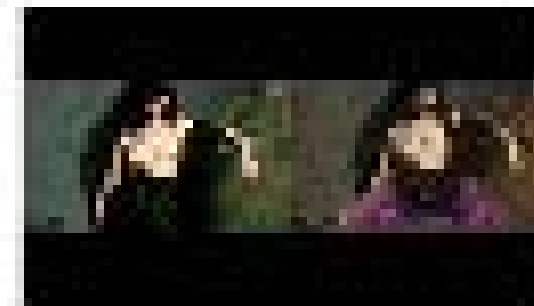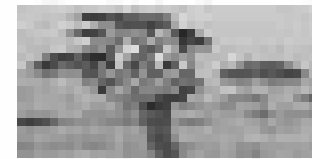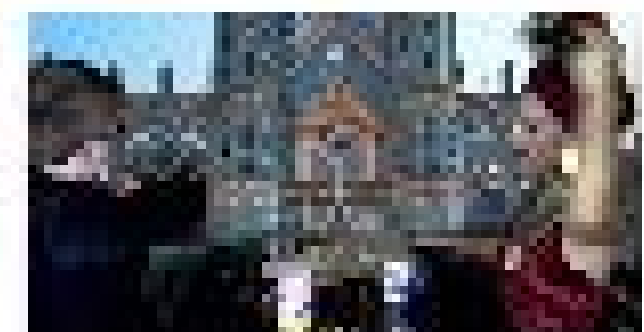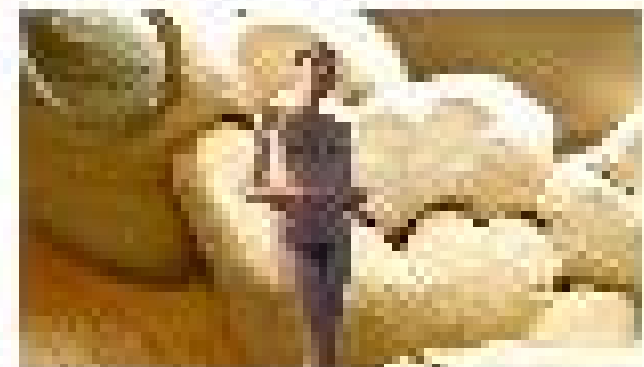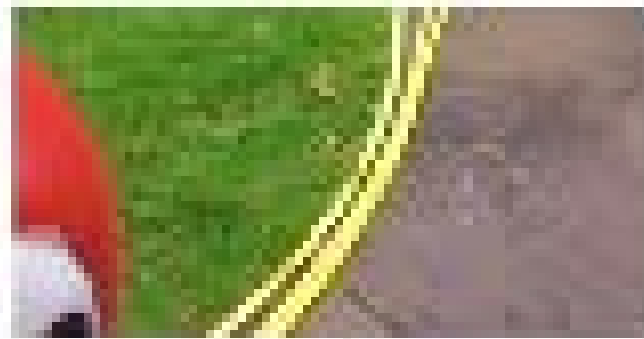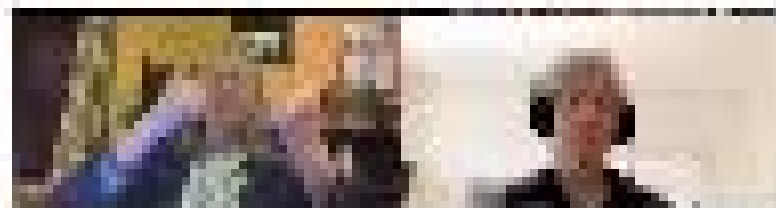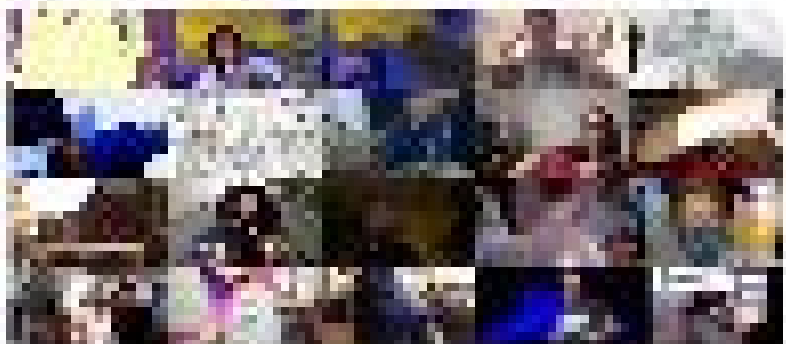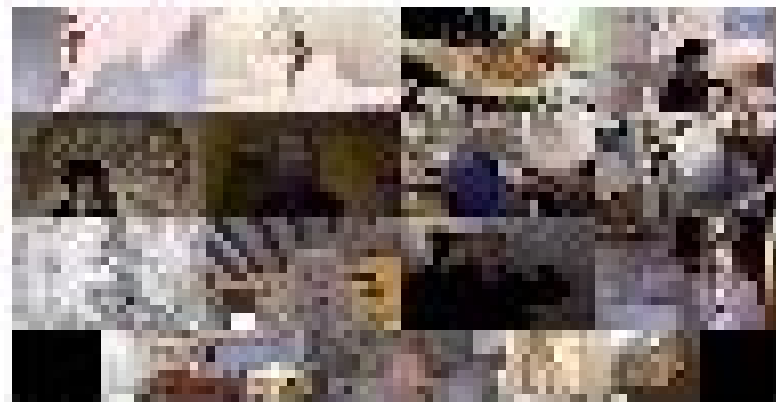
DIGITAL

