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A more attractive 'way of getting things done' freedom, collaboration and compositional paradox in British improvised and experimental music 1965-75

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A more attractive 'way of getting things done'  
**freedom, collaboration and compositional paradox in British  
improvised and experimental music 1965-75**

Simon H. Fell

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield  
in fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Huddersfield

September 2017

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## abstract

This thesis examines the activity of the British musicians developing a practice of freely improvised music in the mid- to late-1960s, in conjunction with that of a group of British composers and performers contemporaneously exploring experimental possibilities within composed music; it investigates how these practices overlapped and interpenetrated for a period. The thesis identifies those characteristics of improvisation and experimentalism which favour a relationship between the two fields, but which ultimately underline the different expectations and objectives underlying each activity.

The historical material is explored through a combination of archive research and interviews with musicians who were actively involved in the developments under examination. In addition the author draws upon his extensive personal experience as an improvising musician and composer, and as a performing associate of several of the key improvising musicians of the period.

The first section of the thesis identifies the historical and social background, outlining the two key groups of participants working in the unmapped area between existing idiomatic improvisation and experimental composition practice, including brief studies of important figures who initiated or facilitated the exploration of shared activity during the period.

A second section seeks to introduce further precision into discussion of improvised music by seeking to clarify the definition of taxonomic terms currently in use, and to extend these by identifying key characteristics of the wide range of approaches to playing improvised music.

Section three explores the practical implications of the differing objectives of improvising musicians and composers. A series of archive case studies examining composing for improvising musicians during the 1960s and 1970s are discussed, along with an investigation of issues raised by the restoration of Derek Bailey's *Ping* (prob. 1967/8) for contemporary performance by improvising musicians.

The final section identifies fundamental differences of aspiration and approach within improvisation and composition, and examines the consequent implications for joint practice. It establishes why such differences are inevitable, and the insights they provide into the nature of artistic practice.



# A more attractive way of getting things done: freedom, collaboration and compositional paradox in British improvised and experimental music 1965-75

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## appended recordings

[CD inside rear cover]

### Derek Bailey score reconstructions

<b>#10 [five pieces for guitar]</b>	[total 10m57s]
<b>01.</b> 10a: G.E.B. [in memory of my father George Edward Bailey]	2m31s
<b>02.</b> 10b: Haught	1m26s
<b>03.</b> 10c [untitled]	3m03s
<b>04.</b> 10d [untitled]	2m01s
<b>05.</b> 10e [untitled]	1m52s
<b>#18-20: Three Pieces for Guitar (1967)</b>	[total 7m30s]
<b>06.</b> 18: #1	0m36s
<b>07.</b> 19: #2	0m50s
<b>08.</b> 20: #3 + improvisation	6m08s
<b>09. #22 [Ping]</b>	30m18s
<b>10. #23: Bits</b>	2m08s
<b>11. Stockhausen/Bailey [completed Fell]: Plus-Minus</b>	20m00s

### **Ensemble Anomaly**

Diego Castro Magaš: classical guitar (1-5), electric guitars (11)

Alex Ward: electric guitars (6-11)

Trevor Watts: soprano saxophone (9)

Robert Jarvis: trombone (9)

Franc Chamberlain: speaker (9)

Mark Sanders: percussion (9)

Simon H. Fell: conductor (9)

recorded:

20<sup>th</sup> November 2015, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (11)

21<sup>st</sup> November 2015, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (9)

23<sup>rd</sup> November 2015, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (6-8, 10)

4<sup>th</sup> December 2015, University of Huddersfield (1-5)

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## acknowledgements & thanks

The considerable list of people that I have to thank for making the completion of this thesis possible divides into four groups, as below. The ordering of names within a given section should not necessarily be considered significant, although it may be.

Firstly, I would like to thank my family, who have supported me (in both moral and practical senses) during my work on this project. In particular, my thanks are due to my wife Jo for her patience; patience during four years of reduced income, repeated absences, neglected household duties, occasional outbursts of grumpy frustration and large piles of books left on tables and floors throughout the house.

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To all those whose name should have been listed above and for some reason was not, please accept my sincerest apologies. The omission was not intentional, and I assure you that your help was very much appreciated.

**Simon H. Fell; July 2017**



# introduction

*A composer is simply someone who tells other people what to do. I find this an unattractive way of getting things done (Cage, 1968 p. ix).*

Improvisation in music generates strong feelings, among both committed practitioners and wary sceptics. For some the power of improvisation to call into question or undermine the presumptions underwriting 350 years of Eurological<sup>1</sup> art music tradition is matched only by the power of composition to dehumanise or subjugate the fundamental human tenets of liberty and collectivism. However, for others, improvisation offers solely incoherent self-indulgence, repetition and lazy familiarity. This thesis identifies the differing aesthetics which tend to motivate musicians who consider themselves either composers, improvisers<sup>2</sup> or in some cases both, and what the implications of these motivations are for collaborative, more flexible musical hierarchies and innovative approaches to group music-making. My main historical focus will be on the communal exploration undertaken by experimental composers and free improvisers as part of the creative ferment of late 1960s London; although clearly much has changed in the subsequent 50 years, this fascinating period permits an in vivo study of the key themes which continue to be central to such inter-praxis collaboration.

I am a practising improvising musician who believes that it is possible to compose (i.e. to at least partially pre-determine) a piece of music that is to be played by other musicians without any implicit assertion of creative superiority, special insight or technical exceptionalism. I am a practising improvising musician who believes that it is possible to direct an ensemble of musicians, even to conduct them in a quasi-traditional fashion, without any implicit assertion of hierarchical authoritarianism or patronising condescension. However, the improvising musician's innate urge to retain a core of free, creative individuality lies in delicate balance with the challenge of co-ordinating and negotiating collective action and responsibility, and not all improvisers see the interventions just detailed as benign. In some situations the repression and compromise involved in reconciling individuality and collectivity can lead to a febrile and frustrating working environment. It could be argued that one of the effects of the flowering of the Romantic Genius figure in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century European art music was the channelling of any subsequent resentment on the part of alienated musical workers toward those actors higher in the pyramidal structure of 'classical' ensemble music: the principal, the soloist, the conductor and ultimately the composer<sup>3</sup>. Such a potentially poisonous legacy of the industrialisation of musical relations could be viewed as

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<sup>1</sup> The terms 'Eurological' and 'Afrological' are drawn from the writings of George Lewis; for an extended discussion of their meaning, see Lewis (1996). In brief, my use of Eurological denotes a literature- and notation-derived system, underpinned by a very specific kind of technical proficiency, that focuses on the production of works; these works are usually seen as the product of individual creators, although these may require realisation by interpretative 'assistants'. On the other hand, Afrological would denote an orature-derived system where the acquisition of knowledge is often practice-based, frequently including auto-didacticism and eccentric or unconventional technical approaches; rather than focussing on the production of works, this practice emphasises the undertaking of (often unrepeatable) collaborative creative acts, and thus has intrinsic links with improvisation, collectivity and impermanence.

<sup>2</sup> See page 15 for further discussion of the orthography of this term.

<sup>3</sup> These suggestions are extrapolated from a synthesis of personal observation, discussion with orchestral colleagues, and the ideas explored in S. Bailey (2013), Cook (1998) and Bathurst and Ladkin (2012).

primarily a result of the gigantism inherent in the symphonic ideal, and therefore of less significance as the orchestral model is increasingly deserted by composers (and musicians) who find their interests better served by smaller, more collaborative ensembles. However, it seems likely that there will always be some degree of tension between the tendency to develop, perfect and fix things which are decreed 'good' or which seem to 'work' and the necessity for creative musicians to think and act freely and spontaneously when desired. It is this tension between the poietic and the practical impulse which I explore through this research<sup>4</sup>.

My personal journey to the writing of this thesis involved 40 years' experience of playing Improvised Music<sup>5</sup> in a wide variety of contexts, with an enormous range of collaborators – most frequently in Britain, but also throughout Europe and occasionally in North America. The journey to this thesis has also involved some 35 years' experience of investigating the possibilities of composing for, or at least devising structures or generating contexts for, my improvising colleagues. This has included groups of all sizes, from solos and duos to quasi-orchestral forces of 40-50 players.

Although many things have changed regarding the attitudes of musicians and listeners since my first participation in a public performance of improvised music (in 1977), there have been a surprising number of constants. These would include the mutual distrust with which the more dogmatic elements of the composition and improvisation communities view each other. This was particularly pronounced for the 'first generation' British improvising musicians<sup>6</sup> I began to work with in the late 1970s, whose battle to free themselves from perceived exclusion by the prevailing hegemony had been conscious and determined (at least in some cases); however casual prejudice (often based on a misunderstanding of each other's working practices) still occasionally manifests itself today in conversations I have with improvisers and composers.

Debatably, there has been a palpable relaxation of dogma in much music-making over the past 40 years, with a growth in composition orientated musicians committed to exploring an arguably more Afrological approach – an approach which accommodates, takes inspiration from and attempts to benefit from the powerful resources of improvisation, both individual and collective. Unsurprisingly, the questions of what composers and improvisers<sup>7</sup> hope to achieve when they undertake collaboration, why these aims are often different, and what makes for greater or lesser degrees of perceived success have long been matter of interest to me. When, in 2013, a research bursary offered in collaboration by Sound and Music, The University of Huddersfield and hcmf// presented the opportunity to investigate these issues, I resolved to start by attempting to trace the connections between the experimental composition and improvised music communities in the UK (and particularly London) of the 1960s, and by so doing try and shed light on the origins of, motivations for, and subsequent decline of one of

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<sup>4</sup> My use of these terms would define poiesis as an action focussed on bringing something into being, and praxis as an action focussed on the undertaking of said action. Cf. Smith: 'Poiesis is about acting upon, doing to: it is about working with objects. Praxis, however, is creative: it is other-seeking and dialogic' (1999, 2011 para. 10).

<sup>5</sup> See page 14 for further discussion of the capitalisation of certain terms in this text.

<sup>6</sup> In this context, this term is widely understood to mean those improvisers who, in the UK in the mid-to-late 1960s, first sought to establish an identity for an improvised music that might be practised outside existing idiomatic contexts. These musicians would include (but not be limited to) Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, Barry Guy, Paul Rutherford, Tony Oxley, John Stevens and the members of AMM.

<sup>7</sup> Including composing improvisers and improvising composers.

the most interesting periods of collaboration in post-war British music. Both the Sound and Music team and I hoped that I would find useful research material in the British Music Collection, the former British Music Information Centre/Society for the Promotion of New Music score archive, of which SaM are now guardians, and which is currently housed at the University of Huddersfield. For reasons which will be explained in the course of this thesis, this starting point did not turn out to be as fruitful as had at first been hoped, although the examination of the archive's contents led to much interesting reflection.

After an initial period of research in the BMC, I turned my attention outside the established institutions, and began a process of examination of selected archives and documents of improvisers and composers from this period, along with personal interviews where possible. The material gathered in this way proved much more fruitful, to the point where I only had time to undertake a fraction of the investigations I had originally intended. In particular, researches in Derek Bailey's archive revealed a wealth of previously unknown material, including numerous compositions from the period I was researching, and extensive unpublished writings and notes on technical methodology. Partly as a result of the consequences of the discovery of this material (consequences which included subsequent restoration, performance and publication projects), this thesis should be considered part of a project in progress, rather than a definitive statement on its subject.

When setting out on this research, developing or expanding the taxonomy of improvised music had not been part of my original intention. However, upon exploring the literature of improvisation I felt there was a frequent conflation of types of improvised musics which I believed had markedly differing characteristics; improvisation in music was all too often discussed as if it were one thing, one style or one methodology, whereas my personal experience strongly suggested that some degree of refinement of definition was necessary, given the widely disparate motivations and aesthetics of the musicians involved. Part 2 of this thesis examines key differences of approach to free musical improvisation; while any definitions of such an amorphous subject matter are bound to provide several hostages to fortune, I hope that my proposed terminology will at least help to introduce more granularity into subsequent discussion.

Further to my work in Derek Bailey's archive, in my discussions of British improvised music I have drawn heavily upon the writings of Bailey, both published and unpublished. This would appear to be unsurprising, but comparatively little critical attention appears to have been paid to Bailey's published writings and interviews thus far<sup>8</sup>; in addition, much of the material to which I refer has yet to be published. Throughout his life, Derek Bailey was an incisive and thought-provoking theorist on the nature of improvisation, even if he preferred to keep many of his observations to himself. His extensive experience in commercial music, his genuine interest in compositional questions and motivations, and his uncompromising approach to musical politics make him an invaluable commentator, reporting from the very heart of the white-hot artistic cauldron of British improvisation in the 1960s and 70s.

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<sup>8</sup> There has, of course, been some interesting work undertaken, but surprisingly little considering Bailey's pivotal place in the theory and practice of improvised music for some 40 years. Naturally, Bailey (and his book on improvisation) are frequently cited in improvisation studies, and there is a plethora of interviews and magazine articles; but more concentrated investigation is less frequently encountered. Examples of such in-depth study known to the author would include Lash (2006, 2010 & 2013), Peters (2017 chapter 21), Brooks (2014) and Watson (2004). (Bailey contributes to Childs et al. (1982) as an interview subject, but there is no substantial discussion of his work.)

However, in consciously (re)introducing Bailey's trenchant observations into this analysis it is explicitly *not* my intention to address any existing imbalance by substituting another. While I may occasionally express concern at a critical tendency to place the work of certain improvisers on a podium, or I may disagree with some of the suggestions or conclusions of certain authors, I do not accept uncritically the ideas and writings of Bailey (and of those other musicians I would like to reconnect with the thrust of critical discourse). Bailey himself had prejudices and personal animosities which occasionally mar his writing or muddy his thinking, and I hope to point these out as even-handedly as I endeavour to do with other writers. In short, if I tend to give more space and attention to certain approaches to improvisation it is only because I believe these areas are under-explored, rather than because I believe they are in some way superior or preferable to other approaches<sup>9</sup>.

I would also like to address what for some may be a disconcerting aspect of this thesis and its associated research – that it appears to concern itself exclusively with a coterie of white, male musicians. Unfortunately, this directly reflects a lack of racial and gender diversity within the groups of musicians which are central to my study; with the notable exception of the gender balance within members of The Scratch Orchestra, both the improvising and experimental composition worlds of 1960s Britain were in general dominated by white men, and the key 'first generation' British improvisers fall into this category. It is not my intention to explore the social, political and educational background to this disparity within this study (McKay (2005) and Moore (2007) provide useful background information<sup>10</sup>), beyond observing that it reflects a wider imbalance in the world of 'professional' music making at that time. The commercial music working environment which I first entered in the late 1970s still bore many traces of these attitudes, with very few ethnic minority or female musicians working in the provincial clubs, theatres and dance halls of the 1970s<sup>11</sup>. In addition, it will be seen that National Service played an important role for several of the musicians in this study; since only men were subject to conscription in post-war Britain, and military music making was primarily a men-only affair during this period<sup>12</sup>, working-class female musicians also had less access to this form of professional training. There is certainly still research to be done on questions of diversity of both performers and audience in British improvised music of the 1960s and 1970s, and particularly perhaps regarding the effect on such diversity of the music's intimate links with licensed premises (often particularly unsavoury ones) during the first 30 years of its existence<sup>13</sup>.

A few technical observations about the text of this thesis need to be made. What may initially appear to be inconsistencies in the capitalisation of certain terms in this text is actually an attempt to differentiate between the use of these terms as objective descriptions, and their use as genre or school labels to denote an (approximately) agreed type of activity. For example, British experimental music would include any music that

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<sup>9</sup> Having said which, I am also familiar with and interested in Bailey's work as someone who knew him and played with him.

<sup>10</sup> Although it should be noted that the commercial music workplace tended to be even more conservative in these respects than the jazz scene with which these authors are primarily concerned.

<sup>11</sup> The exceptions to this male dominance were the at that time traditional ones of vocalists and harpists, although the latter were a rare sight in Northern cabaret clubs.

<sup>12</sup> The two exceptions to this principle are The Central Band of the Women's Royal Air Force (which disbanded in 1972) and The Staff Band of the Women's Royal Army Corps. When the latter disbanded in 1992 its musicians were transferred to The Band of the Adjutant General's Corps, the first mixed band in the British Armed Forces.

<sup>13</sup> I recall performing with Derek Bailey at a Company event in a pub in Hull, in the late 1980s; we were told the only way to reach the performance space was to pass through the gent's lavatory (to access the necessary staircase). This seemed to be a perfect signifier of British Improvised Music's struggle to find a diverse audience during the period.

was both British and experimental (however that term might be defined), whereas British Experimental Music is intended to signify a widely-agreed (but not absolutely fixed) group of composers and their activities (in this case essentially those identified with this label by V. Anderson (1983)); similarly, while Free Jazz may often be improvised music, in that it may have no pre-determined elements whatsoever, it only very occasionally becomes Improvised Music, in the sense that it almost never leaves behind the instrumental hierarchies inherited from the jazz tradition (see page 75 for further exploration of this idea).

When writing about musicians I know (or knew) personally, and sometimes very well, I have in general employed a somewhat formal style in referring to them by their surnames. I hope that neither they nor anyone else will think that this implies a cooling of previously friendly relations; it simply seemed more appropriate for the relatively formal nature of this text. By the same token, I trust the reader will understand if I nevertheless occasionally refer to these musicians by their first names, especially in such contexts as seem to warrant the informality. Finally, the orthography of the term used for someone who improvises is a source of heated debate among certain members of the improvised music community. Whether to use the Germanic -er or the Latinate -or suffix to form the agent noun appears to be subject to no hard and fast rule. Derek Bailey strongly preferred the spelling 'improvisors' to 'improvisers' throughout his career; critic and Bailey biographer Ben Watson concurs<sup>14</sup>, but it would seem there is no universal agreement on which spelling is correct (or to be preferred). 'Improvisers' seems to be more widely used in the current literature, but sadly this may reflect nothing more than the fact that many automated spellcheckers will reject improvisor in favour of improviser. Having received corrections from colleagues in both directions during the writing of this thesis, I have generally used 'improviser', since this seems to be the familiar form for the majority of readers. Nevertheless, I will occasionally use 'improvisor', especially when directly discussing or quoting Bailey's thoughts or writings, both to avoid orthographic dissonance within certain passages and to reflect Bailey's preference in contexts where it seems appropriate to do so<sup>15</sup>.

The aims of this thesis can be summarised as follows. Firstly to identify and analyse the activity of those musicians experimenting with the combination of free improvisation and composition in Britain during the period under study, and identify potential imbalances in the current academic and critical literature due to the neglect of Afrological methods, assisted by the documenting of activities which might previously have been unknown or unreported. Secondly to clarify and extend the terminology currently used to describe improvised musical activity, in order to more accurately identify the aesthetic aspirations and processes associated with different approaches to improvisation. This is essential if questions of aesthetic motivation and philosophy are to be discussed in relation to the aesthetics of composition, where a much finer grid of taxonomy has accrued in academic discourse.

A third aim is to identify strategies commonly adopted to mediate, bypass or foreground the consequences of combining in performance situations the sometimes divergent aesthetics which may lie behind the practices of composition and improvisation. Finally, the thesis seeks to identify the different psychological and philosophical

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Watson (2003).

<sup>15</sup> George Lewis has used both forms in his published writings – although this may simply be a reflection of the editorial policies of different journals and publishers. Bailey was sufficiently fond of the -or suffix that he also writes 'computer' in his correspondence.

approaches to performance which may be implied by the activities of composition and improvisation, and from these extrapolates the importance of both activities while confirming the contradictions inherent in their synthesis.

In addressing these aims, Section 1 (page 19) explores the historical context of, and main actors involved in, the cross-fertilisation of British experimental and improvised musics in the latter part of the 1960s, and the work they produced together. The text also looks at a series of key 'bridging' figures and organisations, who brought these actors together or allowed their projects to be realised. Section 2 (page 65) outlines several proposed developments of the terminology currently used to discuss improvised music, including differentiating between approaches to the outcome(s) of improvisation; this section also seeks to clarify the relationship of Free Improvisation and free jazz. As noted above, such taxonomic refinement regarding different approaches to improvisation is necessary if, as in Section 3, questions of aesthetic aspiration within different improvised musics are to be compared with those which motivate composition. Section 2 also examines potential imbalances in the current critical and historical record, identifying why such imbalances may arise and what might be done to counteract them.

Section 3 (page 93) examines the interfacing of composed or pre-determined material with improvisation, and specifically Free Improvisation in Britain during the period under discussion. As part of the research on such archive material, a project was undertaken to realise contemporary versions of scores by Derek Bailey and Paul Rutherford. The issues raised during the preparation of such material for performance were documented, allowing for a much closer investigation of practical and philosophical consequences than could have been extrapolated from purely theoretical starting point. Through these examples the key characteristics of pre-determination and spontaneity are investigated, along with the implications of these for musical creativity and collaboration. The appended recordings provide audio documentation of the outcome of this process, and include all the Bailey scores for which I prepared, reconstructed or completed performing versions. Paul Rutherford's *Quasi-Mode III* is not included, since the composition dates from considerably later than the period on which I focus. (Additionally, *Quasi-Mode III* does not have the same status as a 'rediscovered' work, since the original 1980 version was both broadcast by the BBC and was part of a six-concert tour for the Arts Council's Contemporary Music Network.)

The final thesis section (page 137) looks at the broader philosophical and aesthetic implications of the (very often uneasy) relationship between improvisation and composition, and what this might tell us about the possible purposes of artistic activity in human society.

Finally, I am aware that there is a difficult balance between repeating information with which the reader may already be familiar and assuming prior knowledge that may not exist. Inevitably some readers may find an imbalance in this respect, but the passages in question are likely to be different for each person. In general, I have devoted more space in these pages to the composing improvisers than to the improvising composers, since the work of the former group seems to be less well explored in the current literature. Unfortunately, only a thesis of prohibitive length would have permitted a full exploration of all the themes I touch upon during the course of this work.

David Toop has written that

the single-minded, authorial voice of a book amounts to multiple murder: its linear form and fixity in time,

the failure of words to fully convey an experience founded in presence, the single voice that arbitrates, selects ... speaks for itself rather than speaking in multiple tongues (Toop, 2016 p. 28).

One of the results of sensitivity to these paradoxes is that many musicians choose to remain silent, or let their music speak for them. Others, like Toop himself, are wracked by the awareness of the contradictions inherent in every attempt to taxidermise the intangible. (Occasionally still others, perhaps less sensitive to paradox, step forward to commit these 'multiple murders' quite liberally.) I sincerely hope that my personal contribution to this crime spree can freely acknowledge ambiguity, without succumbing to enervation.



## section 1: dramatis personæ & mise en scène

### 1a: historical & social background

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*The history of European composition may be considered from the perspective of advances made by the composer over the musician ... These developments bring about the submission of the musician to ever more detailed notation; all this has allowed music to be conceived less and less as a collective experience and more and more as an individually creative act (Scott, 1991 p. 105).*

*One no longer has patience to play the written notes [even] for the first time (C.P.E. Bach, quoted in Childs et al., 1982 p. 72; brackets in original).*

The period 1960-1975 represents a mould-shattering epoch in many areas of British life and culture, but it is not the intention to provide an overview of the social or artistic history of the period here. For general background on the specific musical activities and historical context which provide the starting points for this thesis Blake (1997), Carr (2008), Heining (2012), McKay (2005) and Tilbury (2008) are strongly recommended; however, there follows a brief summary of some of the main aspects of this historical context. The election of Britain's first majority Labour government in 1945 provided the basis for an unprecedented raft of social reforms – the so-called 'cradle-to-grave' welfare state conceived by William Beveridge, and implemented by the government of Clement Attlee. One of the many effects of this radical revision of access to healthcare and education was the dramatic increase in educational possibility and aspiration for the children of less wealthy (or less socially well-connected) families, including education at levels previously only available to those with the financial means to underwrite extended periods of study. Subsequently, as Eddie Prévost remarks, 'better health, better education and more money to spend meant that young people were confident enough to reject the mores and the general culture of their parents and insist upon something else' (Prévost, 2001a p. 21).

John Tilbury has observed that "'freedom" and "security" were an attractive, though ephemeral, dividend in the package of benefits which had been bestowed upon the British people after the Second World War through the creation of the Welfare State' (Tilbury, 2008 p. 292). One of the (possibly unforeseen) outcomes of this peaceable social revolution (combined with the relative stability of the absence of war<sup>1</sup>) was a dramatic explosion in creativity among one or two generations of British youth, particularly perhaps those coming to maturity in the late 1950s to mid 1960s; much of this creativity found fruition in music. During this time music in post-war Europe and North America underwent a series of fundamental revisions of its means of production and distribution. These would include electrification and the emergence of 'pop music', the increasing availability and affordability within the youth marketplace of both vinyl singles/LPs (and the playback equipment required to enjoy and share them) and the transistorisation of radio sets and record-players (resulting in cheap, portable methods of ready access to the music of a nascent youth subculture). The associated astonishingly accelerated evolution of pop and rock music between (for example) 1962 and 1975 would in itself supply evidence of an explosion of creative energy among a certain generation of UK musicians, and similarly (if not quite so spectacularly) exploratory work

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<sup>1</sup> Or rather the absence of widely-acknowledged international ('World') conflict, since various wars both cold and hot continued through this period.

was simultaneously being undertaken in jazz and contemporary composition; the creative energy of the period seemed reluctant to be contained within previously-defined genres, resulting in an exciting period of cross-disciplinary work.

While questioning power relationships and the relevance of inherited structures of authority and deference was a prime mover behind the activity of many *soixante-huitards* of all nationalities; this study considers two groups of British musicians for whom this issue seemed particularly apposite and pressing. These groups can be broadly (and hence inevitably simplistically) characterised as follows: on the one hand a group of **post-avant-garde experimentalists** whose roots lie within the traditions of classical music performance, albeit at its most experimental and subversive nexus; on the other a group of **post-jazz improvisers** developing (mainly) out of modal and early free jazz improvisation, and using the highly-developed improvisational sensitivity of the jazz tradition to question ideas about structure and predetermination.

## 1b: the musicians in question

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*There is today, however, a small but growing number of musicians who are attempting to restore lost communality to Western music, to restore the importance of the creative process over that of the glossy finished product; perhaps the most visible of these attempts lies in a return to the improvisatory roots of music (Small, 1980 p. 175).*

*Acrimonious personal feuds, historical revisionism and poor scholarship have since obscured the complex interactions of this period, but at the time, the impact of these [improvising] players, all different but all working to a more or less common aim, was like the weight of a wrecking ball hitting the side of a municipal building (Toop, 2006 para. 27)*

### ***the post-avant-garde experimentalists***

I identify thus a group of composers or composer/performers who, in Cage's terms, were seeking or proposing a 'way of getting things done' (see page 11) which would provide an alternative to the prevailing trends of contemporary composed music at that time. Among them was Cornelius Cardew, who frequently acts as a familiar figurehead for the group of British experimental composers of this period; a cluster of musicians who, disenchanted with modernism, were searching to rebalance the creative relationship between composer and performer, and revitalise the collaborative rather than executive aspects of performance. Some of them came from the (at the time) predictably middle-class background, and some of them had received the mixed blessing of an 'official' classical music training, but there are also some who fit into neither of these categories.

The composers among them found that the initial excitement of the provocative newness of the post-war Darmstadt school – with its promised *tabula rasa* approach to cultural inheritance and the old ways of doing things – was quickly tarnished by the retention of a very old-school hierarchical relationship between composer and performer, by the increasing suppression of the collaborative act of interpretative performance through the use of extremely complex and destabilising notation, and by the rapidly-established (and propagated) orthodoxy about how such music should sound. These composers and musicians were among the first in Britain to be interested in the work of Cage, and the composers of the associated New York School. But the attempt of many of the American composers to cleanse their music of personal habit, taste, preferences and prejudices also led

them to create performing situations where the collaborative input of the performer was minimised, sidestepped or turned into seemingly 'practical' tasks – since if this had not been the case, they would have suppressed their own personal preferences merely to allow the substitution of those of the performer. For a musician such as Cardew, who believed implicitly – for both musical and political/sociological reasons – in the creative musical partnership between composer and interpreter<sup>2</sup>, neither of these prevailing doctrines seemed to be fully satisfying.

A further approach to contemporary music (which, despite being considerably less well-known at the time, ultimately proved very influential on British experimentalism) was represented by those composers working under the strong influence of various movements in 20<sup>th</sup> century Fine Art. The Fluxus Movement embodied a much more Performance and Conceptual Art approach to the realisation of a musical event, with often open-ended, self-contradictory and occasionally physically-impossible performance instructions completely replacing any kind of musical indications. In such a situation the collaboration of the performer or realiser of such a work is of course, crucial – although in many of these pieces, the performance outcomes are often by no means exclusively (conventionally) musical – or even musical at all. One of the very few performers of this type of music in Britain in the early 1960s was Cornelius Cardew, whose 1959 encounter with La Monte Young was 'decisive' (unsourced quotation in Tilbury, 2008 p. 334).

Another key figure for the British Experimentalists was Christian Wolff, a composer who studied with Cage and has been closely associated with him and other members of Cage's circle throughout his life, but who has consistently placed much greater emphasis on non-hierarchical collaborative processes shared between composer and performer (and listener)<sup>3</sup>. Wolff's life-long commitment to stimulating a genuinely collaborative and creative relationship with the performer, through scores which combine simplicity, elegance, vagueness, contradiction and complexity in varying measure<sup>4</sup>, sets him apart from many of the composers with whom his name is often linked. A clear example of such a difference would be Wolff's response to The Scratch Orchestra's controversial performance of his piece *Burdocks* in Munich in 1972 (Tilbury, 2008 pp. 605-609). While Cage, Feldman and Tudor (who were in attendance) felt compelled to publicly denounce the performance, Wolff responded with a calm magnanimity which resonates with his musico-political philosophy. He told Cole Gagne 'It wasn't recorded, so I haven't heard it and can't tell you, but I suspect that it's perfectly okay; especially given the nature of that particular group, that it would have been very beautiful' (Wolff, 1992/2017 p. 155). The composer's contention that a score 'must make possible the freedom and dignity of the performers' (Wolff, 1998 p. 86) makes clear why he was such a significant influence on the development of Cardew's work, and Wolff expressed a reciprocal interest in the work of both The Scratch Orchestra and AMM, with whom he played during 1967/68 (and subsequently on sporadic occasions).

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<sup>2</sup> 'What was of primary concern to Cardew was to evolve a way – rather than a method – of notating music which could express the subtleties and nuances, the indeterminacies, and above all the mutuality, of the composer/performer relation.' (Tilbury, 2008 p. 234)

<sup>3</sup> Clemens Gresser (2010), in examining what he describes as co-creatorship in the scores of Wolff and associated composers, has identified three levels of such activity in Wolff's *Prose Collection*: the performer as 'structuring co-creator', as 'improvisatory co-creator' or as 'creative co-creator'.

<sup>4</sup> As Gresser observes, in many of Wolff's compositions 'instructions which are relatively simple to understand can create difficulties and complexities in performance' (Gresser, 2010 p. 203).

Both Fluxus and the work of Wolff were key touchstones for Cardew's work with The Scratch Orchestra. On his return from working as Stockhausen's assistant in the early 1960s, Cardew was driven by disenchantment – not only with Stockhausen in particular, but with high modernism in general. Specifically with the lack of trust in – and creative collaboration with – the performers, and with what he saw as the inflexibility and imprisoning effect of the scores of total serialism. Cardew had been particularly struck by the fact that a huge amount of time and energy was devoted to realising highly complicated notations for passages which could have been improvised from more general instructions with almost exactly the same results. Of a particularly complex passage in *Carré* that he had spent considerable time realising he wrote: 'all because Karlheinz is afraid of musicians (orchestral) – doesn't trust them to respond to the prescription "start low then play fast passage ending high" and such like' (Cardew, quoted in Tilbury, 2008 p. 84).

But if Stockhausen was 'afraid' of the musicians, as Cardew put it, perhaps he had good reason, and I shall explore these questions further in Section 3. Cardew's own strategies to try and turn back a perceived tide of musical alienation led him through an exciting and heady labyrinth: from indeterminacy, partial abdication of composerly responsibility<sup>5</sup>, graphic and text scores to the free-wheeling collectivity of the early Scratch Orchestra, and freely improvised music with AMM. Cardew's activity is probably the most widely documented part of the British improvisation/experimental composition interface, and as I shall discuss later his presence has tended to contribute towards a potential imbalance in critical investigation of this period.

However, Cardew is not the only British experimental composer to have performed with key improvisers at this time, in both free and structured settings. Christopher Hobbs also performed with AMM for a period of three years (see page 35), and Hugh Shrapnel and Howard Skempton played alongside AMM and Paul Rutherford in Cardew's *The Tiger's Mind* in December 1967 (as did Christian Wolff)<sup>6</sup>. Skempton and Michael Parsons (along with Wolff and Frederic Rzewski) also joined AMM for the premiere of Wolff's *Edges* in May 1968<sup>7</sup>. Gavin Bryars improvised regularly with Derek Bailey and Tony Oxley during their collective early exploration of freedom (see page 35), while Victor Schonfield's Music Now Ensemble<sup>8</sup> brought together performers such as Hobbs, Cardew, Prévost, Bryars, Skempton, Hugh Davies, John Tilbury, Keith Rowe, Maggie Nicols, Michael Chant, Michael Parsons, Tim Souster and Tom Phillips among others; I shall examine some of these 'cross-over' projects further in Section 1c.

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<sup>5</sup> e.g. *Octet '61*. As Cardew remarks: 'the piece will be known and remembered (if at all) as the piece where something peculiar happens in the middle' (Cardew, 1962 p. 38). Given the importance of this 'something', it is perhaps ironic that Cardew leaves this, above all, to the performer. Note Derek Bailey's comment about composers seeking 'some sensational event that blows everybody away' (quoted in Watson, 2004 p. 103); Bailey was involved in performances of *Octet '61* with the 'Instelimp' group discussed in Section 1c (page 57).

<sup>6</sup> See Tilbury (2008 p. 322).

<sup>7</sup> See Hicks & Asplund (2012 p. 41).

<sup>8</sup> The promoter and manager/agent Victor Schonfield had a signal influence on the development of what Benjamin Piekut has called 'the mixed avant-garde' in London during the late 1960s. Piekut (2014) is an invaluable source of information on (and discussion of) the activities of Schonfield's 'Music Now' organisation, and the reader is referred to this text for fascinating detail on Music Now's activities between 1967 and 1976. Leigh (1975) also gives valuable background.

### *the post-jazz improvisers*

The second group of British musicians heading towards freedom at this time also shared a strong American influence on their creative thinking, but this time the influence was more African-American (i.e. from a culture whose practical methodology had had very little influence on the course of American 'classical' music, despite the latter's occasional adoption of its idiomatic characteristics), and specifically that of developments in free and experimental jazz; as this group is less widely discussed in current academic literature, I shall discuss them and their background in a little more depth. For any British musician coming to maturity between (approximately) 1940 and 1980 and who worked outside the rarefied atmosphere of European concert music, the jazz vocabulary was paramount. Quite apart from the natural appeal this 'musicians' music' often exerts on instrumentalists of all nationalities, it (and the improvisational, compositional and arranging languages and techniques derived from it) also formed the basis of the musical mainstream - light entertainment, easy listening and popular song – that was most Britons' musical heritage until the rock/pop generation were old enough to assume positions of institutional cultural power. While this situation is by no means unique to Britain, the cultural closeness between Britain and America during the war period of the early 1940s<sup>9</sup> – and the subsequent widespread popularity of American Big Bands and their British emulators – laid the foundations of the pervasive influence of jazz (or at least swing) music throughout British popular culture in the subsequent three or four decades. As Heining observes, 'the influence of America on the UK and its culture during the fifties and sixties was huge, and made more penetrable both by [sic] America's economic and military dominance' (Heining, 2012 p. 130). The closeness of this link is not quite so evident in many other European countries; despite many countries having a very dedicated and passionate jazz segment among their cultural consumers, their underlying popular music traditions of the period often reflect more specific geographical influences.

The post-jazz improvisers presented, in general, a different social profile to the musicians in experimental composition circles. Like many of his composing colleagues, Cardew had a solidly (if somewhat unconventionally) middle-class background; during the 1950s and 60s musicians without such expectations and connections would more often find their musical education in commercial music-making – or, particularly relevant to the group of British improvisers of the late 1960s, National (Military) Service – rather than the hallowed establishments of Academy or Conservatoire. Such was the broad background of the post-jazz improvisers, who in many cases are also post-'functional music' improvisers<sup>10</sup>. Several of the key figures in early British improvised music share this background in functional music-making – Derek Bailey, Paul Rutherford, John Stevens, Trevor Watts and Tony Oxley having extensive experience of military and/or commercial practice.

For British musicians from modest backgrounds, the armed forces had traditionally served as a way of developing their skills and accessing professional training; the second period of conscripted military service for British young men ran from 1939 to 1960, with the last batch of conscripts leaving the service in 1963<sup>11</sup> - this clearly ties in with the social 'liberation' which many young people felt during this period, and it is unsurprising that this seems to have stimulated a burst of creativity among ex-Services musicians at the time. David Toop observes that

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<sup>9</sup> A closeness could be characterised as cultural colonisation; see Lyons (2013) for more detailed background.

<sup>10</sup> Functional music in the sense of *Gebrauchsmusik*, or utility music.

<sup>11</sup> See Conscription in the United Kingdom (n.d.)

So many of these players – Albert Ayler, Roscoe Mitchell, Anthony Braxton, Eric Dolphy, Stevens, Watts, Rutherford, Lol Coxhill, Tony Oxley and Derek Bailey – served in the armed forces. Whatever they learnt as musicians from military bands, their subsequent devotion to various versions of musical freedom and freedom of living stood in stark contrast to the discipline forced upon them (Toop, 2016 p. 264).

While it is undeniable that in many cases a highly unsympathetic environment can help in clarifying – if by nothing more than contra-reaction – an individual's underlying sympathies, there have of course been many military musicians who have subsequently been quite happy to operate within the 'normal' disciplines of idiomatic music-making; but clearly the thirst for freedom within some players caused them to react in a catalytic way. It's also perhaps important to differentiate between those musicians who were obliged to undertake military service, and those who chose to do so. The U.S. musicians listed above had no choice about their military service, conscription being obligatory in the U.S. until 1973 (meaning all the Americans Toop mentions were of an age to be subject to 'the draft'). Of the British players, Bailey, Coxhill, Watts and Oxley were old enough to be caught by the National Service Act of 1948, whereas the slightly younger Stevens and Rutherford were volunteers<sup>12</sup>. Trevor Watts details some of the mechanics of this process in Watts (1994); the RAF music course lasted five years, and volunteers would sign up for this period; conscripted men would add three extra years to their compulsory two-year commitment, of which one year would be spent at the RAF School of Music in Uxbridge. In fact, RAF music included a much wider range of ensembles and idioms than purely military bands. The author of *A brief history of RAF Music Services* observes that

In the lead up to World War II there was a huge expansion of RAF Music Services with many civilian professional musicians being drafted directly into the new ensembles. Additional military bands were provided initially on a command basis, with the RAF Symphony Orchestra and the famous 'Squadronaires' Dance Band also being established. The new groups included some of the country's finest musicians such as Dennis Brain, Norman Del Mar and Gareth Morris. In fact no theatrical agent of the time could possibly have afforded such a stunning array of talent, making The RAF Squadronaires and the RAF Symphony Orchestra in particular the 'super groups' of their day during the conscription era of the war years (*A brief history of RAF Music Services*, n.d. para. 3)

One of the key British improvising musicians of the 1960s, John Stevens described how he first became aware of the possibility (as a young working-class man) of getting a 'free' musical education. A friend and fellow would-be musician was slightly older than Stevens, and was therefore eligible for compulsory National Service:

In 1957, he goes into the forces, he gets called up right? And his first leave he contacts me and says, 'Guess what!', I said, 'What?', he says 'I'm going to a music school', I went, '*fu-uck*, fuckin hell, how come?'. It was for the airforce [sic] band, from training you go to Uxbridge school of music for a year and

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<sup>12</sup> George McKay (2005 p. 262) states of Stevens, Watts, Rutherford and Graham Collier that 'all would anyway have been called up for National Service', but this is not quite true; Stevens and Rutherford were born after the crucial 1<sup>st</sup> October 1939 cut-off date. Despite compulsory National Service having been abandoned in 1960, would-be musicians continued to sign up for the armed forces since it represented a way of acquiring extensive training and skills that did not depend on social connections or family prosperity. John Tilbury notes that Cardew avoided National Service 'by the simple ploy of failing to sign on', but gives no further details (Tilbury, 2008 p. 22).

then out to a band and spend the rest of the time as a musician. When he came back and told me that[,] I was doing a day job at the time ... I thought 'Right, this is it, I'm off', so on Saturday morning I went off to the recruitment office. I just missed National Service so I actually didn't have to go in, but I just thought, 'Right, that's it, I wanna be a musician now!' And that seemed to give the opportunity where immediately you were gonna be a musician. Now, I wasn't thinking about the nature of being in the forces and all the fucking uniform bit and square-bashing, I didn't even think about that (Stevens, quoted in Scott, 1991 pp. 242-243; emphasis in original).

The spell in the Royal Air Force seems to have transformed Stevens' life – not only did he meet fellow Forces members Paul Rutherford, Trevor Watts, (trombonist) Chris Pyne, (clarinettist) John Rangelcroft and (flautist and saxophonist) Bob Downes, but a posting overseas allowed him to play with much more established musicians, and also opened an exciting international window for him:

I was stationed in Germany and I actually depped for Kenny Clarke - at a rehearsal with J.J. Johnson, Jimmy Woods. Sat in with Tubby Hayes, Albert Nicholas the New Orleans clarinet player. If I'd been [in London] I don't think that would have happened, and, the influence of [John] Coltrane and Ornette [Coleman] was much more prevalent there than it seemed to be here. There was a tenor player called Hors Jeagar [sic], I played with him, Manfred Schoof, the trumpet player, Alex Schlippenbach, the pianist and Bushie [sic] Niebergall on bass (Stevens, quoted in Scott, 1991 p. 243).