Multiply the body
Avatar bodies
Wearing other bodies
Copy augmentation
sampling Metaphysical

Video Embed 5 Chart of bodies within digitally enhanced improvisational settings

G

5. At the Table

PRACTICE BROUGHT, AND PRACTICE READY FOR THE FUTURE

Do I contradict myself?

Very well then I contradict myself,

(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

Song of Myself, 51, Walt Whitman

Contemporary practices have exhibited an influx in the extra-musical that reflect a wide engagement with notions of performance techniques including: the consideration of space, non-human contributions, and embodied expression of self and community. These are elements of the field which the 'Canon and Its Double' found as under-represented in the history, which have also been exposed as missing because they often came from those erased from dominant aesthetics. Due to the pre-established biases of Anglo/Eurological claims over the field, a dominance of lineage which respects the individual over the community, and an overwhelming exclusion of women and people of color, this research asserts that the existing canon is not equipped to contend with contemporary practice, let alone successfully represent the diversity of its history. This contemporary investigation has framed an effort to assist in re-assessing these narratives in order to better comprehend the developments which take place in contemporary practice. To this end the socio-political commentary as well as the newly made interviews with 28 international players contributes towards a more global reflection of the field. When beginning the 'Canon and its Double' I knew that the practices I partook in would be lacking in the history, because I am a player who exists within these marginalised spaces. Yet I did not know that I would have the opportunity to witness the fields explosive new use of these practice as a result of the digital working switch. Therefore, 'The Three F's' was able to investigate a contemporary notion of the field through a context in which the dominant aesthetics were being challenged.

Furnishing showed that practice is now rich with new performance techno-spaces which are agential features of creative development. Hybrid, digital, and embodied spaces expose efforts of contemporary practice and centralise the importance of 'where' improvisation happens. Fashioning investigated the impact of communal development as membership and access opportunities expanded within an increasingly globally connected field. The now common-place use of networked music practices therefore provides a solution towards reaching across locational, linguistic, cultural, generational, and diverse scenes. This is a representation of how a practice might be both global and local. Fictioning heralded the influx of accessible forms of myth making which augment and manage a new form of extra-musical post-genre skill set – a form of storytelling which armed practitioners with powers to assert and re-write the world in which they wished to be part of.