Paul Rutherford describes the 'middle-class = classical music / working-class = popular music' divide which was perceived as implicit in the British cultural understanding of the time<sup>13</sup>:

At 18 I decided that I wanted to go to music college because I wanted to play music. But I had a certain naivety that I couldn't get into music college because I didn't have enough money or didn't have enough qualifications, which in retrospect probably wasn't the case at all ... it was fairly accessible to people but I just didn't know ... I think that was probably to do with my background, thinking, oh, music college is to do with classical music which generally relates to wealthy or middle class families, there's a definite hierarchical strata [sic], working class people won't really understand or appreciate classical music unless it's the *Warsaw Concerto*<sup>14</sup> or something like that (Rutherford, quoted in Scott, 1991 p. 272).

In fact, Stevens makes explicit the link between the ranks of the armed forces and the constraints on the social

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<sup>13</sup> Clearly this long-standing perception had (has) more to do with educational possibilities than innate ability or interest. Jonathan Rose gives ample evidence of the so-called working class's interest in and knowledge of classical music (see Rose, 2010 pp. 196-206) but he notes that for most working people in pre-1945 Britain 'only the Sunday schools offered opportunities for serious musical education, performance and composition, via hymns and oratorios' (p. 196, citing Laqueur).

<sup>14</sup> Richard Addinsell's *Warsaw Concerto* is a short work for piano and orchestra in a pastiche Rachmaninov style, written for the 1941 British film *Dangerous Moonlight*. Although written in a pseudo-classical language, it was enormously popular with a very wide audience, becoming symptomatic for some of what would later be known as 'dumbing down'. This is epitomised by the fact that British pianist Louis Kentner, who played the solo piano part on the soundtrack, insisted that there be no on-screen credit, as – according to the music's orchestrator Roy Douglas – 'he thought his reputation might suffer if it were known that he had played for films' (Douglas, 2002 p. 216).

structure in 1950s Britain: 'I maintained the lowest rank you could possibly have for five years! I was officially thick anyway so, well, what do you expect from somebody who's got such a low rank?' (Stevens, quoted in Scott, 1991 p. 245). However, Rutherford subsequently crossed what he had considered a class divide; upon leaving the RAF, he spent four years at London's Guildhall School of Music & Drama, an experience which he describes as 'basically classical music' (Rutherford, quoted in Scott, 1991 p. 280). However, this 'classical music' activity included involvement in the Guildhall's Contemporary Music Society, and he reports playing music by Stockhausen, Varèse and Stravinsky, among others<sup>15</sup>. It was doubtless these experiences which gave him the confidence (and notation-reading technique) to attempt his subsequent (in)famous refashioning of Berio<sup>16</sup>, and which helped to develop the skills which first brought him into contact with Barry Guy.

Some 10 years older than the main group of British improvisers under discussion, Derek Bailey followed a less academic (which in this period was synonymous with 'classical' or Eurological) path of instrumental study. After a brief spell in the Navy (1949-50)<sup>17</sup>, Bailey followed the well-worn route of on-the-job training in the commercial music industry. According to his own testimony, Bailey's time in the military did not involve music; 'No musical activity in the navy' he emphatically states (Bailey, quoted in Watson, 2004 p. 31). Of course, the guitar does not have any established role in marching or military band music, but it seems from Bailey's account that playing music as part of his National Service initially simply did not occur to him; as a conscript it was purely a brief period of unpleasantness to be endured before rejoining civilian life. He certainly did not show the motivation for educational self-improvement via the Services evidenced by somewhat younger players such as Watts and Oxley, or later volunteers like Stevens and Rutherford. Born in 1932, Lol Coxhill was nearer Bailey's age, and his experience of National Service seems to have been similarly unmusical, although he did keep his instrument by his side: 'spent half my time on a pig farm so the only person in danger was me; carried saxophone around with me' (Coxhill, quoted in Vinen, 2014 introduction, note 46).

Discussing his training for a career as a commercial musician (or the lack thereof), Bailey observed that 'as a band musician you were automatically in a sense self-taught, if not on the instrument then as regards the work. Nobody taught you how to play in a trio in a restaurant' (Bailey, quoted in Scott, 1991 p. 289); this situation – the traditional popular music one of learning through a mix of observation of one's peers, intuition and experience – remained the norm at least until such non-classical performance skills began to appear on college curricula in the 1980s. Although UK institutions took up this thread some 10 years after the US education system<sup>18</sup>, George

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<sup>15</sup> See Scott (1991 p. 280). The exact dates of Rutherford's time at GSMD are not clear, but must have been 1960-1964, or later. Buxton Orr (later to direct the London Jazz Composers' Orchestra) joined the faculty in 1965, so it is uncertain whether the two overlapped; Orr did not found the Guildhall New Music Ensemble until 1975 (see p. 117).

<sup>16</sup> See p. 42.

<sup>17</sup> For Bailey National Service was obligatory rather than a matter of choice. He tells Ben Watson that he chose the Navy because the period of compulsory service was slightly shorter – only 18 months (Watson, 2004 p. 31).

<sup>18</sup> A notable exception was the City of Leeds College of Music, which started conservatoire-style jazz and popular music courses in 1965. Another important exception would be Ivor Mairants' Central School of Dance Music, founded in London in 1950. Tutors included John Dankworth, Kenny Baker, Bert Weedon, Ike Isaacs, Stan Tracey, Allan Ganley and classical clarinettist Jack Brymer. Brymer is an interesting figure; despite being described by *The Times* as "the leading clarinettist of his generation, perhaps of the century" (Goodwin, 1995), he was from a working class background and was self-taught, having had no formal training as a clarinettist; he was working as a schoolteacher when Sir Thomas Beecham appointed him to take over from Reginald Kell as principal clarinet of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Brymer clearly presents a

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Lewis' comment about the autodidactic tradition in US non-classical music is equally applicable to British musicians of a slightly later period; he describes

a tradition of autodidacticism that dominated jazz performance learning until the 1960s and 1970s, when the rise of secondary and postsecondary jazz education began, all but overwhelming the earlier pedagogical model by the early twenty-first century (Lewis, 2008 p. 38).

Writing of British jazz musicians of the 1930s and 40s, Eric Hobsbawm notes that they

came either from musical or show-business families, or more usually from a working-class background, with the usual admixture of bohemian ex-clerks and students. The working class background was inevitably strong, since the most obvious school in which the musician learned his [sic] trade was one which, both as a professional military and as an amateur civilian institution, has long been part of the British working class, especially the skilled part: the brass band (Hobsbawm [writing as Francis Newton], quoted in Heining, 2012 p. 45).

Hobsbawm's definition of the jazz (and later improvising) musician's traditional career route is one which resonates strongly with many of the musicians discussed in this thesis. As Heining writes, 'learning on the job or in the classroom create differing sets of opportunities and musical possibilities' (Heining, 2012 p. 57), and the inherent (Afrological) malleability of popular music and jazz concepts of correctness and accuracy when compared to those of (Eurological) repertoire classical music has always made this field of activity a more welcoming one for gifted musicians with idiosyncratic or informal training. This is not to imply that the British jazz community of the 1960s was exclusively working class, but its formula of a majority of working class and a minority of middle class musicians presents itself in mirrored opposition to classical music of the time. As Barbara Thompson (a member of the New Jazz Orchestra in the mid-sixties) observed of her occasionally 'drunk and leery'<sup>19</sup> male colleagues 'they left me alone because of [my] being quite middle class, which was a bit unusual in those days' (Thompson, quoted in Heining, 2012 p. 297; brackets in original)<sup>20</sup>.

Comparing the socio-political situation of the working-class British improvisers with the adventurous American musicians who inspired them, Eddie Prévost has remarked that 'ethnic identity has been very important for black American musicians. My own view is that the ethnic-colour stratification is a localised way of dealing with a class struggle' (Prévost, quoted in McKay, 2005 p. 10). While some commentators might point out that Prévost's down-playing of 'ethnic-colour stratification' is a typical *white* musician's response, I believe that the revised balance of the importance of race and class which he proposes is of importance when studying British (as opposed to American) jazz and improvised music of the 1950s to 1970s.

The racial dynamics of British music during this period are somewhat different to those pertaining to the U.S.A. (although less explicitly prejudiced than contemporary American society, British racism could nevertheless have

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exception to the class bias strand I have been suggesting.

<sup>19</sup> In addition to its dictionary definition, in British slang this term can also mean 'rowdy' or 'boisterous'.

<sup>20</sup> Of course, it was perhaps Thompson's other 'unusual' characteristic – her gender – which might have made her an initial focal point for such 'leeriness' in the first place.

significant consequences for black British musicians), but there also existed in Britain less vicious but nonetheless restrictive parallels in the pointed and highly developed distinctions of social class prejudice which had been the hallmark of British life since the industrial revolution<sup>21</sup>. While George Lewis writes that 'European free improvisers were apparently free to pursue their art unburdened by the dynamics associated with being part of a minority people or a racially oppressed or otherwise subaltern group' (Lewis, 2004 p. 85), for at least the first part of its history European improvised music was very much an outsider art, made for the most part by those whose social and academic background might traditionally have excluded them from creative artistic activity. As George McKay observes in this respect, 'in important ways aspects of class map on to debates about race and national ethnicity' (McKay, 2005 p. 99).

The continuing significance of such a mapping was confirmed to McKay by Gary Crosby when discussing the much-debated Jazz Warriors/Loose Tubes contrapositioning in the London jazz scene of the 1980s. Crosby observed that 'the more important factor really from those two big bands is not so much that one was black and the other white ... but that *our parents were working class*' (Crosby, quoted in McKay, 2005 p. 164; emphasis in original). As McKay summarises,

their working-class status dictated that [formal] music education would not be a top priority or family expectation – unlike, in their view, for the students at the Royal Academy of Music, who made up much of the membership of Loose Tubes (McKay, 2005 p. 164).

Of course, the founder members of AMM were not unaware of the social difference between themselves and another RAM alumnus who found their work so inspiring, the middle-class eccentric Cornelius Cardew. Tilbury points out (2008 p. 290) that the social gulf between Cardew and his colleagues was marked and did not pass unnoticed; as Tilbury observes '*Class was Cardew's Achilles heel, as it was for many of his middle-class peers*' (ibid., emphasis in the original), but the irrational feelings of inferiority historically engendered in many working-class members of the British class system could prove just as sensitive and destabilising. Many years later, Eddie Prévost reflected that 'Cardew's idea of projecting to the workers, and from his extraordinarily privileged social position – it felt very uncomfortable at the time, and with hindsight seems so wrong' (Prévost, in McKay, 2005 p. 205)<sup>22</sup>.

In *Indeterminacy, Free Improvisation, and the Mixed Avant-Garde* Benjamin Piekut touches upon the implicit class distinction involved in the categorisation of musical activity at this time, although he articulates this in a racially-sensitised reading which follows the Lewis line relatively closely. In discussing the 'serious music' improvising groups AMM and MEV, Piekut describes them as post-Cagean, and observes that these groups are 'commonly thought to have employed a special kind of improvisation that avoids self-expression and emotion, even though members of both groups (particularly Cardew, Curran, and Rzewski) often commented on their practice in precisely these terms' (Piekut, 2014 p. 2). Having thus hinted at the idea that perception of these groups' activity is possibly more a result of retrospective aesthetic *triage* than what the musicians themselves actually said, did or played at the time, he goes on to observe that 'the difference between these groups and, say,

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<sup>21</sup> 'England is the most class-ridden country under the sun' (Orwell, 1970 p. 87).

<sup>22</sup> For Christopher Fox, however, Cardew's background as a cathedral chorister and Royal Academy of Music student represents 'an archetypically English musical education' (Cardew, 2006 p. 371).

London's Spontaneous Music Ensemble (SME) or the Art Ensemble of Chicago, would seem to turn on questions of educational background and the racial associations that accrued to musical style' (ibid.); this relationship between 'serious' and 'non-serious' improvising groups is discussed further in section 2b (page 83). In his essay Piekut returns repeatedly to the question of 'racial associations', but perhaps from a British reader's perspective he understates the question of prejudice also arising from educational (and usually by implication social class) background. The balance between these two faces of the discriminatory coin would be dramatically different for the SME and the AEC; while it seems evident that the Britain of the 1960s was a considerably more racist society than that of 2016<sup>23</sup>, this racism had less effect upon British musicians in general simply because (compared to their American colleagues) far fewer of them would have fallen into the racist's category of 'non-white'. Piekut himself observes that

one reason that this kind of heterogeneous avant-garde could emerge in the UK has to do with the racial homogeneity of its participants ... It was easier to keep post-Cage and post-Coleman free musics in the same conversation when this convergence took place on a plane of whiteness (Piekut, 2014 p. 38).

Summarising Hilary Moore (2007), Heining notes that 'she does not ignore the pernicious and sometimes virulent racism of many white British people that was expressed towards such immigrants'; but he also notes that 'there are marked differences between situations of formal and enforced segregation and the informal, everyday prejudice encountered by black people' (Heining, 2012 p. 70) during this period (and subsequently). However, if formal or explicit prejudice based on skin colour was (arguably) less of an everyday experience for most British musicians compared to their American colleagues, the implications of social and educational background were practically omnipresent, skin colour notwithstanding. Impoverished working class British families were historically little better equipped to deal with the financial implications of an advanced musical training than their African-American analogues, resulting in both groups favouring the Afrological approach of auto didacticism, partial training and learning-through-doing – Lewis' 'earlier pedagogical model' (see page 27); although the narrative in Lewis (2008) primarily concerns African-American jazz, this pedagogical tradition has also dominated more general working class or socially underprivileged arts performance learning in Britain and elsewhere.

However, this modelling does not necessarily represent a simplistic privilege = opportunity equation. Muhal Richard Abrams observed 'I was determined to teach myself because that way I could go directly at what I wanted' (Abrams, quoted in Lewis, 2008 p.56), and the urgency of creativity implied in this statement has tended to be the hallmark of many musicians who have shared a similarly unorthodox preparation for a lifetime of innovational activity; the directness of this experience is occasionally a source of envy for more traditionally schooled musicians. It is clear that whatever social repression British working-class musicians may have felt subjected to could not compare with the institutionalised racism which was prevalent in some US states during the early 1960s; but mirroring the civil rights emphasis of much African-American proto-free jazz, musicians such as Stevens, Rutherford and AMM also attached great importance to the non-hierarchical and collaborative aspects of the developing (non-)idiom of Free Improvisation. (For at least some of them – e.g. Rutherford, Rowe – this was an explicitly Political act, as indeed it was for Cardew and several of his peers in the world of composed music.)

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<sup>23</sup> Manfred Mann arrived in the UK from apartheid-era South Africa in 1961, and remarks that 'I was amazed to find a lot more racism than I had expected. I saw NO BLACKS signs and that made me feel uneasy here' (quoted in McKay, 2005 p. 125).

Unlike their notation-interpreting colleagues, the crisis for the British improvisers was less one of oppression-through-notation (as discussed on page 20) than the urgent need to explore the spectrum of freedoms made available by liberation-through-improvisation. As long-form improvisation came to dominate the modern jazz of the early 60s, it inevitably raised questions about the value of the traditional composed starting-points for these improvisations, and some jazz musicians adopted 'free-form' playing in the late 1950s and early 60s. But Bailey and some of his colleagues were seeking to sever the hierarchical relationships that still bound free jazz musicians in quasi-traditional roles (even when professedly improvising freely), and to do so they felt they had to reform the language spoken by these musicians. For Bailey and Stevens in particular, a key starting point was the music of Anton Webern; the British improvisers were provocatively stimulated by developments in European composed music in tandem with the experiments of Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor or John Coltrane. The attraction for some improvisers lay not so much in the theoretical excitement of a virtuosic deployment of serialism as in the very specific nature of Webern's soundworld, to which serialism was one among several contributing factors. Michael Nyman describes Cage, Feldman and Wolff as being 'not so much interested in how Webern's music was written and constructed than how it sounded' (Nyman, 1974 p. 33), and this resonates with Evan Parker's comment about contemporary composed music of the period – 'I don't listen to these things for their realisation of formal concepts but only to the way they work as sounds' (Parker, quoted in Carr, 2008 p. 91).



**Figure 1: a sketch (1966/67) for the third of Derek Bailey's *Three Pieces for Guitar*, showing the use of a tone row and its inversion**

Nevertheless, Derek Bailey was also profoundly intrigued by how Webern's music was constructed – his personal archive contains several compositions from this period which manipulate tone rows and investigate Webern-like gestures and intervals (see Figure 1). Even more importantly for Bailey, Webern provided an example of how the standard expectations generated by even an extended harmonic and tonal system could be side-stepped. Bailey remarked that 'tonality is like an argument, and the answers to the questions are always the same... Atonality is a way of moving from one point to another without answering questions... Atonality has a non-grammatical quality, a non-causal sequence to it' (quoted in Watson, 2004 p. 213)<sup>24</sup>. But within a few years

<sup>24</sup> Watson does not ask Bailey to elucidate on this; I would suggest that Bailey does not mean that every tonal 'question'

[footnote continues on next page]

he had come to see that he needed to move beyond atonality to what he described as non-tonality: 'It became necessary to reject all tonal, modal and atonal organisation in order to leave the way free to organise only through the powers of improvisation' (D. Bailey, 1980 p. 127).

But even while Bailey's brief compositional career was following this progression, he was realising that with equally adventurous playing partners his 'non-tonal' language could realise an improvised music which was much more vital and immediate than the mechanics of composition would allow. Free improvisation can very quickly result in extraordinary and dramatic music; of course it can also result in much less extraordinary music, but as Bailey realised it shares these potential outcomes with pre-determined music *without* the investment in work-specific preparation and a general hierarchical command-and-control structure which composition tends to imply.

### ***'lazy, irresponsible, insular and useful'***

To be a working musician in the 50s in, say, a dance hall, pub or club was to belong to a highly visible but totally ignored tiny part of society. Its behaviour was usually unconventional, sometimes anti-social, its expectations minimal and its habits often outside the law but, as far as I re[me]mber, there was no pressure to conform. We were thought of as alien, I think, but accepted because we fulfilled a necessary function. It was an odd situation which offered a great deal of licence and most of the people I knew at that time took full advantage of it. The common attitude towards the rest of the world and what went on in it was either complete indifference or derision. More important matters had to be attended to such as middle 8s, changes, voicings, time, the mysteries of the ear and the height of the strings at the 12th fret. Self-justification was unnecessary and unthought of. That's how we were; lazy, irresponsible, insular and useful (D. Bailey, n.d.-a).

The working background of musicians such as Bailey and his peers forms a key part of their later attitude to non-commercial activity, but the nature of live commercial music-making up to and including the 1970s is not widely understood by those who were never part of a now-extinct lifestyle on the fringes of respectable society; I intend to examine this background in part through reference to the early years of my own musical training. My experiences as a lower-middle class<sup>25</sup> British improviser (initially earning a living as a commercial music freelancer) are separated from those of Bailey, Stevens, Oxley et al. by a period of some 15-20 years; however, although the amount of working opportunities available noticeably reduced in the intervening period, the actual type of work undertaken and the structures and lifestyle associated with it remained essentially the same. (This

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always demands the same answer, but that while any answer may be given, it is always heard in relation to a given harmonic question. Whether atonality dispenses with this characteristic, or merely provides less specific questions, is open to debate. Dominic Lash has observed 'Perhaps it would be better if he had referred to a "non-syntactical" quality. Syntax refers to the rules for sequential sentence construction; it was tonality's musical analogues to these rules that Bailey felt constrained an improviser unacceptably' (Lash, 2006 'The Implications of the Vocabulary' para. 9). In 1972 Bailey told Lloyd Garber that, ideally, if he played two notes there wouldn't be any point of connection, except in so far as the notes followed each other in time (Bailey [in *Guitar Energy* 1972], summarised in Kaiser, 1975 para. 62).

<sup>25</sup> Although my parents could certainly be described as having working class backgrounds, my father learnt a trade (thanks once again to National Service) and eventually made the transition into management.

is in dramatic contrast to the technology-driven decimation of low- and mid-level full-time professional music-making which took place in Britain during the 1980s and 1990s.) During the period under discussion, promising youngsters might acquire a certain (limited) amount of classical training (often in the case of earlier generations supplemented by additional tuition during National Service), and this would then form the basis for a long period of learning 'on the job'. The live entertainment infrastructure – a world of cabaret and working men's clubs, restaurants and hotels, summer seasons and pantomimes, strip clubs and local broadcasting which provided employment for thousands of musicians even away from large metropolitan centres – had already begun its long terminal decline by the mid-1970s. Nevertheless, even in 1975 a little natural talent and an ability to read music could see young musicians of school age being sucked into the occasionally shadowy world of functional music-making to deputise for (or observe the work of) their elders, often at a high level of proficiency.

The Batley Variety Club, where I began my own professional playing career, was able to boast visiting 'artistes' of varying magnitudes of stardom, despite being located in a deeply unfashionable woollen-industry-based area of West Yorkshire. As part of its programming during the late 1960s and 1970s the club presented performances by a remarkable list of performers, including The Bee Gees, Shirley Bassey, Tina Turner, Tom Jones, Roy Orbison, Eartha Kitt, Louis Armstrong, Johnny Mathis, Neil Sedaka, The Everly Brothers, The Four Tops, The Supremes, Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, The Platters and The Hollies. These performers would normally undertake a week's residency (six shows), although this could be extended to 2 weeks or more in the case of particularly popular artists. Although pre-eminent, this club was by no means unique; during the 1970s the Wakefield Theatre Club and the Sheffield Fiesta also provided stopping-off points for performers of similar stature, and this in the West & South Yorkshire areas alone. In the days before the widespread use of pre-recorded music, such clubs were at the more glamorous end of a range of employment possibilities for commercial musicians which included hotels, restaurants, dancehalls and cafés in every town in the UK. This was the world in which many of the British improvisers developed their technique, and honed their aesthetic aspirations.

A move by some of the post-jazz group of improvisers to disassociate themselves from the last vestiges of jazz-derived rhythm, tonality and instrumental relations (and in some cases the habitual responses of instrumentalism)<sup>26</sup> allowed for interaction between these players and their composition-orientated peers – an interaction which resulted in both an improvised music practice and a contemporary music practice in Britain which have been particularly rich and open, and which still bear the stamp of some of the fruits of this period<sup>27</sup>. For a brief time, a certain degree of common purpose was felt between the two groups of musicians, and a series of connections can be traced between them in the second half of the 1960s and early 1970s.

Both these sets of musicians – the experimentally-orientated composers or notation specialists, and the freedom-seeking post-jazz improvisers – were trying to re-establish trust, collectivity and personal freedom without jettisoning decisive and incisive input from inspired individuals. As part of the artistic cauldron of 'swinging sixties' London, the two camps collaborated frequently on genre-blurring projects; a partial list would

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<sup>26</sup> See page 79 for further discussion of this question.

<sup>27</sup> For example, the work of an organisation such as CoMA (and many other educational/outreach activities in the UK) would be difficult to imagine without the ground-breaking work of The Scratch Orchestra, The Portsmouth Sinfonia and similar groups. Similarly, several generations of British musicians in varied fields of activity have found inspiration, support and empowerment through the passionate educational commitment of Cardew, Stevens and Prévost, among others.

include Eddie Prévost's *Spirals*, Cardew's *Treatise* and *The Tiger's Mind*, and groups such as AMM, The London Contemporary Chamber Players, The Portsmouth Sinfonia and others. However, by 1973 the collaborations between the two camps had started to run out of steam. Cardew himself had had a political epiphany, and moved to a form of socialist realism which severed any links with experimentalism. Many of Cardew's key associates had become seduced by the avuncular minimalism of Systems Music. Free improvisation had little part to play in the music of these newly ironic systems-based composers; Christopher Hobbs notes that he left AMM because it was getting 'sort of too mystical' (Hobbs, quoted in V. Anderson, 1983 p. 126)<sup>28</sup>. By 1972 it was becoming clear to Derek Bailey that the musical fruits that could be harvested through composition did not justify the time and ideological compromise it demanded from him; indeed, the discovery (perhaps rediscovery) that it was possible to make such extraordinary music without anyone having to act as musical leader or director (even on a temporary basis), thus sidestepping many philosophically and politically sensitive areas, was too rich a prize to abandon.

## 1c: building bridges

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*The problem for the 'composer' (individual creator) is to learn to work with other people. And you learn that as a person, not a composer (Cardew, quoted in Tilbury, 2008 p. 834).*

*Establishing a proper group rapport can be difficult 'if someone has a big ego and wants to make everything compositional' (Bertram Turetzky, quoted in Borgo, 2006 p. 17).*

### **Cornelius Cardew (1936-1981)**

Cornelius Cardew's membership of AMM from 1966 to 1972 led to him meeting and playing with four of the more provocatively creative British post-jazz musicians of the period (Eddie Prévost, Keith Rowe, Laurence Sheaff & Lou Gare), providing one of the more important bridges between new 'concert music' and free improvisation, encouraging musicians to pass in both directions. Much has been written about Cardew, the music of AMM and the relationship between the two; part of the explanation of this is the 'regular group' effect discussed below, but part is also the fact that members of AMM (in particular Eddie Prévost, and formerly Cardew) have written extensively about the aesthetic and philosophical questions behind their music. Even allowing for Bailey's seminal text on the nature and practice of improvisation (D. Bailey, 1980), other improvising musicians from this period have been significantly less expansive with respect to formal explanation and discussion of their music.

As discussed on page 28, for musicians with the backgrounds of Gare, Prévost and Rowe, Cornelius Cardew

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<sup>28</sup> When we discussed the issue in person (4<sup>th</sup> July 2015), Hobbs explained that the mysticism he had in mind was that state of mind typically associated with the popular music world of the later 1960s; psychedelic, 'spiritual' or generally 'far out'. Anyone who is familiar with the main thrust of Hobbs' mature work can imagine how he might have found working in these kind of contexts frustrating; apparently, the final straw came with Eddie Prévost's composition *Silver Pyramid*, the score/performance instructions for which consist of (to quote Prévost himself) an 'impenetrable text and the beautiful totem' of a silver pyramid – 'a wooden framed structure covered with shimmering, reflecting material that shot light out at every angle' (Prévost, 2001b). Note the similarity to the Scratch Orchestra Improvisation Rite CCIR24: 'Construct a silver pyramid. Bathe it with light. Play.' (Cardew 1969b).

would very much represent 'the establishment' – even as a wayward example of the archetype. It would be impossible for anyone with Cardew's social and educational background<sup>29</sup> to appear otherwise to the AMM founders<sup>30</sup>. As John Tilbury puts it

Cardew came from a family and was educated in a manner which instilled into him a feeling of self-belief; in this sense he was typical of his class ... he had to *learn* self-doubt whilst the likes of his fellow musicians in the AMM (and myself) had to learn self-confidence, self-belief and, most importantly, self-esteem. We were not brought up to harbour expectations; rather, to express gratitude (Tilbury, 2008 p. xviii; emphasis in original).

In the social class-conscious atmosphere of 60s Britain Cardew's middle-classness, along with his being somewhat older and definitely better known in the 'straight' music world, might have implied a 'seniority' to his improvising colleagues (and some music critics and journalists assumed without other evidence that he was thus the leader of AMM<sup>31</sup>); but Cardew found working with Prévost, Gare, Rowe (and initially Sheaff) an intensely stimulating and liberating experience – allowing him to radically develop his ideas about music, its creation and performance<sup>32</sup>. As 'the improvisers' had little previous track record, it is harder to point to any significant changes in the music-making practices of the AMM founder members, but the subsequent 40 years of music making does point to a great stability in the nature of AMM and with what it tends to concern itself. In 1982, Christopher Hobbs – whose own role in this history will be examined shortly – proposed of AMM's music that 'it didn't really change very much when Cornelius joined', to which Keith Rowe added:

Right. [...] I think we'd have always done what we did, I think AMM would have come out as AMM, even if Cornelius hadn't joined, but it would have taken us longer to achieve that confidence (Rowe, quoted in Childs et al., 1982 p. 36).

Although Cardew had had his first 'free' improvisation experiences with *Il Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza* in 1964<sup>33</sup> (where he met Larry Austin, and heard recordings of his 'stand-up composing' improvisation work with the New Music Ensemble of Davis, California, from the previous year), he seems to have remained unsure of his relationship to this kind of work until he joined AMM. In the *Treatise Handbook* of 1971 he writes

Up to [January 1966], improvisation had always terrified me; I thought it must be something like composing, but accelerated a million times, a feat of which I knew I was incapable (Cardew, 2006 p. 114).

There are several indications in Cardew's writings that he found the experience of improvising with AMM exhilarating and transformational; but perhaps the most significant indicator of the effect it had on him is the fact that, according to Tilbury, 1966 (the year of his joining AMM) was the first year since Cardew 'became a

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<sup>29</sup> Canterbury Cathedral Choir School, the King's School (Canterbury), Royal Academy of Music etc.

<sup>30</sup> See Tilbury (2008 p. 290) for a useful summary of these players' social background.

<sup>31</sup> See Tilbury (2008 p. 326).

<sup>32</sup> See Tilbury (2008 pp. 285-286, 291).

<sup>33</sup> See Tilbury (2008 p. 186).

composer' that he did not finish a single composition (Tilbury, 2008 p. 321).

During this period Christopher Hobbs was a student – for a time the only student – of Cardew at the Royal Academy of Music, and probably became aware of the work of AMM through his teacher, who was at that point a member of the group. It was however Lou Gare who asked him to 'join' AMM, inviting him to the private playing session which led to Hobbs performing with the group for 3 years<sup>34</sup>. Like Cardew, Hobbs had a background (and future) in composition, and like Cardew seems to have improvised freely mainly within the context of AMM and (debatably) The Scratch Orchestra<sup>35</sup>; these facts certainly seem to inextricably link the two musicians primarily to the ethos of composed music, and their improvising period resembles a sojourn rather than a permanent commitment. Indeed the self-reflexive and separatist tendencies inherent in AMM music were somewhat at odds with the ethos of most of the improvising musicians of the period, and seem to have provided a particular resonance to those of its members with a composition heritage. This is not particularly surprising, since AMM's long-term development of a specific style (or even repertoire) of improvised gestures *could* be characterised as extremely non-instant group composition – whereas many other improvisers saw the communicative freedoms opened up by the new language as a way of exploring a huge variety of playing situations and improvisational vocabularies, looking outward rather than inward.

Cardew's subsequent conception of The Scratch Orchestra, with its considerably larger personnel, also created a context in which various composers and improvisers of the period would work together. Although this was primarily in situations which were composed, or at least 'programmed', in a way which was not always sympathetic to the work of the improvisers, there was enough indeterminacy and openness in many of the projected events to both permit and often necessitate improvisation. In particular, a large swathe of key British experimental composers were involved in the Scratch Orchestra, or revolved in its orbit; as well as Cardew and Hobbs, these included Michael Parsons, John White, Michael Chant, Hugh Shrapnel, Howard Skempton, Dave Smith and many others<sup>36</sup>.

### **Gavin Bryars (b. 1943)**

If Cardew and those directly associated with him formed a temporary bridge between compositional and improvisational approaches to music, a second important strand of communication between the two groups centred around the person and work of Gavin Bryars. For part of the 1960s Bryars was one of a small community of investigative musicians and listeners based in the South Yorkshire city of Sheffield; his membership of the Joseph Holbrooke Trio, and his work with Derek Bailey and Tony Oxley within this group, has been investigated by several authors<sup>37</sup>. By the time Joseph Holbrooke was making its final move from open and experimental modern jazz to 'non-idiomatic' playing<sup>38</sup>, Bryars had, like his colleagues, already undergone

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<sup>34</sup> See V. Anderson (1983 p. 48).

<sup>35</sup> Hobbs has relatively recently resumed free improvisation activities (especially in the Birmingham area), playing with the groups SCHH and CHA.

<sup>36</sup> For more comprehensive information on Cardew's musical trajectory, and his association with AMM, the definitive source is Tilbury (2008).

<sup>37</sup> These would include Bailey (1980, 1992), Bryars (2005), Heining (2012), Toop (2016) and Watson (2004).

<sup>38</sup> See page 79 for further reflection on this much-discussed term.

extensive on-the-job training in the world of Northern cabaret, working men's clubs, and function bands; Duncan Heining reports that Bailey and Bryars even undertook a summer season in Jersey together (Heining, 2012 p. 329)<sup>39</sup>. Throughout his later career Bryars has made frequent reference to the skills of busking, transposition and general musical flexibility he acquired most effectively during this period<sup>40</sup>. Although Bryars renounced improvisation for composition immediately following the dissolution of Joseph Holbrooke, a certain sense of the value of this practical musicianship can be found in several of Bryars' works; for example *1-2*, *1-2-3-4* directly reflects his experiences as a working jazz and commercial musician.

Bryars discussed his disenchantment with improvisation in an interview which formed part Derek Bailey's *Improvisation: its nature and practice in music*. Bailey prefaces extracts from the interview with the observation that Bryars' thinking 'indicates one of the main differences between a composer's and an improviser's attitude towards making music' (D. Bailey, 1992 p.113). The 'specific occasions' which Bryars regards 'as being significant in my turning from improvisation'<sup>41</sup> do indeed tell us more about Bryars' state of mind and personal aesthetics at the time, than revealing a great deal about the nature of improvisation. His description of a disappointing performance where (in jazz musicians' parlance) 'his chops were down' is something which almost all musicians will recognise and will probably have experienced, no matter what their specific field of activity. From the starting point of having 'lost touch with the instrument a bit', and the fact that he was no longer 'emotionally or physically trained' for improvised performance as a double bassist, Bryars extrapolates a moral position: 'I was trying to recapture something that had been happening in the past. And that seemed morally wrong.' But being ill-prepared for a performance, or having a diminished interest in improvisation due to a changing creative agenda, does not necessarily have any direct implications for the practice of improvisation in music, merely for Bryars' relationship to it.

Similarly, his second Damascene moment – the discomfort generated by the unorthodox bass technique of Johnny Dyani<sup>42</sup> – speaks more to a conflict of value systems than any inherent deficiency of improvisation. This is the point at which Bryars' developing composition-orientated world-view manifests itself; as Bailey has observed, 'improvisation is not knowing what it is until you do it, composition is not doing it until you know what it is' (Bailey, quoted in Watson, 2004 p. 440). His criticism of Dyani does not relate to the sounds he makes, or his

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<sup>39</sup> The 'Summer Season' was an integral part of the itinerant musician's working life in the 50s, 60s and 70s, and consisted of an engagement (usually at a seaside resort) to play in a show (theatre, cabaret, circus, dancing etc.) which ran throughout the summer period (which for the busier resorts and larger shows could run from Easter until early November). When combined with a long pantomime engagement (in exceptional cases these could run from mid-December until Easter) this could be enough to fill a working musician's diary for the year. Gavin Bryars identified the Jersey Summer Season as being at St Brelade's Bay Hotel, and that during the course of it Bailey 'was fired for insulting some of the patrons'; the pair also worked together at the Carlton Cabaret Club, Chesterfield (G. Bryars, e-mail to the author, 10<sup>th</sup> August 2017).

<sup>40</sup> E.g. Watson (2004 p. 94) and Rowan (1988 1m50 to 3m30s), where he discusses working at Greasbrough Social Club. In this context, the term 'busking' is used by British jazz and commercial musicians to denote playing an unknown or unfamiliar piece by ear, without prior guidance – American musicians use the term 'faking'.

<sup>41</sup> All Bryars quotes in this paragraph are from D. Bailey (1992 p.113).

<sup>42</sup> Bassist Johnny Mbizo Dyani (1945-1986) was a member of the *Blue Notes* group of expatriate South African musicians, living in London from 1965 until he moved to Scandinavia in 1972 (for more information, see Rasmussen (2003)). While Bryars' original criticisms of Dyani's playing were made without naming him, he subsequently identified him in Watson (2004 p. 80).

contribution to the music, or to the sonic outcome of the improvisation event at all, but merely to the fact that it was evident (to Bryars, as an experienced fellow bass-player) that Dyani 'had no idea of what he was doing' (Bryars, quoted in D. Bailey, 1992 p. 113); in other words, he was doing it without knowing what it was. Bryars is not referring to Dyani's sonic contribution to the music, or his conception of what might be an appropriate gesture within an improvised context – he observes that Dyani's 'fantastic runs ... sounded in the genre, the appropriate thing in the context' (ibid.); in fact this is a very old-school argument about playing *properly*. Dyani's self-taught ad hoc scholarship, focussing on finding ways to do what needed to be done, reflected the limited opportunities of his upbringing as a Xhosa in apartheid-era South Africa<sup>43</sup>. His 'unorthodox' (in other words his Afrological) approach to learning, and by extension bass technique, seems to have deeply upset Bryars' unexpectedly 'professional' (and Eurological) approach to training – that the student painstakingly acquires a wide-ranging and formidable technical arsenal, and only then is permitted to use that vocabulary to address creativity. Unfortunately, it is not atypical of the outcome of this Afrological/Eurological mismatch that the Eurological establishment regards this difference of approach as invalidating (or at least devaluing) the work of the other, whatever the sonic outcome might be. In his more expansive discussion of the issue with Ben Watson, Bryars observes that:

I used to practise the bass up to four or five hours a day. Sometimes the bass would be in my hands for between seven or eight hours a day, even more sometimes. I knew the finger-board incredibly well. I knew exactly where everything was, I could do all kinds of things. I can't really say for certain, but I think I was a very good bass player at that time ... I could see when I watched Johnny playing that it was guesswork – inspired guesswork – but no more than that (Bryars, quoted in Watson, 2004 p.80).

The implication is that, however inspired Dyani's contribution may have been, and however wonderful the music, it was invalid because it was 'only' guesswork. Bryars is not, of course, the first idiomatically-skilled musician to decry improvisation because the musicians 'don't know what they are doing', and he won't be the last; a particularly galling aspect of improvisation for many highly trained musicians is that technically unskilled but creative people can make a contribution which may be more stimulating or effective than that of less creative technocrats. In other words, improvised music undermines the role of performance as technical skill validation (or exhibition), refocusing the practice on artistic (sonic) outcome. But Bryars' decrying of guesswork seems to also inevitably lead away from an interest in improvisation, since all improvisation (with the possible exception of solo playing) involves a certain amount of conjecture, divination or postulation (or alternatively wilful ignorance) about how fellow performers might respond to a given gesture or event, and how the music might consequently evolve.

Despite the unequivocal nature of Bryars' rejection of improvisation post-JHT, he continued to work in New Music contexts with Bailey and other improvisers, particularly in the 'Instelimp' group (see page 57). At the same time his 1969-1970 teaching post at Portsmouth College of Art led to an outburst of experimental music activity there, the best-known flowering of which was probably The Portsmouth Sinfonia. The somewhat simpler (even simplistic) premise of this ensemble enabled it to find a quasi-commercial success which would never have been possible for The Scratch Orchestra. Among the members was Winchester Polytechnic graphic design student

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<sup>43</sup> Speaking of The Blue Notes' impact on the London jazz scene of the 1960s, Maggie Nicols notes 'there was some snobbery about their technique' (quoted in McKay, 2005 p. 179).

Brian Eno, playing clarinet; once Eno had found fame and record-industry-leverage with post-modern art-rock band Roxy Music, his continued association with Bryars led to Eno using his influence to record and publish the Obscure Records catalogue of LPs between 1975-78. Superficially an impressive document of the links between the improvising and experimental composing communities, the 10 published recordings are in fact very much orientated towards composition. Such a focus on composition is unsurprising, since Bryars appears to have acted as artistic director for the series; nevertheless the Obscure LPs include the presence of improvisers such as Bailey, Fred Frith, Paul Burwell, David Toop, Hugh Davies, Frank Perry & Steve Beresford; they play alongside (and in some cases play the works of) composers such as Bryars, John White, Dave Smith, Michael Nyman, Tom Phillips, Cardew, Christopher Hobbs & Howard Skempton. They thus represent an invaluable (if retrospectively-reconstructed) document of a period of collaboration which had already run its course by 1975.

### **Barry Guy (b. 1947)**

Double bassist Barry Guy is an exceptional figure in the history of British improvised music; during the period under discussion he was at the heart of many of the key developments in European free improvisation, working in white-hot (and often explosive) collaborative situations with 'hard-line' improvisers like Bailey, Oxley, Rutherford, Stevens, Evan Parker and Howard Riley – and subsequently with major international figures like Cecil Taylor, Anthony Braxton, Peter Brötzmann & Bill Dixon – while maintaining close and continuing links with the world of composition and European Classical Music. While Guy's work in improvised music provides a CV that would be the envy of any improviser, for a significant part of his career he was simultaneously working at the heart of the establishment, holding principal bass positions in several orchestras including The Orchestra of St. John's Smith Square, The City of London Sinfonia, Monteverdi Orchestra, The Academy of Ancient Music, Kent Opera and The London Classical Players. Like Cardew, Guy has a professional association with draughtsmanship and visual representation (he originally began a career in architecture as an articling student, and all his scores exhibit exceptional visual qualities), but subsequent studies at the Guildhall School of Music seem to have quickly inserted him into the Eurological music tradition at the highest level. He was in fact a composer before he became aware of improvised music, and for his entire career has been a successful one by the standards of contemporary classical music, with international commissions, festival appearances and broadcasts. Indeed, it was Guy's search for a trombonist for one of his compositions led him to Paul Rutherford, who connected him to the developing free improvisation community<sup>44</sup>.

However, it is striking that Guy's scores from the late 60s and early 70s show very little if any influence of the intensity of the improvisation experience that he was undergoing at this time. For example, although the vocal line in *String Quartet III* for example may often make a listener think of Maggie Nicols<sup>45</sup>, the score itself is scrupulously notated. The score for *String Quartet No. 2* contains the note

one of my main endeavours was to create a spontaneous involvement of the players, a 'group feeling' similar to that of a jazz group or an improvising ensemble. To suggest a sense of spontaneity, I 'loosened'

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<sup>44</sup> Very little scholarly attention appears to have been paid to Guy, with the exception of Quigley (2003). Biographical and other information related here has been drawn from <http://www.mayarecordings.com/articlesofinterest/barry/index.html>, and from personal conversations with Guy himself.

<sup>45</sup> The pre-eminent female British improvising vocalist.

the notation, so that within certain defined limits the players could respond in a free and natural way to each others' [sic] statements (Guy, 1970 [publisher's note, quoting the composer, pasted onto the inside front cover of the score]).

But although there are several interesting and novel attempts to find new ways of relating between individual players, and to the pulse (plus some free-ish notation), there is no scope for improvisation in either of these pieces, or any of the others published during this period.