The emergence of these digital practices have been contextualised through a reading of techno-feminism. In this regard, the agency of communities and artists exploring within the x-reality has been an influential factor in more tangibly highlighting the relationship between community experiences of risk (uncertain times of the pandemic) and the creative power to re-write reality through expansive creative practice. An approach that affords the ability to contend with physical world exclusions through what this research claims is a combined front of spacial, communal and practice based assertions.

While this research was centred around a specific network of improvising artists, the developments are not limited to these groups. The timeliness of the presentation of research into post-pandemic experimental music practices therefore contributes towards what will no doubt become a growing field of academic study. The themes identified have provided new vocabulary to assist in continuing to seek these narratives, an outcome which iteratively also influenced the presentation methodology which utilised complimentary and forward looking forms of technologically-enhanced research.

The HTML presentation in particular responds to a number of needs for audio-visual research that more directly link writing with examples, and provided a way in which to present subject matter that benefits from a non-linear approach. The contribution made towards the development of the new musicological tools TIAALS offers a new system for multi-modal audio-visual analysis, tagging and networking possibilities. Furthermore, the production of the archives at the centre of this study are now an important collection for my own continued research.

As this research developed an iterative methodology that utilised innate social skills of improvising practice to track the social process, I have learnt invaluable skills in contending with my own role within the global community. Contemporary practice showed me that community can expand exponentially through the use of digital technologies (fashioning). To this end I was afforded the ability to considerably expand my knowledge of the global community, meeting with (interviewing), and performing with players from all over the world which previously I would have thought impossible. As we continue to need to diversify research and practice this approach offers a simple way to highlight our shared individual powers to expand our immediate circles. Again, this is a result already well defined in techno-feminist theory which continues to highlight the agencial power of communities who find themselves and empower themselves through the affordances of our contemporary digital means.

On a personal level this research has provided me with a path, and with the tools to engage with this path, one which has become a focus central to my continued work and my identity as an artist and researcher. I continue to work with the GIO research team, as we move towards the publication of our first book which outlines the specific developments and contemporary virtuosity practices developed by the ensemble during this period. I as look forward to contributing towards a diversifying improvisation project run by Una MacGlone, Raymond MacDonald, George Lewis and Corey Mwamba. And I see a huge benefit in implementing the outcomes of this research in practical ways within my ongoing work as a teacher and workshop leader. To this end one of the most useful products outside of this thesis, but which was entirely informed by the thesis thinking, was in rewriting George Lewis' work 'Artificial Life' (written for GIO, 2007). Lewis's original piece is a work that gets a large ensemble improvising together freely through the use of simple instructions that help produce common musical relationships within group improvisational playing. My version utilises the same structure but instead affords players the possibility to explore social and extra-musical practice. In Figure 14 it is possible to see many of the themes identified in the Three F's as prompts within the score: showing objects that matter, changing clothing and visual presentations, asserting a personal politic, and so on.

Just as Legacy Russell points toward the ability to draw across the digital 'AFK', this thesis has already been drawn out of itself and exists beyond the ideas, theories, and perspectives already developing in the community. In a return to the social, the thesis itself might not be the vehicle for influence. As the final light touch politic of this research, I would propose that possibly it is not useful that I comprehend or account for impact, contribution or outcome. As with the mushrooms, the mychorrhizal network carries in the ways that it knows best.

For the end of this thesis a final memory is recounted from a particular GIO session, which seems an appropriate conclusion of the many winding explorations in the text. George Lewis attended a digital session and at some point

he had changed his virtual background to a picture of players in FIG in the 1970s. He performed with this background, and then had a giggle with Maggie Nicols. They grieved the loss of those who had died, and Nicols shared stories of particular gigs that she remembered. This small digital act contains multitudes, of which only a bit is possible to describe.