In an undated interview with Nick Kimberley (possibly from 1994), Guy remarks 'generally I keep improvisation and composition separate but there are some classically trained players willing to enter into the spirit of the thing' (Kimberley, n.d., p. 10). Bearing in mind that Guy had composed extensively for the improvisers of the London Jazz Composers' Orchestra between 1970 and 1995, I take this remark as referring to his composition for notation specialists ('classical musicians'). When I discussed this with Guy himself<sup>46</sup>, he acknowledged a certain separation between the two main strands of his composition work during this period, depending on for whom he was writing. Finding that at that time he simply could not get the commitment to and ability in improvisation that he was seeking from his classically-orientated colleagues, he prepared for them meticulously notated and intensely detailed scores, which – although unconventional in many ways – did not call for improvisation as such. These were the scores published by Novello, and which can, for example, be found in the BMC archive<sup>47</sup>; although the scores were often written for particular performers, they were nevertheless potential 'repertoire' pieces which could be performed by any ensemble of the correct instrumentation. At the same time, his work with the London Jazz Composers' Orchestra (formed by Guy in the early 1970s) was specifically geared to exploring compositional strategies for experienced improvisers; these scores were in general not published, and only played by those musicians for whom they were specifically written – often a very limited number of times. The characteristics of these two strands sum up quite clearly the different mechanics of similar compositional work in different operating environments; one built around a structure of composer, fixed text and subsequent interpreters (the classical/establishment model), the other around a collective collaboration of creative individuals, working with a malleable and highly customised text which is never fully or finally fixed (the jazz/improvisation/collective model)<sup>48</sup>.

During the late 60s and early 70s, Guy probably formed the link between several of his improvising colleagues and composition-orientated organisations such as the Society for the Promotion of New Music; his extensive involvement with the SPNM's Composers' Weekends in the early 1970s is detailed below (see page 52). But it was another aspect of Guy's voracious musical life at this period which was to threaten to sever his own links with improvised music, and which began to develop in the mid-1970s. Early Music performance has always been among Guy's passions, and his seemingly unerring knack for being in the right place at the right time (coupled,

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<sup>46</sup> B. Guy, personal conversations with the author, 30<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> August 2014.

<sup>47</sup> When I mentioned to Guy the copies of his scores in the archive, he was disconcerted, avowing he would not have wished to be included in such a collection - since it was highly representative of the 'establishment' which he and his colleagues were endeavouring to reject or overturn in the late 1960s. Probably these scores were deposited by their publisher, without Guy's involvement.

<sup>48</sup> Guy subsequently found changes in the attitudes of classical musicians to such questions, changes which resulted in works such as 1992's *Bird Gong Game*, and other improvisation-related pieces both by Guy and other composers.

of course, with his remarkable performing ability) led him to become principal bassist with both John Eliot Gardiner's Monteverdi Orchestra and Christopher Hogwood's Academy of Ancient Music. Both groups were remarkably successful in the mid- to late-1970s, and this led to an often-recounted turning point in Guy's life, when in the mid-1980s he realised (with the help of Evan Parker) that his individual creativity could easily be stripped away from him by the mechanisms of commercial success<sup>49</sup>. Talking to Bill Shoemaker, Guy and Parker recalled the dramatic reclaiming of a soul slipping into perdition:

*[Guy]* We were constantly in the studios, recording Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn you name it. It was the heyday of recording classical music, when Decca had this seemingly inexhaustible budget to record old music. I remember Evan coming to me on one of the increasingly rare occasions where we could actually work together. People kept coming to him with trio gigs, and I would be in Japan or somewhere. So, he said that what I was doing was incompatible with us sensibly trying to run a trio. It was an important moment in my life when he said, 'We're losing you to this music'. You were very serious when you said, 'I'm trying my best, but we're losing you'. It was a salutary lesson about how if you think things are evolving slowly, then you're doing all right, but you're really losing something.

*Evan Parker:* Well, you did record about 300 symphonies.

*Barry Guy:* We did the Beethoven symphonies twice in a year with different conductors. We were just fodder for the record companies, who wanted their version of the Beethoven series. In the end, we were playing Haydn symphonies on the red light, like you would do a commercial or something. It was illogical. That's when Evan told me I was being lost to this commercial Baroque and classical world.

*Evan Parker:* We did actually snatch you back, physically, that day in Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center (in 1986). Perfect symbolism.

*Barry Guy:* We had finished touring at Alice Tully with Christopher Hogwood, and there was champagne, we're in tails still, and then these guys turn up, and it was this amazing transition from that life to this life. Once the champagne was finished and the tails were put away, we're on the street, walking uptown, carrying the bass ...

*Evan Parker:* To sleep on the floor (in a flat). From a five-star hotel the night before (Shoemaker, 2003 pp. 3-4; parentheses in original).

Even in the very early stages of this aspect of his career, a hastily-written letter from Guy to (probably) SPNM Hon. Secretary John Woolf regarding the 1975 Composers' Weekend (which Guy was co-directing, see p. 54) makes very clear the constraining effect of the degree of career success Guy was enjoying (n.b. spelling and punctuation are reproduced from the original):

The Composers Weekend scores are proving really awkward. Its best that I give you me schedual for June 5-8.

5<sup>th</sup> June 2-5 Academy of Martin's – Wembly.  
afterwards – Bristol – Arnolfini.

6<sup>th</sup> 2-5 Academy of Martin's.  
7-10 Rehearsals.

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<sup>49</sup> As well as his work in Early Music, during this period Guy was working extensively as a session musician within the film and recording industries, a situation which he retrospectively described as 'very lucrative' (B. Guy, e-mail to the author, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2017).

7<sup>th</sup> 10-1 } Richard Hickox BBC.  
2.30-5.30 }

8<sup>th</sup> Rehearsal [most?] aft + evening concert St Johns.

It's bad – I'm sorry – I can make the 10<sup>th</sup> all day (as a matter of interest).

regards Barry

P.S. I am in the States for 1 month so ring through details to my [messaging service] number  
(Guy, 1975).

Interestingly, Barry Guy's evident success as a notation-interpreting musician does not prove sufficient to overcome (for some) the 'polluting' effect of his association with free improvisation (and free jazz). An inside source told me of a certain amount of establishment backlash when Guy was invited to be the composer in residence at the 2006 Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival; apparently certain publishers resented the fact that Guy was not a 'proper' composer (whatever that might mean in this context), and were concerned that his presence would inevitably lead to an increased profile for improvisation in the Festival's programme. It would seem that this grumbling even included some who questioned Guy's ability to play his instrument 'properly', a suggestion which speaks to the level of distrust and prejudice within (composer-orientated) establishment circles which still surrounds improvising musicians even at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As George Lewis writes, 'even European free jazz musicians, with few or no African Americans around, still experience the reception of their art through the modalities of race' (Lewis, 2004 p. 84).

### ***Paul Rutherford (1940-2007)***

Trombonist and euphonium player Paul Rutherford had a crucial role in the development of British improvised music, and commanded respect in all fields of music for his technical virtuosity. His social nature also led him to act as a frequent bridge between musicians seeking a communal creative outlet. Rutherford was one of three key players who found themselves thrown together in the British Royal Air Force in the late 1950s – the others being John Stevens and Trevor Watts. Although the three musicians made the most of the creative opportunities presented by a posting to Köln (as evidenced by the Stevens quote on page 25), it was some time before they made the breakthrough to free playing.

In the early 1960s Rutherford and Watts were among the younger players at the heart of London modern jazz scene, for example playing with The New Jazz Orchestra (along with Ian Carr, Les Carter, Barbara Thompson, Jon Hiseman, Jack Bruce, Mike Gibbs, Don Rendell et al.). In approximately 1965 Watts and Rutherford were co-leading a quintet and, meeting Stevens again after having lost touch for a while, invited him to become their drummer<sup>50</sup>, and it is this group which eventually evolved into the SME. Martin Davidson observes that 'around this time, the Watts-Rutherford Quintet became the Spontaneous Music Ensemble, initially a co-operative band' (Davidson, 1996 para. 7); the stress that Davidson puts upon the co-operative idea within the early SME is not without significance, since in later years this group was increasingly aligned with a more traditional bandleader aesthetic. But if this were eventually to become the case, it certainly was not the situation at the outset; indeed, the seemingly irresistible tendency to credit collective endeavour to what are seen as inspirational individuals has proved a life-long frustration for players like Trevor Watts. During a workshop in Leeds in 2016 Veryan

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<sup>50</sup> Or perhaps Stevens invited himself; commentators tell slightly different versions of this story.

Weston was giving the student audience a potted history of the origins of improvised music in the UK during the 1960s; describing the availability of the Little Theatre Club at a key moment in the music's evolution, Weston casually commented that John Stevens 'had been searching for a venue where he could develop his music'. This immediately generated a trenchant response from Watts, interjecting from the corner where he was preparing his saxophones: 'our music!' (Watts & Weston 2016).

As well as his role in the coming into being of the Spontaneous Music Ensemble, Paul Rutherford also introduced Barry Guy to the circle of players around the Little Theatre Club through their mutual association with the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. As Barry Guy told Bill Shoemaker

My introduction to the Little Theater [sic] Club was through a straight piece I had written called «Perceptions» in '66 that had a cadenza for trombone and a cadenza for alto [saxophone] in it. I guess it was a kind of precursor to the big band stuff I did later. Bernard [sic] Living, who was playing alto with the (Mike) Westbrook band, had dragged me along to these composition classes, and our objective at the end of the year was to write a piece. I knew Rutherford from a local pub, where he often stood with a pint by a particular fireplace. So I asked him to do the piece, told him I also needed an alto player, and he suggested Trevor. A couple of weeks after we did the piece, I got the call from Stevens to come up to the Little Theater [sic] Club, which set off a chain of events (Shoemaker, 2003 p.1; parentheses in original).

As well as these crucial associations, Rutherford continued to perform both contemporary classical and modern jazz music extensively. His association with The Mike Westbrook Band of the late 1960s and early 1970s was a crucial part of the generation of the 'mixed avant-garde' in London at this time, described as such in Piekut (2014). As previously observed, the original Westbrook band provided several of the musicians who were to create AMM, and for the next decade Westbrook ensembles regularly mixed a wide range of creative musicians with allegiances to both the experimental and contemporary jazz scenes. Under the Westbrook umbrella, as well as playing with other 'revolutionary modernists' like himself, Rutherford worked alongside British musicians with a more evolutionary jazz outlook such as Dave Holdsworth, Malcolm Griffiths, Ray Warleigh, Alan Skidmore and John Taylor, and some musicians who went on to have extensive experience in commercial and popular music like Derek Wadsworth, Derek Healey and Dave MacRae.

Rutherford's role in the mixed avant-garde is further underlined by his participations in many of the 'crossover' projects explored by experimental musicians and composers during this period. For example, he was a member of the ensemble for the December 1967 performance of *The Tiger's Mind* alongside AMM, Christian Wolff, Hugh Shrapnel and Howard Skempton, and was still performing contemporary composed music in 1974, when he took part (alongside Barry Guy) in BBC Radio 3 broadcasts of Wilfrid Mellers' *Venery for Six Plus*<sup>51</sup> (conducted by Bernard Rands) and Richard Orton's *Cycle for Four Players*<sup>52</sup>.

Rutherford's continuing association with composed music of all kinds (he also played with, for example, Soft Machine and The Detroit Spinners) led to one of the improvised music community's most cherished anecdotes. The occasion when Rutherford was programmed to be playing Luciano Berio's *Sequenza V*, but during the

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<sup>51</sup> BBC Radio 3, *Music In Our Time*, 18<sup>th</sup> June 1974.

<sup>52</sup> BBC Radio 3, *Music In Our Time*, 29<sup>th</sup> August 1974.

performance abandoned the score and improvised an alternative solo trombone piece, has passed into improvising legend. I have heard this story recounted by numerous musicians, and it is referred to by several writers, including Watson, Lewis, Borgo and Prévost. On most occasions the recounting of this story is accompanied by a strong anti-composition implication; the fact that (allegedly) most of the audience were unaware that the score had not been played, and that some audience members (often described in the retelling as ‘intelligentsia’ or ‘cognoscenti’) even congratulated Rutherford on ‘the finest performance they had heard’ of the score, is usually taken as evidence of the inherent flimsiness and superficiality of the composer-orientated performance construct, and the inevitable power and superiority of inspired improvisation.

The truth behind the circumstances of this performance are inevitably much more complex, but given this incident’s importance for improvisation mythology, surprisingly little seemed to be known about it. Martin Davidson had identified the date as the 13<sup>th</sup> May 1974<sup>53</sup>, and had issued ‘the latter half’ of this performance as part of Paul Rutherford & Iskra 1912: *Sequences 72 & 73*<sup>54</sup>. The recording location is indicated as London, but the venue or any other contextual information about the performance is not given; however Davidson’s own Emanem discography webpage for 1974<sup>55</sup> indicates that the venue was the prestigious (and traditionally classically-orientated) Queen Elizabeth Hall. Jean Michel van Schouburg gives tantalising supplementary information about the occasion, but without indicating his source(s):

[Rutherford’s] adventurous and legendary interpretation ... was received with great enthusiasm. A practical joker had made off with a page of the score, but Paul promptly improvised it as if nothing had happened. He was congratulated for this by the composer himself<sup>56</sup> (van Schouburg, 2013 section *Iskra, l’étincelle.....*).

Whatever the source of this recounting, it certainly puts Rutherford’s relationship to the score (and by extension the composer, who makes a personal appearance in this version of the story) in a much less confrontational light. However, unless the missing page were the final page of the score, it doesn’t really account for the 4m19s improvisation derived from ‘the latter half’ of this performance and published by Emanem under the title *Non-sequence*. When I contacted van Schouburg to enquire about his sources he told me that ‘these details come from a descriptive text by Martin Davidson in the sleeve notes for one of Paul’s albums’ (J.M. van Schouburg, e-mail to the author, 12<sup>th</sup> July 2016)<sup>57</sup>, but Davidson felt that van Schouburg was mistaken:

I have never heard JMvS’s claims that Berio was present and that some joker stole a page. He didn’t get those from me, unless something was very lost in translation, although JMvS’s English has been good as

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<sup>53</sup> i.e. 4 days after a BBC Radio 3 broadcast of Vinko Globokar playing *Sequenza V* (Berio, BBC Radio 3, 9<sup>th</sup> May 1974, 21:45).

<sup>54</sup> Emanem 4018, 1997 CD

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.emanemdisc.com/disco1974.html>. Accessed 14th July 2016.

<sup>56</sup> « Son interprétation aventureuse et légendaire de la *Sequenza pour Trombone* de Luciano Berio fut reçue avec le plus grand enthousiasme. Un plaisantin avait subtilisé une page de la partition, Paul l'improvisa sur le champ comme si de rien n'était. Il en fut félicité par le compositeur lui-même » [my translation].

<sup>57</sup> « Ces détails se trouvent dans un texte descriptif de Martin Davidson d'une note de pochette d'un album de Paul » [my translation].

long as I've known him (M. Davidson, e-mail to the author, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2016).

In fact Jean-Michel van Schouwburg is a personal friend, and I can confirm Martin Davidson's assertion that his English is very good; this is unlikely to have been a linguistic misunderstanding. I would suggest that for him, as for many others active in the field of improvised music, this legendary event has such potential significance that he did what so many have done before him – i.e. lacking a good story, he creatively remembered one of his own<sup>58</sup>. We all seem to need such myths to inspire us, and sometimes we have to give them a helping hand – while from the point of view of an academic researcher this approach may seem highly undesirable, such myth-making in artistic practice seems relatively common, and personal experience indicates it is certainly prevalent among musicians.

Martin Davidson was good enough to provide me with as much information as he could recall about this performance, and until very recently this represented the most detailed account available of this occasion:

The concert was organised by the Park Lane Group<sup>59</sup>. I was there and seem to remember that the main item was a performance by a Tony Oxley group (quintet or sextet?) using graphic scores. Paul decided that his solo performance music would be better if he just improvised, although he did play a little of the beginning of the Berio piece. At least one person said that it was the best performance of the Berio that he had heard! The Park Lane Group were not amused, to put it mildly, and said they would not employ Ruthers again (M. Davidson, e-mail to the author, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2016).

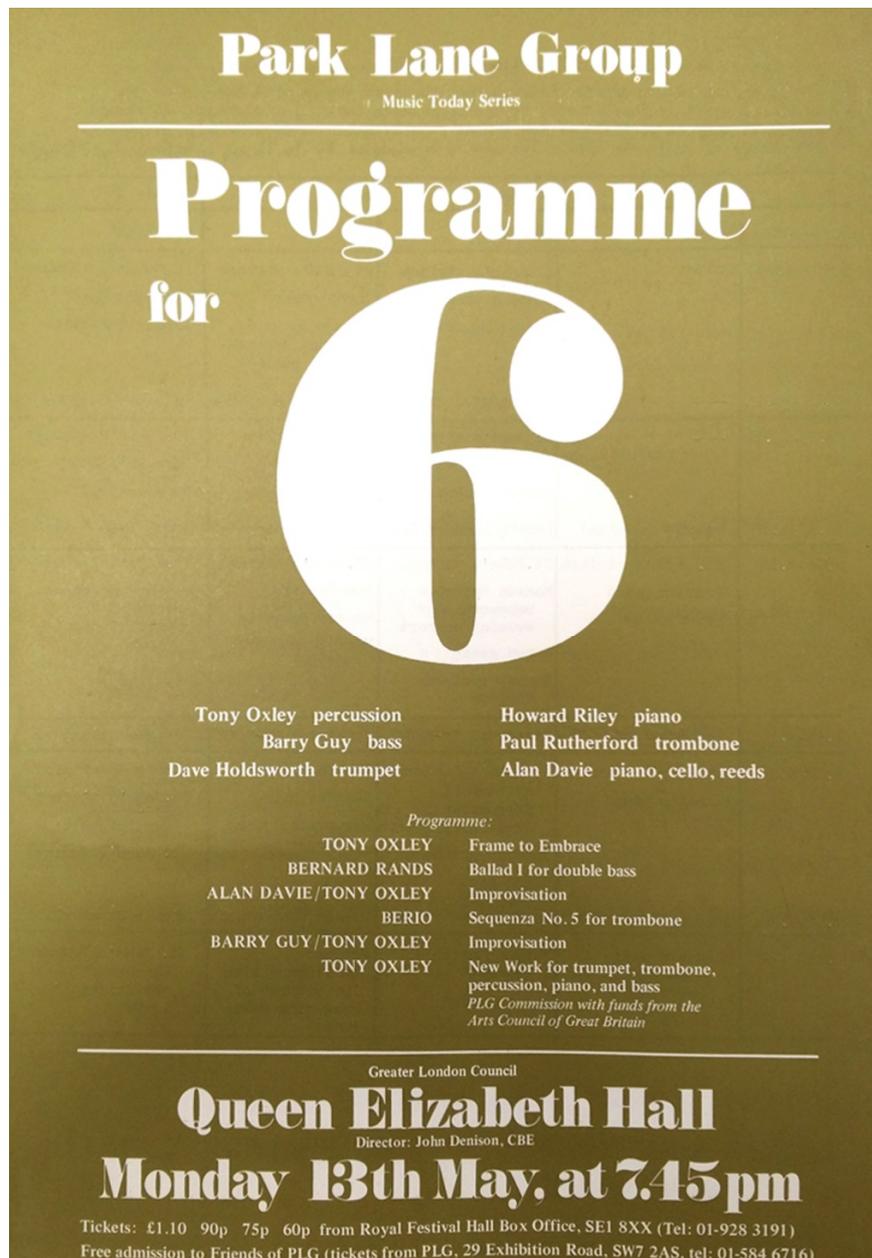
However, further information on this concert has now come to light. Some of the Park Lane Group's original posters had been re-used as scrap paper at the SPNM office during 1974, including one for the Oxley group concert, on the back of which had been written the proposed schedule for the 1974 Composers' Weekend<sup>60</sup> (see Figure 2). The poster reveals that the main work in the concert was a new piece commissioned from Oxley by the PLG with funds from the Arts Council of Great Britain; this was to be performed by a quintet of Dave Holdsworth, Rutherford, Howard Riley, Barry Guy and Oxley. The programme also included a previous Oxley piece, along with a work for solo bass by Bernard Rands and the Berio, plus two duo improvisations featuring Oxley; one with Guy, and one with Scottish visual artist and musician Alan Davie.

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<sup>58</sup> In a subsequent e-mail (21<sup>st</sup> July 2017), Jean-Michel wondered whether he had found these details in a specialist magazine, or somewhere on the internet, or from someone who was at the concert; he couldn't remember.

<sup>59</sup> The Park Lane Group is a British charity founded in 1956 which exists to 'create opportunity for young musicians'. The Group auditions young musicians, and then present some of them in concerts in prestigious venues in London. Sometimes they present further concerts elsewhere in the UK, or will present their chosen artists at international festivals. Their focus is almost exclusively on interpreters of composed music, but (in the spirit of the times) the early 1970s saw an incorporation of contemporary jazz and improvised music into their concerts. In addition to the concert Martin Davidson remembers, the SPNM archive contains posters for PLG concerts by Intermodulation (playing White, Cardew, Stockhausen and Souster, 12<sup>th</sup> October 1970) and Ian Carr's Nucleus (12<sup>th</sup> March 1973), both at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. For more information about The Park Lane Group see [www.parklanegroup.co.uk](http://www.parklanegroup.co.uk).