> A small black and white photo of some laughing young women walking down the street
>
> London the 1970s'
>
> Pioneering women, when we look back
>
> One of them present in performance, the matriarch made
>
> Set as the virtual background on a Zoom call of a similar giant in the field
>
> Who for some reason had this image close at hand
>
> Who took the photo?
>
> Used in collaborative digital performance with a group of intentional artists
>
> Dealing with the distress of a global pandemic through the collective work of finding each-other to share
>
> Stories of life and art

A moment like that is a portal between, it is the loop. What has been brought is also still present and contributing towards the timeless story of this practice. This cookbook is a snapshot of curated elements of a field. It has shared some possible ingredients, and recipes for improvised research. It is an invitation to make research in this way, and it is an invitation to make art in this way. The impact of time and relationships has been used in a concerted effort to diversify, de-centralize and acknowledge a messy legacy of practice, academic thought, and collated communal histories. Something with no neatly defined core. These have been tangled in many deeply cultural, variable and socially developing stories. This is a practice of sharing recipes that might be transported, augmented, critiqued, re-contextualised and left open-ended. A cookbook invites writing in the margins, incorporating future ideas, and at the very end, coming together, to sit down at the table, and to take part in the sharing of life.

Artifactal Lyfe 2021
(Maria Sappho entirely hijacking the work of the venerable George Lewis 2007)

Page One

REACH	POETRY	POLITIC
INSTRUCTION	SUPPORT	CONVERSATION
PRESENTATION	RECEIVE	PRESENCE

REACH: pick up and show something that is nearby you and important. In a pocket, handbag, on your desk? Perform with this item.

POETRY: Write a poem? Read one? Recite one from memory?
POLITIC: Be political, in whatever way you choose.

INSTRUCTION: Find a way to give the group a simple instruction. Verbal, text, visual? Someone might respond in RECIEVE or not.

SUPPORT: Pick one player and support their idea in any way.
CONVERSATION: Open up a dialogue. It might just be with yourself. You might imagine a response. Or someone might respond.

PRESENTATION: Change the way you look: eg. take off a sweater, change your hairdo, alter your posture or positioning to the other players or audience.
RECEIVE: Take up and respond to an INSTRUCTION that has been given. If none have been given yet, or you have forgotten or missed them, wait for one. If one does not come after your decided time in this section, move on.
PRESENCE: Visibly find your own end. Turn your focus to those continuing to perform, and give them your undivided attention. Your presence is your contribution

Figure 14 Artifactal Life, Maria Sappho 2021

Glossary

This glossary provides further background on the retuning terms which are specific to this research. These include a further description of important phrases as well as links (both internal within the thesis and external to exterior sources) which should assist the reader. These links can also be used to refer back to points in the thesis where new methodological terms are further discussed in the body of the text. The glossary can be accessed at any point in the document by clicking the G in the bottom right corner on all pages.

Anti-association: A product of practice where players consciously disassociate from existing genre and creative aesthetic terminology

Auto-sociology: Methodology coined by this research which sets the writer's own practice based knowledge of a social network as the primary source for the documentation of a creative practice development.

Chimere: AI developed by the ImpactIA foundation who is a central member of the Noisebringers ensembles work, and represented in this document as an improviser in her own right.

COVID19 pandemic: Global pandemic between 2020-2022

Cyber-body: A purely digital representation of a body, as in only the player is capable of experiencing the physical aspect of the body, and all elements of presence are perceptible by others only though the digital. See Cyborg body as well.

Cyborg-Body: A hybrid representation of a body, which is viewable by others as both digital and physical.

Cyborg-socialites: Like Cyborg bodies these are hybrid forms of socialites which are participated within by both physical and digital bodies concurrently.

Fashioning: Term used by this research to point towards the communal inputs towards the generation of new creative cultures.

Fictioning: Term borrowed from Donna Haraway which points towards the real world purposes and agencies of blended and fictionalized representations of reality.

Flattening the curve: The name given to the online digital practices of GIO during the pandemic.

Furnishing: Term borrowed from Tia DeNora which highlights the role of space via the noticing of the self and communal practices of furnishing contexts with social and creative needs.

GIO: The Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra

GIO research team: Research team composed of Raymond MacDoanld, Tia DeNora, Ross Birrell, Robert Burke, and Maria Sappho Donohue.