<sup>60</sup> There is a great deal of PLG printed matter in the SPNM archive; the SPNM administrator at this time, John Woolf, was also the chairman of The Park Lane Group – a position which he took up in 1956 (and continues to hold at the time of writing, some 60 years later). During the 1970s, he also independently promoted concerts under his own name at London's South Bank Centre.



**Figure 2: poster for a performance promoted by The Park Lane Group, 13th May 1974**

The programme is interestingly balanced between Eurological composed works (with the traditional non-performing – probably absent – author), Oxley’s more Afrological loose graphic scores (with their present and participating composer) and free improvisation. It is perhaps understandable that Rutherford may have been seduced by freedom within this context, to the detriment of his agreed performance programme; however it does seem unfortunate that a concert which appears to display such a high level of commitment and financial support by a group such as PLG towards a composition/improvisation hybrid programme should have gone down in history thanks to an (arguably) flippant or provocative gesture, even if that gesture did ask very serious questions about what price might have to be or should be paid for improvised music to be accepted within the context of Eurological art music performance<sup>61</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> In 1970 Don Banks compared Berio’s solo writing in the *Sequenze* to the writing for jazz soloists of composers such as Duke Ellington. He concluded that ‘it is therefore interesting to compare the results of a serious musician playing music by

*[footnote continues on next page]*

Returning to the currency of this story as evidence of the improviser 'putting one over' on the specialist establishment, to which Davidson also makes reference above<sup>62</sup>, Ben Watson makes an interesting comparison of the Emanem recording with a more traditional realisation of the score by Benny Sluchin (an eminent former student of Globokar); in doing so, the author puts aside the improvisers' special pleading:

Playing the two pieces back to back does not necessarily result in a complete victory for Free Improvisation. It is questionable whether Rutherford's refusal to follow the score really proves anything about the 'superiority' of improvisation as a musical method. The objectivity created by the score – the sense that Sluchin is sounding out a pre-prepared pattern – actually creates space for reflection, for the listener's own thoughts. Indeed, there is something suffocatingly mono-dimensional about Rutherford's '*Non-Sequence*' (Watson, 2004 p. 169).

Whatever the historical facts surrounding the occasion may be, they have not undermined the potential for this performance to become emblematic for a certain group of fellow-travellers, who – rightly or wrongly – believe it illustrates important fundamental truths about their relationship to the artistic mainstream.

### **Hugh Davies (1943-2005)**

Electronic musician, composer, instrument inventor and improviser Hugh Davies (1943-2005) was the incarnation of the healthy unpredictability which rendered the British 'mixed avant-garde' so interesting and creatively stimulating. Although slightly younger than Cardew, the presence of Davies on the British improvising scene of the late 1960s often provokes comparison between the two men, due to shared elements in their background; but Davies' response to the challenges of improvisation was a much more relaxed affair, seemingly an unselfconscious exploration of the music's possibilities, without the apparent self-centredness of Cardew's angst about the relationship of improvisation to the construct of The Composer.

The most obvious parallel between Davies and Cardew is that they both spent periods working as an assistant to Karlheinz Stockhausen. As discussed earlier, in Cardew's case this covered the period 1958-1960; Davies' period of service (or servitude) was from 1964-1966<sup>63</sup>. According to Karl Heinrich Wörner, his duties included playing in the *Mikrophonie I* ensemble and operating the sine-wave generator in *Mixtur*, correcting the proofs for the works published during this period, preparing orchestral parts (*Momente*), working on an aborted project for a reading score of *Gesang der Jünglinge*, plus general German-English translation duties for Stockhausen's writings<sup>64</sup>.

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Berio and a jazz musician playing an improvised solo - for example Vinko Globokar playing Berio's *Sequenza V*, and the jazz trombonist Paul Rutherford as soloist in Barry Guy's *Ode for Jazz Orchestra* (Banks, 1970 p. 66). This comparison predated Rutherford's refashioning of the work by some 3 or 4 years.

<sup>62</sup> It is unclear from Davidson's message whether his unidentified speaker was in earnest or in jest, whether they had a predisposition toward either contemporary composition or improvisation, or a specific personal agenda to undermine or proselytise for one or the other.

<sup>63</sup> Wörner (1973 p. 241) has the dates as 1965-1967, but the majority of sources state 1964-1966.

<sup>64</sup> See Wörner (1973 p. 241).

Like Cardew, Davies has a background that seems to link him closely to 'the establishment' – the middle-class Eurological paradigm of composition-orientated music-making which was predominant in British art music of the time. He studied at Westminster School<sup>65</sup> (a prestigious private educational establishment, dating back to at least the 12th century), then went on to Worcester College, Oxford (1961-64), where he studied music history, harmony and counterpoint with Frank Harrison and Edmund Rubbra. His subsequent career could easily be mistaken for a 'conventional' one in contemporary music; after his time with Stockhausen, he became a researcher at the Groupe de Recherches Musicales of the French Radio (1966-67), and from 1967 to 1986 he was the founder-director, and 1986-91 the research consultant, of the Electronic Music Studio, Goldsmiths College, University of London. In 1986-93 he was the external consultant for electronic musical instruments at the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague. He was Secretary of the International Confederation for Electroacoustic Music (1982-86), and was a part-time lecturer in Sonic Art at the Centre for Electronic Arts, Middlesex University, London.

However, throughout his life Davies also maintained an open and relaxed relationship with free improvisation, performing alongside a wide range of different players without appearing to be distressed by varying approaches to music making. As David Toop observes

Even in the late 1960s, few musicians were able to move confidently between the divided factions of experimental jazz, classical composition and rock. Crossing boundaries could be interpreted as a lack of commitment to a cause, yet Davies seemed untroubled by any potential difficulties (Toop, 2005)<sup>66</sup>.

If Cardew's experience with Free Improvisation (as it was then developing in London) appears to have been in general restricted to members of the AMM and Scratch Orchestra extended 'families', and temporary (from 1966 to 1972), Davies's involvement was more wide-ranging and life-long. He returned to the UK in 1967 after a period in Paris and New York, and within months<sup>67</sup> had joined the Music Improvisation Company, formerly a trio with Derek Bailey, Evan Parker and Jamie Muir. Michael Walters relates that 'Davies detects certain differences in working with the Music Improvisation Company from improvising in a contemporary classical background, but feels that they are not great, and that the group operates "at a point where the two different backgrounds meet"' (Walters, quoted in Piekut, 2014 p. 35); Davies must have found this process of considerable interest, and for the rest of his life he maintained playing and recording connections with Bailey and Parker, along with improvising musicians as varied as Paul Burwell, Paul Lytton, David Toop, Philipp Wachsmann, Eddie Prévost, Phil Minton and others. According to Keith Potter, Davies' eclecticism even stretched to the fringes of African-American jazz; for example working alongside Han Bennink in a group with Don Cherry<sup>68</sup>.

Simultaneously, Davies was a member of Gentle Fire. James Mooney relates that 'Gentle Fire began as an improvisation group but gradually became more interested in performing works by composers such as Cage,

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<sup>65</sup> See Hugh Davies (composer) (n.d.).

<sup>66</sup> Note Toop's reference to 'divided factions'; it is possible that the atmosphere of the era was less freely collaborative than the historical record seems to imply.

<sup>67</sup> Sources vary regarding the date Davies joined the group; this is sometimes identified as 1968, sometimes 1969. James Mooney states 1969 (2017 *Shozyg: an instrumental turn* para. 7).

<sup>68</sup> See Potter (2005).

Cardew, Ichiyanagi, Kagel, Wolff, and, by virtue of Davies's close connections with him, Stockhausen' (Mooney, 2013 p. 2). Although the group's repertoire (which also included 'group compositions') places them on the fringes of the composed music tradition, the members generally retained a strong connection with the infrastructure and actors of that area of activity. As a result, Davies is occasionally to be found at the heart of the establishment, for example playing one of the solo synthesiser parts for the world premiere performance of Jonathan Harvey's *Madonna of Winter and Spring* given by the BBC Symphony Orchestra during the 1986 Proms<sup>69</sup> – although clearly he was far too individual (even eccentric) a figure to be efficiently absorbed into the musical hegemon.

### ***the SPNM Composers' Weekends***

The Society for the Promotion of New Music (universally known as the SPNM) was a 'British organization founded in 1943 by Francis Chagrin to support the work of young and unestablished composers' (Payne, n.d.). On the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008, it merged with sister organisations the British Music Information Centre, Sonic Arts Network and the Contemporary Music Network to form Sound and Music (Stadlen, 2008). The archives of the SPNM, currently held in the Heritage Quay Archive Centre at the University of Huddersfield, give an interesting insight into the strangely ambivalent but evolving attitude of the organisation toward experimental and improvising musicians in the late 1960s.

The SPNM Composers' Weekends were annual residential courses during which participating (less-established) composers had their scores played through by experienced professional performers, and were given advice by more established colleagues. The weekends also included lectures, recording listening sessions and participant performance opportunities drawing on experimental scores and/or improvisation. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1967, John Woolf (SPNM Hon. Secretary) writes to Victor Schonfield 'you have probably heard what a great success the [1967 Composers'] week-end was and how much of this was due to John [Tilbury] and the AMM. In any case, please convey renewed thanks for all they did' (Woolf, 1967b). Among other events, the 1967 Composers' Weekend included a Friday evening 'open-ended improvisation ... by people attending the seminar' (Society for the Promotion of New Music, 1967); the participant list for the weekend included Richard Orton, Robert Sherlaw Johnson, Paul Patterson, Tim Souster, Jonathan Harvey and Hugh Shrapnel<sup>70</sup>.

In his participant's report on the 1968 Composers' Weekend, Hugh Davies also singles out Tilbury for praise: 'John Tilbury's sessions were illuminating, and attracted interest from a number of composers observing, whose tastes I had not imagined would have extended to Christian Wolff and similar musical styles. This was a very encouraging sign' (Davies 1968); the records show that as well as several pieces by Wolff, works by Kosugi and Feldman were also studied. Apart from Davies, other participants for this weekend included return visitors Sherlaw Johnson, Harvey and Shrapnel, along with Richard Steinitz, later the founder of the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival. In the 'organisers' report' on the 1968 weekend, in which every aspect of the weekend is recorded and analysed for future reference, Don Banks (the incumbent SPNM Chairman) and his co-authors have a simple and direct response to Tilbury's contribution; under the heading 'John Tilbury's Room'

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<sup>69</sup> 27<sup>th</sup> August 1986, at the Royal Albert Hall. He also participated in the 1969 Proms performance of Stockhausen's *Mikrophonie II* (21<sup>st</sup> August 1969, at the Royal Albert Hall).

<sup>70</sup> These and all subsequent administrative details are taken from SPNM records held at Heritage Quay Archive Centre, University of Huddersfield.

they simply write 'Yes. More.' (Banks, Gilbert & Lumsdaine, 1968 p. 3).

The 1969 Composers' Weekend was directed by David Lumsdaine, Harrison Birtwistle, Alan Hacker and Anthony Gilbert. A new feature of the weekend was the invitation of an established (non-British) guest composer to act as 'principal lecturer'; in 1969 the invitee was Milton Babbitt. Among the participants were (once again) Harvey and Steinitz, along with Bryn Harris, Anthony Parsons, Roger Smalley and Gary Carpenter among others. In his report on the weekend, Gilbert makes clear the continuing influence of Tilbury's presence, and its associated experimental/improvised axis. He remarks that

we once more invited John Tilbury to direct a composer/performer group realising indeterminate music, and an instrumental ensemble consisting of the Pierrot Players and others was engaged to perform short pieces composed by participants. We had intended this ensemble to be a composite one this year; we wanted some jazz players – particularly specialist drummers – to come and play alongside the others because of the interesting, imaginative and creative approach they often have to the production of sound, not found in their orchestral counterparts – not in the same way at least. This part of it fell through, however, chiefly due to lack of interest or unavailability on the part of the jazz players consulted (Gilbert, 1969).

In fact advance publicity for the 1969 Weekend had indicated the presence of 'The Howard Riley Jazz Trio' (with Barry Guy and Tony Oxley)<sup>71</sup>. Despite what Gilbert writes in the Director's Report, the archive includes a letter from John Woolf to Riley confirming a telephone conversation regarding the engagement<sup>72</sup>, and Riley's reply accepting the terms offered<sup>73</sup>; there is no further correspondence to indicate why the agreed participation did not take place. It's worth noting that Riley's group was not being represented by Victor Schonfield; he would probably not have accepted on their behalf the fee of £30 for the full trio (in which context it is worth noting that David Lumsdaine and Anthony Gilbert had been paid £70 and £50 respectively for their administration work on the previous year's Composers' Weekend). Indeed, The Howard Riley Trio appear to suffer from being systematically underpaid when compared with their 'classical' colleagues; Barry Guy told me how the world premiere of Wilfrid Mellers' *Yeibichai*<sup>74</sup> at the 1969 BBC Proms was in danger of cancellation due to the trio temporarily going on strike; this action was sparked by the discovery that even though the trio were one of the group of featured soloists in the large-scale work, as presumed 'jazz musicians' they were being paid less than the rank-and-file string players of the Scottish National Orchestra, who were 'accompanying' them<sup>75</sup>.

In the absence of the Riley Trio, it was left to John Tilbury to represent the 'alternative' contemporary approach

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<sup>71</sup> Society for the Promotion of New Music (1969).

<sup>72</sup> Woolf (1969).

<sup>73</sup> Riley (1969).

<sup>74</sup> *Yeibichai*, for two narrators, two sopranos, bass, scat singer, improvising jazz trio, choir and orchestra was given its premiere under Alexander Gibson at the Royal Albert Hall on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1969, as Prom 18 of the 1969 season (information retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/events/r336v2/series>, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2016).

<sup>75</sup> Barry Guy, conversation with the author, 30<sup>th</sup> August 2014. This type of discrimination was common; Andrew Blake reports that during the same period 'Indo-jazz Fusions received some Arts Council support, though jazz musicians were paid lower fees than classical musicians' (Blake, 1997 p. 106).

to music-making, and he seems to have done so most successfully. Once again, the Director's Report sings the praises of Tilbury, observing that

John Tilbury's group proved as usual a complete success ... There was a keenness among the great majority of participants to join this group for at least part of the time. John Tilbury shares with Babbitt the ability to communicate his ideas in a vivid and precise way (Gilbert, 1969).

The 1970 Composers' Weekend featured Henri Pousseur as principal lecturer, with Tilbury and Hugh Wood also on the staff. Participants included Ben Mason, John Casken and John Buller. John Tilbury was evidently beginning to feel that his significant contribution to the weekends was not being reflected in the level of fees he was being offered, and in 1970 he requested a fee of 75 guineas<sup>76</sup>. Although I have not found any figures relating to Tilbury's fee in previous years, it seems safe to assume that this request represented a step-change in the rate of fees that he would henceforth seek from the SPNM. John Woolf replied to the 75gns request with an offer of £50; unfortunately the archive doesn't contain any further correspondence on the matter (there is in general very little documentation extant for the 1970 weekend).

However, John Tilbury's feeling about the way this had been handled can be deduced from a letter in the SPNM archive relating to the 1971 Composer's Weekend. Victor Schonfield writes on Tilbury's behalf, and appears to have had a clear brief to put the relationship on a more business-like footing. In a letter dated 19th April 1971, Schonfield writes

John Tilbury has asked me to take over the discussions for his participation in the 1971 Composers' Weekend, since he will be abroad for a few weeks<sup>77</sup>.

Frankly the fee of £40 for the three days is inadequate. Even without outside comparisons, it is not up to the Weekend's own standard, as I understand that last year he received £35 for two days<sup>78</sup>.

In the circumstances I feel it is right to ask for a fee of £75. John has given faithful service to the Weekend for some years for very modest fees, and surely the SPNM does not need to take advantage of him in this way nowadays. Furthermore I imagine he must now be one of the main attractions to participants, both in view of the special praise he has received in Musical Times reports of past weekends, and in view of his greatly increased reputation as a performer. I do not propose to draw any comparisons with Martirano<sup>79</sup>,

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<sup>76</sup> Although the gold guinea coin had not been minted in the UK since 1814, the use of the term guinea to denote one pound and one shilling persisted until the decimalisation of British currency in 1971. 75 guineas equals £75 plus 75 shillings, i.e. £78 15s (£78.75).

<sup>77</sup> Readers under a certain age may wish to reflect on this; in 1971 the only viable channel of communication with Tilbury while 'abroad' would have been by telegram, letter or a very expensive (and at that time rare) international landline telephone call – assuming his whereabouts at any given moment were known.

<sup>78</sup> It is unclear why the SPNM should offer £40 in 1971, having previously offered £50 in 1970. Nor is clear why Schonfield mentions £35 for 1970, despite the £50 offer. This may be related to the number of days' work involved; it is possible that the £50 offer had been for three days, and that Tilbury had ultimately only worked two, for which he was paid £35 - but this is speculation. During our correspondence in 2016 John Tilbury himself confessed that (unsurprisingly) he had no memory whatsoever of these details (J. Tilbury, e-mail to the author, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2016).

<sup>79</sup> American composer Salvatore Martirano was the 'principal lecturer' for the 1971 Composers' Weekend. His fee was \$240, which at 1971 exchange rates was equivalent to £100. The year before Babbitt had received 120gns (£126); Pousseur was

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but the case for a higher fee is quite clear anyway.

(Schonfield, 1971a).

In fact, in 1967 Tilbury had been paid £10 (and AMM £20 for the whole group)<sup>80</sup> for the contribution so volubly appreciated above by SPNM Hon. Secretary John Woolf. Nevertheless, Woolf replied with a letter expressing surprise and disappointment that Tilbury had been unhappy with the level of his fee in previous years, and raising the SPNM offer to £45 (it should be noted that by this time members of the professional ensemble engaged to play through the participants' compositions had been paid £50 each for quite a few years). Schonfield writes again on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May, having had chance to talk to Tilbury about the matter in the meantime. He agrees to drop the £75 request in view of John's apparently having already agreed to accept £50 before his departure on tour, but will not concede the remaining £5 difference. He observes that

If the SPNM insists on rejecting the arguments and refuses to meet the above fee [£50], we realise that you will have the problem of having advertised John's course before confirming his availability, and being left without a tutor. In that case we suggest that Christopher Hobbs would be a suitable substitute, and can be contacted at 01-878 2814 (Schonfield, 1971b).

Woolf replies by return, observing that 'John is the person we want, and that the participants will feel the same way' (Woolf, 1971). Schonfield acidly replies

John Tilbury appreciates that you want him specifically, and not some near substitute or approximation, and is still ready to give his course. However, he must receive the fee he has asked [sic], and not some near substitute or approximation (Schonfield, 1971c).

Later in the same letter, Schonfield – himself an adventurous New Music promoter who was ultimately laid low by financial uncertainty – makes a pithy reference to the SPNM's financial situation<sup>81</sup>:

I would remind you that the SPNM is unique among bodies concerned with contemporary music in not having financial worries. It is therefore ironical that the SPNM should also try to adopt a uniquely cheeseparating attitude over financial matters (ibid.).

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the correspondence continued with an increasingly tetchy and curt tone; the SPNM were reluctant to agree to the additional £5 fee expenditure, despite all the glowing praise heaped upon

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paid £100 in 1970, and in 1972 Dallapiccola received £120.

<sup>80</sup> See Woolf (1967a).

<sup>81</sup> According to Toop, Music Now's corporate motto was 'Get Their Money' (Toop, 2016 p. 204). Although at least partly tongue-in-cheek, this alludes to Schonfield's appointed mission of securing institutional funding and support for those creative musicians who, by dint of their background, aesthetic allegiances or race, had been excluded from the mechanisms normally available to 'the arts'. As Schonfield tells Richard Leigh 'the position in 1967 was that public money was going to support rubbish, and geniuses were getting none whatsoever; and the only way to change this was by forming a charity' (Leigh, 1975 p. 4). For their part, after a particularly difficult loss-making season in 1965-66 the SPNM had been in an awkward position; but in 1967 'the SPNM received a bequest of over £100,000 from Arthur Paul, a new music enthusiast and former pupil of Seiber. This gift temporarily freed the SPNM from reliance on subsidy' (Wolf, 2013 p. 57).

Tilbury's contribution in previous years. Schonfield was obliged to write a final letter on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1971 confirming once again his insistence on a fee of £50, as John Tilbury had requested. Schonfield's tenacity paid off, and Tilbury did indeed receive the extra £5; but the extraordinary reluctance of the SPNM to pay John Tilbury the same fee as the (in some cases relatively anonymous) players making up the Weekends' performance ensembles speaks volumes about the two-track thinking prevalent within contemporary music institutions of the time, and against which Schonfield had set his face. As far as the records show, 1971 was to be the final time John Tilbury's course was to be included in the Composers' Weekends; it is not clear whether he declined the proposal in subsequent years, or whether the offer was not made. When I asked John Tilbury about this, he replied 'Sadly, or perhaps fortunately, I can recollect very little from those times. And none whatsoever of my relationship with the SPNM' (J. Tilbury, e-mail to the author, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2016). John suggested that Victor Schonfield might recall a little more about the affair, but this was not the case. However, Schonfield did make a point of observing that 'I think of John Woolf as basically decent and co-operative, indeed helpful. Maybe we were both simply doing our best to fulfil our respective roles' (V. Schonfield, letter to the author, 17<sup>th</sup> February 2017)<sup>82</sup>.

The performance ensemble for the 1971 Weekend was the Sonor Ensemble, which in this case included several well-known names of British contemporary music at this time, such as Josephine Nendick, Ross Pople, John Wallace and Barry Guy. Returning composer participants included Harvey, (R.) Smalley, Souster and Steinitz, along with Roger Marsh, Philip Mead, Peter Wiegold, John Woolrich, Nicola Lefanu and Bernard Rands.

1972 saw what might appear to be a significant development from an improvisation point of view, with the invitation of Iskra 1903 (Rutherford, Bailey & Guy) to participate (along with the London Contemporary Players, including Jane Manning, Edwin Roxburgh, Alan Hacker and Elgar Howarth) in the playing through of participants' scores. The invitation of the trio may well have been facilitated by Guy's presence at the 1971 weekend, and could also be a result of the apparent absence of John Tilbury in 1972. The 1972 Composers' Weekend was held from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> July at Hatfield College, in Durham, and the principal lecturer was Luigi Dallapiccola. The directors of the weekend were Lumsdaine and Anthony Gilbert, and the records show that the SPNM was becoming a little more even-handed regarding the question of fees; the two directors and the invited musicians (both improvisers and notation players) were all paid the same fee of £60 (the 'associate composers' were paid £37). Participants included Philipp Wachsmann, Robert Saxton, Colin Wood and Hermann (later Latif) Freedman. The surviving documents include SPNM contracts signed and returned by Guy, Bailey and Rutherford, along with texts for dissemination to the participating composers; in these texts the performers briefly outline their interests and background, to assist composers who might wish to write for them. Paul Rutherford's text explains that he is 'very interested in improvised music, but will try anything...' (Society for the Promotion of New Music, 1972).

Unfortunately, Rutherford's open-endedness was not to be put to the test, since he never participated in the 1972 Composer Weekend. An exchange of correspondence serves to show that probably the presence of Iskra 1903 as an improvising group was not as welcome as might first appear<sup>83</sup>. Since only one document from the

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<sup>82</sup> Although he couldn't remember this particular correspondence, in the same letter Schonfield remarked 'God knows there is plenty I do remember, much of which I wish I didn't'.

<sup>83</sup> In 1972 the group had not yet received the *imprimatur* of the doyen of classical music labels Deutsche Grammophon; their  
[footnote continues on next page]

correspondence between John Woolf and Paul Rutherford in July 1972 survives, a little conjecture is necessary to construct the reasons which led to Rutherford's non-participation. However, by far the most likely explanation is simply that none of the participating composers submitted a piece which called for trombone, or which offered a role which might be filled by a trombonist. It would appear that when this became clear, Woolf wrote to Rutherford explaining that his presence in Durham would not be required after all, but that since the commitment from the SPM had been a firm one, he would of course be paid his fee nevertheless<sup>84</sup>. Presumably Rutherford replied that since he was to be paid anyway, would it not make sense for him to attend, and for a performance of *Iskra 1903* to be scheduled; with historical hindsight this clearly should have been an important opportunity for the participating composers to hear (and discuss and explore) the new 'non-idiomatic' improvisation which these three musicians were pioneering at a high level. However, the SPM did not see it this way; the only surviving document is a letter from Woolf to Rutherford on 4<sup>th</sup> July, in which he writes

I have now had a word with David Lumsdaine about your excellent idea of coming up in any case to the Seminar to do an *Iskra* concert during the Weekend. As I expected, David feels that there will not be a spare moment, and the answer must therefore be no. I am very sorry but thanks again for the suggestion. Your engagement with us for 20-23 July was firm, and we will of course pay you the agreed fee of £60 (Woolf, 1972).

In other words, the musicians of *Iskra 1903* were being invited as musicians who would be written for by composers, rather than as improvisers in their own right. In the absence of a composer's validatory text, their presence would have been superfluous. (This is a disappointing outcome, but Barry Guy was to continue to seek to introduce improvised music into the Composers' Weekends in later years, as the archives reveal.)

Despite the dismantling of *Iskra 1903* as a group, Bailey and Guy did participate in the Weekend as individual musicians, within an ensemble which at some stage took the name The London Contemporary Chamber Players. On the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1972, the LCCP (conducted by Henry Ward) presented a concert at the Purcell Room in London, which was advertised as 'works from the SPM Composers' Weekend 1972'. Although not all pieces looked at during the weekend were programmed (Philipp Wachsmann's *Invention* for trumpet and piano was not included, for example), the programme as presented certainly does not include any pieces calling for trombone. Although Barry Guy plays in several pieces (*Visions of Emily Dickinson* by Richard Steinitz, *Streim* by Roger Marsh and possibly Gillian Whitehead's *Janet Frame Songs*), the only piece which made use of Derek Bailey's presence was Peter Wiegold's *The Circle of Forms* for electric guitar and double bass<sup>85</sup>.

Barry Guy's influence on the Composers' Weekends continued to grow over the coming years, and he seems to have frequently taken advantage of opportunities to introduce into the programme the work of his improvising colleagues. The SPM archives contain less detailed information and correspondence about the Composers' Weekends of 1973-1979, but from 1972 the discrimination between notation players and improvisers in terms of fees paid seems to have been abandoned, and the idea of an invited 'guest star' principal lecturer also appears

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contribution to the label's *Free Improvisation* boxed set was recorded in 1973, and the three-LP set was released in 1974.

<sup>84</sup> Coincidentally, the 1975 archive contains a letter from trombonist James Fulkerson, responding to a (presumably) similar letter from Woolf, in apparently identical circumstances.

<sup>85</sup> Although listed in the British Music Collection catalogue, this score could not be found by the Huddersfield archivists.

to have been put aside until 1977.

The 1973 Weekend was directed by Barry Guy, Alexander Goehr and Bernard Rands, and on the Saturday afternoon featured a 'Barry Guy improvisation group' – although the archives contain no further details about how this group was constituted and who participated in it. The 1974 Weekend was directed by Guy and Jonathan Harvey, and the resident ensemble was the Orchestra of St John's, Smith Square – an orchestra in which Guy was (or had been) the principal bassist. In his Director's Report, Harvey ruefully notes that 'many of the predominately young players of the orchestra were fascinated by the new techniques and sounds involved, lamenting the protection from modern music their educational institutions had so thoughtfully provided for them' (Harvey, 1974).

**SPNM**  
society for the promotion of new music  
1972-73 30th anniversary season

**Works from the  
SPNM Composers' Weekend 1972**

HAYDN REEDER	Piece for soprano, horn & trumpet*
RICHARD STEINITZ	Visions of Emily Dickinson for soprano, clarinet & bass*
HELEN LONGWORTH	Piece for solo voice*
ROGER MARSH	Streim for soprano, flute, clarinet, trumpet & bass*
DAVID JOHNSON (Edinburgh)	Five Chinese Songs for soprano & trumpet*
ELDON WALKER	This bird for soprano, flute & clarinet*
*****	
DALLAPICCOLA	Machado Songs for soprano & piano
PETER WIEGOLD	The Circle of Forms for electric guitar & bass*
DAVID JOHNSON (Warwick)	Blues for Mr. Barratt for solo clarinet*
GILLIAN WHITEHEAD	Janet Frame Songs for soprano & ensemble*

\*first performance

**Jane Manning** soprano  
**London Contemporary Chamber Players**

Judith Pearce flute	Anthony Halstead horn
Edwin Roxburgh oboe	John Wallace trumpet
Alan Hacker clarinet	Derek Bailey guitar
Bill Sweeny clarinet	Barry Guy bass
	Ronald Lumsden piano

**Henry Ward** conductor  
*Presented in conjunction with the ICA*

Greater London Council  
**Purcell Room** Director: John Denton, CBE  
**Friday 6 October at 7.30 pm**

Tickets: 70p 40p from RPH Box Office, SE1 8XX (Tel: 01-928 3191).  
Admission free to SPNM Members. Reduced price (40p) for ICA Members, tickets from SPNM, 29 Exhibition Road, SW7

**SCORES**  
Composers are invited to send works to be considered by the SPNM Reading Panel for inclusion in the 1973-74 Season. All scores will be acknowledged and those received by the 6th of the month will be read by the end of that month. The result will be notified immediately.  
The closing date for the 1973-74 Season is 31st March 1973.  
Compositions in all styles are welcomed, the qualifications being ability, talent and musical imagination. Scores by young composers are of particular interest.  
**SPNM, 29 Exhibition Road, London SW7, Tel: 01-584 6716, afternoons**

Figure 3: poster for the SPNM Composer's Weekend concert, Purcell Room 6<sup>th</sup> October 1972

The 1975 Weekend was organised by Barry Guy, Richard Orton and Paul Patterson, and took place on the 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> July at the University of York. Participants and lecturers included Simon Emmerson, Odaline de la

Martinez, Stephen Montague, Melvyn Poore, Peter Wiegold, Trevor Wishart, Wilfred Josephs, Steve Stanton, Bernard Rands and Christopher Fox. Invited performers included Rogers Covey-Crump, Paul Hillier, John Wallace, Guy Protheroe and Edwin Roxburgh, along with 'an improvisation group' of Guy, Rutherford, Evan Parker and Paul Lytton. The musicians (regardless of genre) were paid £70 each, and the three directors received £75 each. In a report on the Weekend's activities, Margaret Lucy Wilkins observes that the improvisation group 'joined forces with [The Contemporary Dance Group], resulting in a session that was humorous, unrepetitive [sic] and always resourceful' (Wilkins, 1975 p. 1). In an advance information/publicity flier for the event it was stated that 'Paul Lytton, Evan Parker, Paul Rutherford and Barry Guy will form the nucleus of a group in which participants may join. The sessions will consist of playing and discussion of aspects of improvisation' (Society for the Promotion of New Music, 1975). Unfortunately the archive contains no further information about which participants joined the group of improvisers, and what the outcomes were.

This survey has reached 1975, and I have described the links between the improvisers and the experimentalists as loosening or even dissolving in the early 1970s; however, the links between some improvisers and the composition establishment (in the form of the SPM) were to continue a little while longer, thanks almost exclusively to the apparently indefatigable Barry Guy. The 1976 Composers' Weekend was again directed by Guy and Orton, and was held at UEA Norwich on 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> July. The Saturday evening concert included works by David Bedford and Richard Orton, along with a 'full ensemble' version of Earle Brown's *December 1952*. The performing ensemble included Timothy Walker, Melvyn Poore and James Fulkerson.

In 1977 the Weekend directors were Barry Guy and Nicola LeFanu, assisted by Richard Orton, Paul Patterson and Peter Wiegold. Jacob Druckman was invited to be a guest lecturer, and works by Michael Finnissy, Trevor Wishart and Guy himself (*Statements II*) were performed and discussed. The performing ensemble included Guy, Jane Manning and Nancy Ruffer, and the Sunday evening was devoted to an 'experiment with improvisation involving everyone' (Society for the Promotion of New Music, 1977).

The 1978 Weekend was once again directed by Guy and LeFanu, with assistance from Patterson and Wiegold. Gemini were the ensemble in residence, and by now the musicians' fees had risen to £130 each. However, in view of past (and future – see below) discussion about the Composers' Weekend fees, it is worth noting that John Woolf's letter to the musicians confirming their fees is dated 17<sup>th</sup> July 1978 – with the Weekend itself scheduled to start on the 21<sup>st</sup> July. The archive also contains a letter from Woolf to Barry Guy discussing the participation of Howard Riley and Tony Oxley in the Weekend. He notes that

Both are planning to come up ... Tony will be driving up overnight and arriving at approximately 5 a.m. so I shall be arranging for him to have somewhere to sleep before waking up again in time for breakfast! However, neither of them have yet a clear idea of what you want them to do on the Saturday. I suggest that it needs to be gone into in good time especially in relation to the schedule which Nicola is already well advanced with (Woolf, 1978).

While LeFanu's timetable for the Weekend does indeed include allocated time for the Riley/Guy/Oxley group, disappointingly the archive contains no record of what form their session took, or who the participants were.

The 1978 Weekend appears to have been the last in which Barry Guy played such a prominent part. The 1979 directors were Wiegold and Patterson, with Morton Subotnick as the principal lecturer. The main performance

group was Electric Phoenix, but the Sunday included an afternoon open rehearsal and evening concert by a trio of Gavin Bryars, John White and Dave Smith. This marks the first appearance of British Experimental Music since John Tilbury's final appearance in 1971; unfortunately there is no record of the programme they played, or reactions thereto, with the exception of one letter from John Woolf to Gavin Bryars: 'There is no question that [the trio concert] provided valuable food for thought for everyone present – even the one who walked out!' (Woolf, 1979).

Unfortunately, as with Tilbury in 1971, the question of fees was to raise its head once more. In a letter dated 12<sup>th</sup> May 1979, Gavin Bryars writes to John Woolf on behalf of the trio:

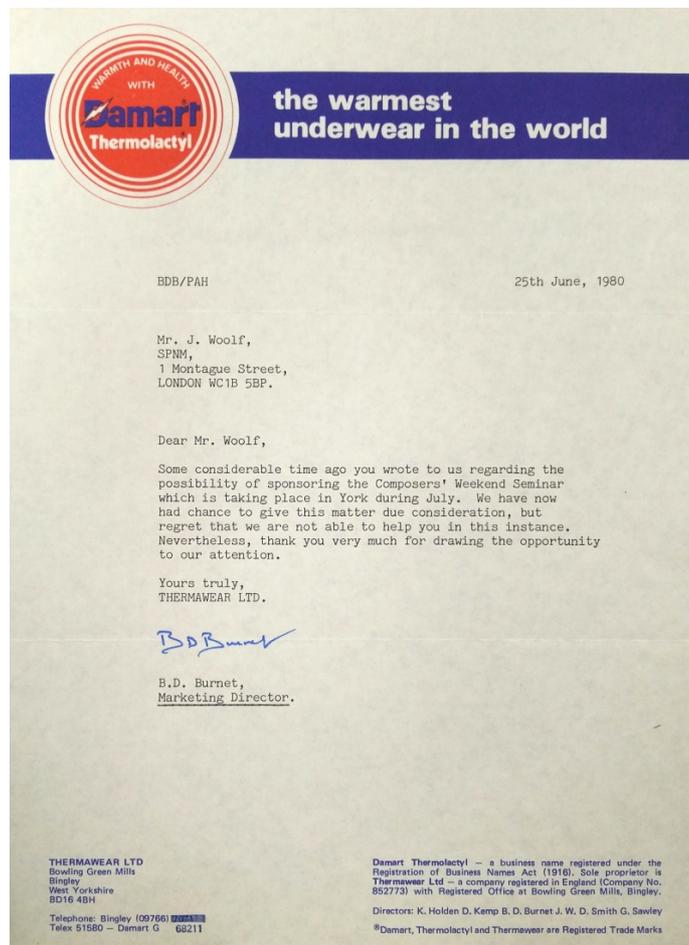
I find it a little awkward to say this, but I had expected more than £150 [for the trio] for the event, especially given that it is out of London and that I am to do a talk in addition to the concert itself. We did get more than twice that for the concert alone earlier this year. I would be prepared to do what you suggest for an overall fee of £200 – which I would divide between the three of us – plus return travel and accommodation (Bryars, 1979).

In a striking echo of Schonfield (1971b) (see page 51), Bryars continues:

My embarrassment stems largely from the fact that, having been already billed to appear without any discussion about fees and so on, it might appear that I am using a rather unfair form of coercion, which could not be further from the case. I would have said the same thing had the fees been discussed in advance of the publicity – which, of course, would have been better from all points of view (Bryars, 1979).

As the Gemini fee letters mentioned above tend to corroborate (and the problem was to recur during the preparation for the 1980 Composers' Weekend), the tendency of the SPNM to leave the confirmation of actual fees until very late in the administrative process was clearly problematic. However, it's hard to be sure whether there was any discrimination against the experimental musicians with regard to the fee levels offered; nevertheless Bryars is right to point out that he could expect more given the additional lecture commitment, since in the same year David Bedford was paid £50 for giving a lecture only, without performing duties. The directors of the Weekend were being paid £100 each in 1979, but it's notable that Electric Phoenix – in a 5-person formation – were paid £940 for their participation.

As the 1970s became the 1980s an era seems to come to a close. John Woolf left the SPNM in March 1980, and was replaced by Roderick Lakin; the correspondence archives reflect the changing times, with a significant amount of administrative time now being devoted to fund-raising (see Figure 4), while the Composers' Weekends appear to gently retreat from their engagements with improvisation and experimentalism to focus once again on New Composed Music.



**Figure 4: New Music promotion in the 1980s. A letter from Thermawear Ltd. (manufacturers of Damart, ‘the warmest underwear in the world’) declining John Woolf’s request for commercial sponsorship**

### ***preMICO / Instelimp***

The key groups of early British improvised music (such as the Spontaneous Music Ensemble, AMM, the Joseph Holbrooke trio and the Music Improvisation Company) are widely known to listeners and scholars, and are frequently referenced in texts on improvised music. However, there are also some intriguing transitional and hybrid groups, which have received considerably less attention. One such group which is the combination of musicians which preceded the Music Improvisation Company and involved many of the same musicians, and which presented programmes of compositions and improvisations.

It’s not clear whether this group ever had an official name, although in correspondence with me Evan Parker referred to it as preMICO. He also mentioned that ‘Derek did suggest Instrumental and Electronic Improvisation, or more catchily “Instelimp”’ (E. Parker, e-mail to the author, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015), and this is the name by which Parker refers to the group in his introduction to *Soundweaving* (Schroder 2014). Parker tried to unpick some of the history of this group

One lineage has the group arising out of two duos, one with me and Derek and one with Derek and Jamie [Muir] which became a trio, but there is also the group with Gavin (after his return from studies with Cage) which had J[ohn] T[ilbury] ... This was also the context in which Hugh Davies arrived. We played mixed programmes of notated (whether graphic, text based or conventional) [sic] (E. Parker, e-mail to the author,

15<sup>th</sup> May 2015; parentheses in original).

The ensemble which performed Herbert Brün's *Infraudibles* at Cybernetic Serendipity in 1968<sup>86</sup> may well be an early manifestation of this group. In his *Soundweaving* piece, Evan attributed a certain agency with regard to the group's operating method to Gavin Bryars;

Gavin Bryars, who had recently returned to England after his studies with John Cage, had the rest of us playing pieces involving chance ... Gavin said somewhere that his aim in these concerts was to leave as little time for improvising as possible having been persuaded that the Cage approach was right (Parker, in Schroder, 2014 p. 4)<sup>87</sup>.

Bryars himself remarks

This group finally broke up when it was noticed that I programmed a particular performance in Bristol in such a way that the improvisations would be last in the programme and, ultimately had to be omitted because the compositions ran overtime (Bryars, 1994).

The specific concert programme which Parker details in his *Soundweaving* essay<sup>88</sup> is an interesting mix of English and American experimentalism:

Gavin Bryars: *Mr. Sunshine* (1968)

George Brecht: *Candle-piece for Radios* (1959)

Christian Wolff: *For One, Two or Three People* (1964)

Derek Bailey: *Quarter of Zyklus* (date unknown)<sup>89</sup>

John Gosling: *Film from Water Yam* (date unknown)<sup>90</sup>

Cornelius Cardew: *Octet '61 for Jasper Johns* (1961)

John Cage: *Water Music* (1952)

Christian Wolff: *Tilbury* (1969)<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Herbert Brün: *Infraudibles*. Performed at The ICA, London, 29<sup>th</sup> August 1968 by Evan Parker, Richard Howe, Derek Bailey, Gavin Bryars and Bernard Rands. See p. 115 (footnote) for more information on this event and on Richard Howe.

<sup>87</sup> There is perhaps irony in the fact that, as Benjamin Piekut has suggested, much of the Cage/Tudor work that inspired Bryars was probably essentially improvised. Evan Parker observed to me that Bryars 'was assembling a case for the composer's role. Much as Cage himself continued to do, although the activities he indulged himself in performance sound a lot like improvising to me' (E. Parker, e-mail to the author, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017).

<sup>88</sup> A concert at the West of England College of Art in Bristol on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1969.

<sup>89</sup> *Quarter of Zyklus* is not among the scores I have so far uncovered in the Bailey archive, although there remains much to examine and catalogue. The title of this piece is suggestive of Bailey's interest in Stockhausen at this time, possibly referencing Stockhausen's 1959 composition *Zyklus*. A partial score of this latter piece has been found in the Bailey archive (see page 162).

<sup>90</sup> Artist and printmaker John Gosling made several elegant editions of Brecht pieces at this time, including *Water Yam*. The exact nature of *Film from Water Yam* has not yet been identified.

<sup>91</sup> Wolff wrote three *Tilbury* pieces in 1969; this is presumably the first of them.

The core personnel of the group was Bryars, Bailey, Muir, Parker and Tilbury (although Wolff's *Tilbury* was not played by the dedicatee, but by Bryars and Bailey). Gavin Bryars describes the group as

a curious quintet which divided ideologically into a trio - Evan, Derek Bailey and Jamie Muir, from the jazz wing of free improvising - and a duo of myself (not playing bass) and John Tilbury contributing a more anarchic Cage/Tudor approach, using radios, contact microphones and such like (Bryars, 1994).