IRiMaS: Interactive Research in Music as Sound, a 5 year European Research Council project which this thesis has been part of.

Keeping up: The notion of the active work by players and communities in retaining the 'things that matter' of practice, history, and shared knowledge.

Mopomoso and **Mopomoso TV**: Mopomoso is said to be the longest unbroken series for free improvised music in the UK. Started by John Russell and which runs monthly out of the Vortex Jazz bar in London. In 2020 the show was adapted to the COVID19 pandemic becoming Mopomoso TV, a purely digital version of the monthly series, hosted on youtube. As of 2022 both the digital and the physical series run on a monthly basis curated by a team of volunteers.

Mycelial practices: Borrowing of mycological terminology which presents a cross section of combined creative practice approach between the three groups at the heart of this study. Viewable in the TIAALS software under the page of the same name.

Mythadology: The methodology section of this research, presented as a play on words of the overarching themes of myth making practices important to many of the examples of this thesis.

Networked music and Telematic Music: Online music practices which connect desperately located players around the world.

Recipe and Cookbook: Metaphor used throughout this research which marries notions of culinary and domestic aspects important to the contemporary practices discussed. As well as acting as an overarching theme in which a collection of diverse and unique perspectives might be shared together, which variously are used by players in context for a number of different reflections of the field.

Sartorial: A term used to point towards both the more obvious physical implications of practice: clothing, fashion, make-up, style. As well as the greater implied aesthetics which encompass these practices: wider aesthetics of meaning presented by players.

Social Virtuosity: Term coined by Maggie Nicols to highlight the innate skills of improvisers to notice and work with each other with more than musical techniques.

Techno-socialites: Socio-creative spaces which are purely digital (like that of cyber-bodies) these are groups which meet entirely online, unlike Cyborg-socialites, where there is a more present mix of digital and physical players.

The Anarchive: Term by Siegfried Zielinsk which highlights the contemporary changes in communal and creative systems in which practice and socialites are archived and documented.

The Mushwork: Term invented by this research which encompasses the mycological theory influential for the social networking understanding of this research, which is a play on words of the Meshwork theory of Tim Ingold.

The Noisebringers: Ensemble of Brice Catherin, Henry McPherson and Maria Sappho, who perform both as an improvising trio as well as produce large interdisciplinary projects which further curate and present wide ranging examples of multidisciplinary improvisation practice.

The Three F's: Chapter in this research which presents the three overarching themes identified as emergent within contemporary improvised practice: furnishing, fashioning, and fictioning.

Theater of Home: Term coined by the GIO research team which describes the contemporary shifts toward domestic and contextual practices taken up as players worked more often from homes and non-traditional performance spaces.

Theater of Home+: A specific expansion of the Theater of Home term this research used during tagging to delineate between practices more situated within domestic settings, and those which expanded out towards spaces like airports, beaches, forests, and taxis.

TIAALS: Tools for Interactive Analysis is the overarching software which the Mushwork is presented in. This software was developed over the course of the IRiMaS project, which this PhD contributed ideas towards development of specific tools needed for the study of improvised practice.

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Tracking the social process: Term used by this research to highlight the social processes which are often visualized throughout this research, and which are viewed here as agents towards the more traditional term 'tracking the creative process'.

Trans-linguistics: Term borrowed from linguists theory which proposes ways to think about diverse every-day global languages, as contributing towards a larger shared, but diversely enacted human experience.

X-reality: Term by Beth Coleman used here to specifically highlight the new phenomena of a combined digital and physical realm, where digital and physical are not two disparate locations but rather have generated a space between which is part of a much wider reality of contemporary human-machine socialites.

Zoomsphere: Term coined by the GIO research team which describes the specific aesthetics and affordances available for GIO when working with the digital conferencing software Zoom.

Files

The TIAALS software: TICthemushwork.m2doc2

Maps pages:
    Mushwork on Map
    Social Mushwork

Info pages:
    Instructions for TIALLS videos

Archive pages:
    Mopomoso
    The Noisebringers
    GIO
    Mycelial practices

Practice pages:
    starts and stops, improv speed dating
    GIOfest XIII
    Non-humans in sociality
    Cooking in the Theater of Home

Files in submission Folder

Appendix

Interview videos/audio
    Example ethics forms
Improvisers Cookbook: Recipes from improvisers
Video examples and instruction videos hard copies

Archives

Mopomoso
Noisebringers
GlO

Further resources for TIAALS pages

*These are provided so the tools will source materials, these are not necessary for the reader to engage with but are noted here for clarity

Bodies examples
GIO archive
    Cooking in the theatre of home
GIOfest XIV page
Mopomoso Archive
Mycelial practices
Social map
World Map

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Thank you for reading (or clicking) all the way to the end

THE LOOP

Mychorizal Table of Contents

This thesis is presented non-linearly, therefore the following table of contents is an interactive chart which outlines the various components of this research. This is different from the traditional table of contents, and functions as a map for easier navigation through the main sub-sections of research.

1

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1.1 Tracking the Social Process: Mycelial threads

1.2 Contending with Free: Improvisation

1.3 Accident and Happenstance: Acts of Becoming

1.4 Tools for Interactive Analysis: TIAALS

1.5 The Three F's: Themes of Contemporary Practice

1.7 Originality, Niche and Novelty

3

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A. 3.3 Place, location and Improvisational Claim

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B. 3.10 Community: Adaptable Living and Care

4

The Three F's: Introduction

4.1 Furnishing: Bodies and Spaces in Construction

4.2 Fashioning: the Social Act of Co-creating Culture

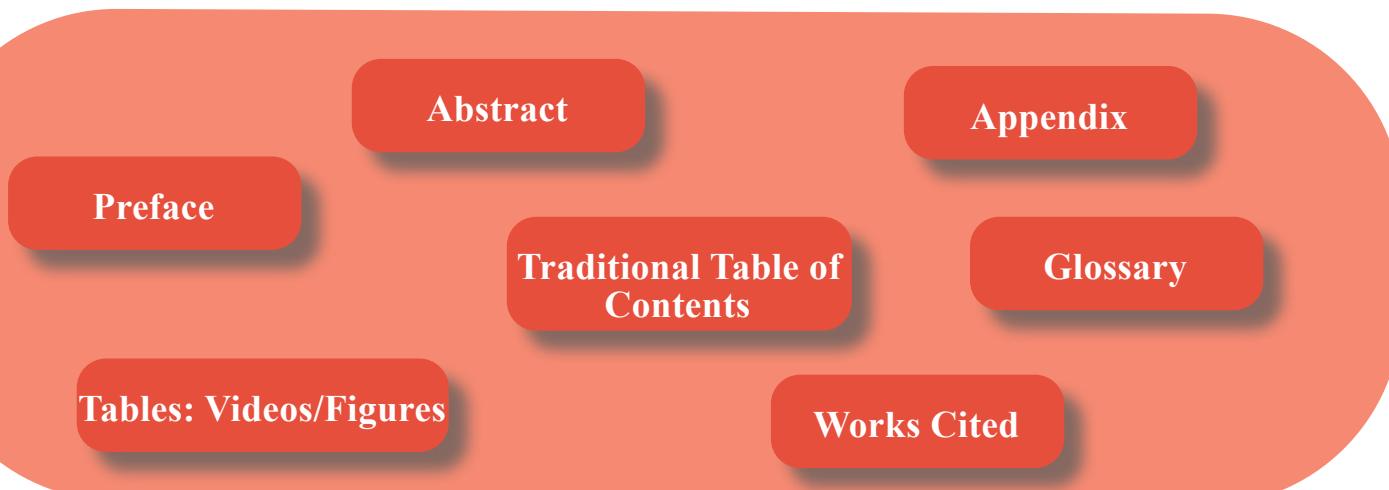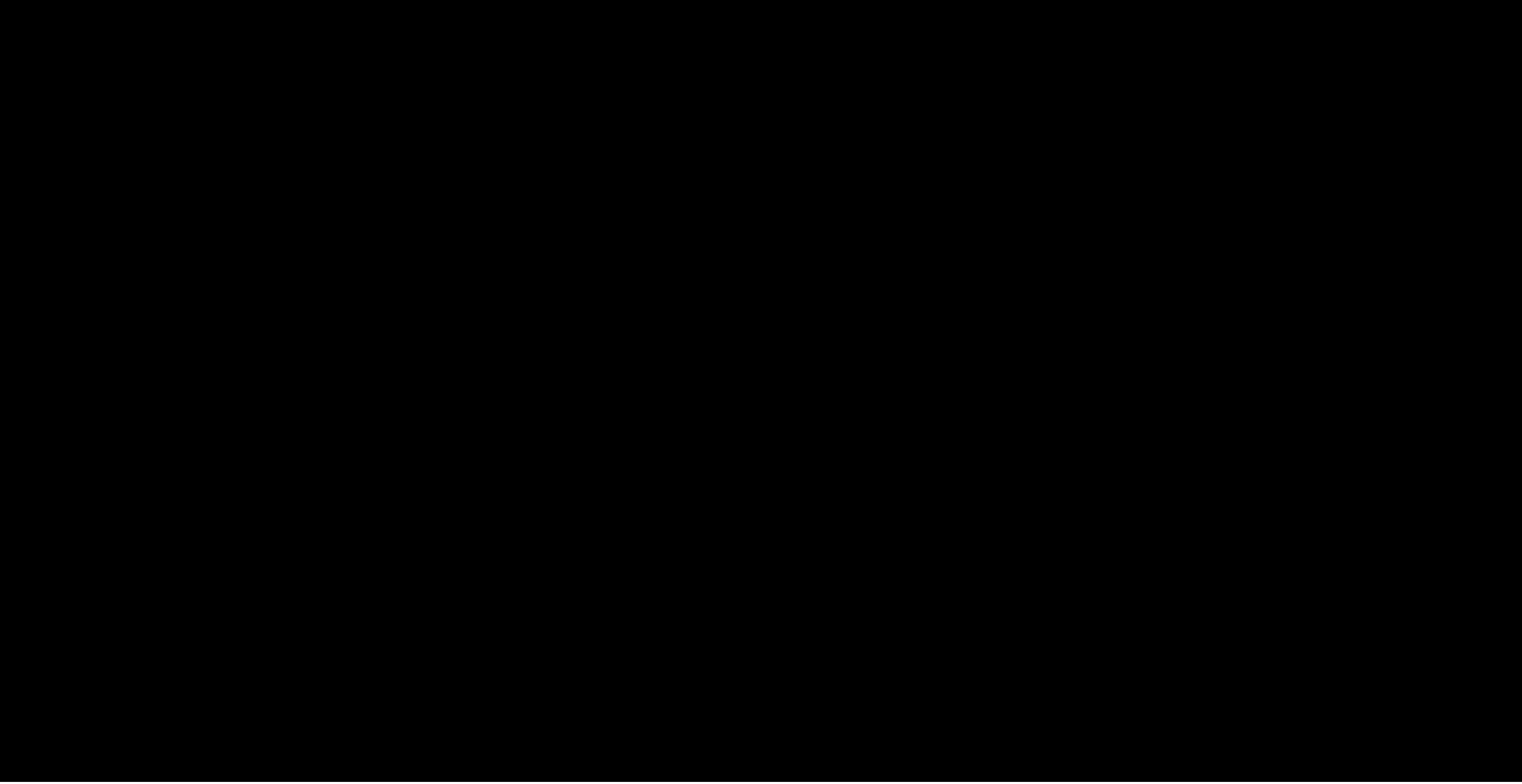4.3 Fictioning: Mobilizing Storytelling, Myth and other Realities

Preface

Abstract

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5

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Mythadology: Methods, Myths, Metaphor and Mushrooms

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2.2 Making a Mushwork

2.3 Non-linearity and Video

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ANOTHER END