Given Bryars' unequivocal rejection of the improvising style he had arguably (via Joseph Holbrooke) helped to create, it is not entirely clear why these two ideologically divided groups found themselves working together. Derek Bailey's interest in composition had not yet deserted him at this point, although excessive exposure during this period to Bryars' 'avantgarderie'<sup>92</sup> may have dealt a fatal blow. However, his participation in this group can also be considered in the light of comments by Dominic Lash regarding the Music Improvisation Company, the group which 'Instelimp' eventually evolved into: rather than a group with a common aesthetic goal, 'Bailey saw it more in terms of a fruitfully frictive combination of personalities and propensities, and hence a precursor of his ever-changing Company Weeks' (Lash 2010, p. 86).

Bailey subsequently made several pertinent observations about the change of priorities involved in Bryars' switch from improvisation to composition. He points to the predominance of predetermined intention as a key characteristic of composition, with its determination to express or explore 'something':

Each composition usually has a definite, clearly defined, pre-decided point to make. Improvisation is not much use for making statements or presenting concepts. If you have any philosophical, political, religious or racial messages to send, use composition or the Post Office. Improvisation is its own message (Bailey, quoted in Kaiser, 1975 p 10).

Bailey felt that this obsession with a pre-decided 'point' rendered would-be composers insensitive to the true flow of an improvisation, and describes Bryars as often falling into this trap upon his return from the United States; Bailey sensed the distraction from the job at hand of a composer who is constantly seeking to insert 'some sensational event that blows everybody away. Composers have a weakness for this kind of thing' (Bailey, quoted in Watson, 2004 p. 103). This focus on the what-might-be rather than on the what-is-happening-now (a division between conceptual and practical application) could serve as a summary of the implied division of labour in the separate roles of composer and performer (even improvising performer). When, at the Bimhuis October Meeting Symposium in 1987<sup>93</sup>, Misha Mengelberg put forward the relatively commonplace proposal that improvisers were

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<sup>92</sup> See Watson (2004 p. 103). It should be noted that, despite the evident intensity of some of the aesthetic disagreements between Bailey and Bryars, the two men remained on good terms for over forty years. Gavin Bryars told me that 'Derek was, for me, a good friend throughout our long association that stretched from 1962 until his death and after ... I know that Derek had the reputation for being a bit brittle with many people and there were some major fall-outs. But that didn't happen with us' (G. Bryars, e-mails to the author, 8<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> August 2017).

<sup>93</sup> The Symposium was held as part of the first Bimhuis October Meeting, in Amsterdam, which ran from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> October 1987 inclusive. The symposium featured many of the musicians performing at the festival, but the exact date on which it was held is not known. The participants were Derek Bailey, Gerry Hemingway, George Lewis, Misha Mengelberg, Cecil Taylor and John Zorn; the session was chaired by J. Bernlef. Quotations are taken from a transcript of the event found in Bailey's archive (Bailey et al., 1988)

effectively composers in real time, Bailey was at pains to distance himself from a provocatively caricatured representation of the conceptual composer:

I am not what I think of as a composer ... I am not that. That's what I don't do ... I don't have a sort of castle in the south of France where I take off for six months and sort it all out (Bailey, in Bailey et al., 1988 p. 6).

Bailey's comments here suggest once again that his 'quarrel' with composition was arguably less with the actual act of predetermining some elements of musical activity (although he also certainly felt this was an overrated activity) than with a Eurological social construct of The Composer as a conceptual genius whose work was at the apex of a pyramid of social, artistic and political relations. Bailey also expresses scepticism about what he sees as sonic conservatism in the 'experimental' work of his former improvising colleague, and other post-Scratch experimental composers:

It's been very prevalent in European avant-garde circles for about five years now, back to the melody. And in England it takes the form of a sort of cozy [sic] Sunday evening Edwardian-type drawing room music. Like Gavin Bryars' music, for instance. Or Christopher Hobbs'. They call it experimental music, and it allows them to work with melody (Bailey, quoted in Kaiser, 1975 p. 9).

Referencing Bryars' controversial ('quite ravishing' Nyman, 1974 p. 135) realisation of *Plus-Minus*, Dominic Lash observes of Bailey's own realisation of the Stockhausen piece<sup>94</sup>

it is possible that Bailey's realization [sic] was to some extent a polemical response to Bryars; an assertion of the value of a musical surface consistent in its inconsistency (rather than cutely referential) and of the value – expressed by the very concept of Moment Form – of the productive power of acausal sequentiality, rather than ironic juxtaposition (Lash, 2010 p. 82).

In Lash's perceptive reading, the two men's differing Stockhausen realisations serve to illustrate perfectly the diverging foci of their respective practices. However, in some senses both men were also moving away from their earlier experimental work to concentrate more explicitly on *notes*, to base their mature investigations on the relationship between relatively pitch-specific instrumental sounds related in time – the crucial difference being how such relationships were to be determined.

I asked Evan Parker about any possible tensions which might have arisen from this particular combination of playing partners, with their varying allegiances to improvisation, composition and many things in between. He observed that 'there was a certain amount of good humoured disagreement and taking of positions'; while this may have been good-humoured, the end result was that

by the time the MICO toured for the [Arts Council of Great Britain]'s proto-version of the [Contemporary Music Network] the group had settled into a fixed personnel DB/JM/H[ugh] D[avies] and me. Things didn't take more than about six months to clarify (E. Parker, e-mail to the author, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017).

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<sup>94</sup> See page 113.

Although it might be possible to read this ‘clarification’ as symptomatic of a diverging focus of attention between the two groups within Intelimp and the communities they represented, Parker was keen to stress the aspect of communal exploration which had initially brought the musicians together; with hindsight he feels that many of the ideological debates which ensued were conducted under false premises:

We were all learning about what had already been done. It is interesting to think about DB's decision to make one side of his first solo record (Incus 2) pieces by GB, M[isha]M[engelberg] and Willem Breuker. Clearly at that point there was a feeling of commonality to say the least. And as you know DB was still working with notation. My early thoughts on the need to distinguish free improvisation as a separate discipline led me down some semantic alleys which I have subsequently clarified (at least for myself). The idea of opposing composition and improvisation as virtual antonyms was a category error. **Notation and improvisation are both ‘compositional methods’**. Nevertheless thirty years on people still ask the question , ‘Was it composed or was it improvised?’ If I only come out of this with one quote please make it that one. (ibid.; parentheses and emphasis in original)

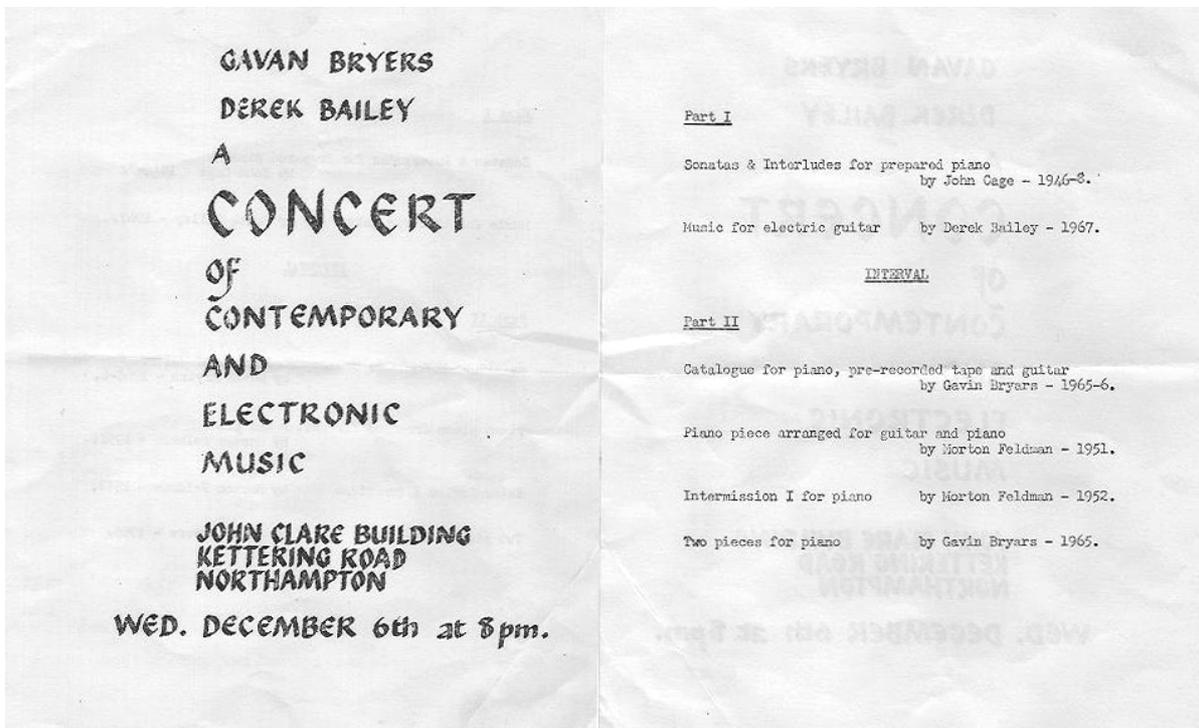


Figure 5: programme (pp. 1 & 2) for a concert by Bryars & Bailey, 6th December 1972

The Music Improvisation Company tour Parker refers to appears to have taken place in Spring 1970<sup>95</sup>; despite the preceding ‘clarification’ that Parker describes, Bailey and Bryars continued to explore notated material together as a (presumably occasional) duo. This Bryars/Bailey duo seems to have been operative since at least 1968, since the Bailey archive contains a letter from Cecily Bilham (on the notepaper of E. T. S. Hoffman, M.A.

<sup>95</sup> According to <https://www.arnolfini.org.uk/whatson/arnolfini-music-music-improvisation-company> (retrieved 27th July 2017), the group played in Bristol on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1970.

B.Com, Principal of Tottenham Technical College in the London Borough of Haringey), dated 11<sup>th</sup> December 1968. The concert referred to was evidently not a success, since the letter reads:

Dear Mr. Bailey,

I would like to thank you & Mr Bryars for your performance yesterday evening. It was most unfortunate that it was cut short so abruptly, particularly as you had gone to so much trouble bringing all the equipment. However you certainly provided a lively discussion & I'm sure it will be remembered for a long time by those who were present.

I enclose a cheque as agreed for £8.

With many thanks

Yours truly

(Bilham 1968)

Evidence for a 1972 Northampton concert is supplied by a programme in the Bailey archive: 'a concert of contemporary and electronic music', given by Gavan Bryers [sic] and Derek Bailey at the John Clare Building, Kettering Road, Northampton on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1972<sup>96</sup>. The programme was as follows (titles and composition dates are as indicated in the concert programme; all subsequent information is taken from Bryars and Bailey (1972)):

John Cage: Sonatas & Interludes for prepared piano (1946-8)

Derek Bailey: Music for electric guitar (1967)

Gavin Bryars: Catalogue for piano, pre-recorded tape and guitar (1965-6)

Morton Feldman: Piano piece arranged for guitar and piano (1951)

Morton Feldman: Intermission I for piano (1952)

Gavin Bryars: Two pieces for piano (1965)

The programme notes add that 'other pieces may be included', and indeed notes are printed for a Bryars piece not in the above list: *16 continuous fragments for guitars* (1967). The programme notes give useful further information; 'a selection' of Cage's *Sonatas & Interludes* will be played, and the Bailey 'Music for electric guitar' is in fact the suite of three compositions numbered 18-20, and listed here as *Guitar Pieces #1, #2, #3*<sup>97</sup>. Bryars' *Catalogue* is an arrangement of a piano piece of the same name 'which utilises chance operations in performance'; a score of this arrangement is in the Bailey archive (see page 162). The Feldman piano piece is identified as being *To Lulla*; since there appears to be no piece by this name, it seems likely that the piece may be *Piano (Three Hands)*, which is dedicated to Lulla Adler (but dates from 1957 rather than 1951)<sup>98</sup>. 16

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<sup>96</sup> In his report of this concert, Ben Watson notes that Bryars was absent in the U.S.A., and that his place was taken by John Tilbury (Watson, 2004 p. 138). Gavin Bryars observed 'I'm sure that John Tilbury must have depped for me as I didn't do it, though I'm not sure that I was in USA at the time'; however he also noted that 'I did play a concert in Northampton with Derek after I'd stopped improvising and the programme did resemble this one', so there may have been more than one such concert during this period; Bryars also recalled a similar concert in Loughborough (G. Bryars, e-mails to the author, 8<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> August 2017)

<sup>97</sup> See page 171 for the score of these pieces.

<sup>98</sup> My thanks to David Cline for his help in trying to identify this piece. Bryars subsequently identified the piece as indeed

[footnote continues on next page]

*continuous fragments...* is 'on 6 large pieces of paper the performer choosing the sequence', and the two Bryars piano pieces are *For a birthday* and *Triptych*, both drawn from the original solo piano version of *Catalogue*. It is noteworthy that there is no provision made for improvisation in the programme, although improvisations could have been among the 'other pieces' provided for.

There is no indication whether, in the absence of Bryars, this programme was amended in any way, but it nevertheless represents a valuable document of the continuing interaction of these two artists, and particularly of Bailey's enduring interest in composition, even at this relatively late date.

As the material explored in this first Section establishes, the relationship between the (developing) experimental composition and free improvisation communities in Britain in the later 1960s was much closer, and with a richer range of outcomes, than is generally allowed in the current literature. For example, Bailey's commitment to composition during this period of his career is widely overlooked, often as part of a retrospective tidying-up of aesthetic allegiances; the (sometimes mitigated) support offered by organisations such as the SPM and The Park Lane Group towards experimentalism and improvisation remains as yet little discussed. Before I examine in detail case studies from this period in Section 3, Section 2 will suggest possible refinements to the terminology employed in the discussion of improvised music, and will briefly touch on possible imbalances in the received historical/critical record of this period.

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being *Piano (Three Hands)* (G. Bryars, e-mail to the author, 8<sup>th</sup> August 2017).



## section 2: (re)defining and rebalancing

### 2a: the taxonomy of improvised music

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*What we will be doing here is playing. And, although its [sic] freely improvised, it won't be called Free Anything. Maybe we'll think of a name for it when we've played it – or somebody will (D. Bailey, 1995).*

*Much of the new postwar terminology had greater rhetorical force than literal signification (Kim, 2008 p. 37).*

#### **current terminology**

In order to discuss coherently the aesthetics and practice of improvisation, and to make possible subsequent comparisons with the aesthetics and practice of composition, it would be helpful to have a greater degree of precision in the terminology applied. Many texts approach improvisation in music as if it were one type of activity, undertaken with the same aesthetic aspirations (or lack of them) by all practitioners; even those texts which acknowledge the considerable differences of musical and technical literacy, aesthetic allegiance and individual/collective impulse between players rarely seem to consider the consequence of these questions for the discussion of improvisation's place(s) in the spectrum of creative musical activity. It is also necessary to understand the disparate uses of improvisation (both the term and the practice) in order to understand composers' uses of and distinctions from improvisation, as explored in subsequent sections of this thesis.

Hard lines, neat categorisations and clear differentiations are almost impossible when discussing improvised music; categorisations overlap and bleed into one another in a way which reflects the protean polyvalence of improvisation praxis. I have thus far used several signifiers to denote improvised musical activity; while there is no universal critical agreement on the use of these terms, experience and frequent usage tend to suggest the following broad definition. *Free Improvisation, Improvised Music* (also *Non-Idiomatic Improvisation*): a form of improvised musical activity which, among other things, may attempt to avoid all formulaic references to the idioms of other musics<sup>1</sup>. This music would normally be expected to have no prepared or pre-determined elements, beyond the technique, vocabulary and personal creativity of the participants. Although regular groupings are possible, it is often the case that these improvised encounters are between musicians or groups of musicians who do not habitually play together, and who may never even have met before the moment of performance. The musicians may have little or nothing in common in the way of musical (or verbal) language, with perhaps neither a common use of given temperaments nor a similar approach to the definitions of music, non-music, sound and noise. A final key characteristic of the music designated by these terms is that instrumentalists tend to avoid traditional hierarchical roles, or careless domination of the sonic environment due to incompatible dynamic ranges or other instrumental mismatches. The descriptors 'British...' and 'European...' simply reflect the spread of influence of this type of music-making, and its subsequent labelling by other musicians to identify the type of activity in question; 'British Free Improvisation' tends to be used to point up the

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<sup>1</sup> The degree to which his avoidance could be construed as intentional, rather than simply a following of convention, would depend on the historical context of any particular performance.

differences between the activity of the UK musicians discussed here, and those of their French, German and Dutch counterparts, whose music tends to have somewhat different approaches resulting from differing social and musical conditions. 'European Free Improvisation' similarly tends to differentiate this type of activity from American improvised music, which for most of its history was split between approaches based on extensions of either Free Jazz or 20<sup>th</sup> century composition, but rarely both. The choice between terms in this group is not always a scientific one; 'non-idiomatic' is closely associated with Derek Bailey and his writings, and is disputed by some (see p. 79 for further discussion of this term), while the other terms tend to be used interchangeably by many practitioners.

When exploring the internal subdivisions of improvised music practice, many recent writings on the subject have tended to follow a binary model first posited by Evan Parker as a way of differentiating between the activity of the groups AMM and SME, a difference which he articulated by use of the terms 'laminar' and 'atomistic'. Whilst these terms are accurate in respect of the phenomena they describe, they have been taken by some writers as representing two basic contra-defining poles of improvised music activity, in a way which Parker may never have intended. The articulation of 'laminar' and 'atomistic' arose from a need to differentiate the methods being used by two of the key groups of the mid-to-late 1960s. Parker first proposed it at the Actual Music Festival at the Institute for Contemporary Arts in London in 1980:

The group of people that were working around the SME (Spontaneous Music Ensemble) at that time... were working on a method that I could call 'atomistic': breaking the music down into small component parts and piecing them together again in a collective way, so as to de-emphasize the soloistic nature of improvisation and replace it by a collective process. But at the same time AMM had what I would call a 'laminar' way of working, where although the solo had been lost and the emphasis was on a collective sound, an orchestral sound if you like, it was not done by breaking the music into small components but by contributing layers which would fit together and make a new whole (Parker, quoted in Bell, 1999 p. 1).

The interests of both groups were similar (although they approached the task in different ways); the musicians were seeking to strip out the romantic and/or individualistic tendencies inherent in both jazz improvisation and the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century composition repertoire that was the then classical mainstream. For both AMM and SME achieving this involved eliminating the individual voice from the musical texture, either by the dense overlaying of continuous blocks of sound in the case of AMM, or the meticulous fragmentation of line and gesture undertaken in developing the SME concept. But it's important to note that Parker's two terms relate to groups who were undertaking very similar processes, albeit it by different methods and from different starting points. In both cases these groups were to develop slightly (or in the case of AMM, perhaps significantly) apart from the fluid thrust of ad hoc free improvisation playing, in which Parker himself was such a key figure. Consequently it should be remembered that the laminar/atomistic duality was proposed as a refinement within a sub-category of improvisation taxonomy, rather than presenting a binary model for free improvisation as a whole.

While these terms relate primarily to working methodology and subsequent textural characteristics, in *Into The Maelstrom* David Toop also identifies what he sees as two distinct philosophical strands which fed into early improvised music

by the 1960s free improvisation was splitting into two sharply divergent philosophical positions, both adamant that their methodology was the true path to complete freedom. On the side of preparedness was

a conviction that only the highest levels of musical virtuosity made it possible to follow each imaginative flight ... From the other side was a belief in deconditioning: forget musicality and training; cleave instead to holy fools and children; splatter, scream, rattle among the everyday (Toop, 2016 pp. 164-165).

To a certain extent, it is these two positions of preparedness and deconditioning which have developed into what I shall identify as the **somatic** and **associative** approaches to improvised music; while there is no hard and fast rule, it is arguably the case that most post-jazz improvisers adopted a position of 'preparedness', while many post-classical improvisers were drawn to the idea of 'deconditioning'.

Eddie Prévost has articulated what he calls 'the twin analytical propositions' (2004 p. 85 and elsewhere) of 'heurism' and 'dialogue'. These are not categorical opposites and appear not to be intended as taxonomic terms, but rather serve as markers of separation from what Prévost refers to as 'classical music' (ibid. p. 86); for Prévost, the heurism of improvisation rests in its almost inevitable tendency to arrive at form and signification through real-time practice, rather than preparatory contrivance. In a more developed reading, the terms heuristic and algorithmic could serve to categorise organisational tendencies within improvised music itself, which would map closely onto the concepts of **praxis**-based and **poietic** which I discuss below.

The terms heuristic and algorithmic are drawn from computer technology; in the 'Glossary of Cybernetic Terms' in Stafford Beer's *Brain of the Firm* (1972), 'heuristic' is defined as 'a set of instructions for searching out an unknown goal by exploration, which continuously or repeatedly evaluates progress according to some known criterion' (p. 306), while an algorithm is 'a comprehensive set of instructions for reaching a known goal' (p. 305) – such as a traditional Eurological score<sup>2</sup>. Definitions proposed by Suryam K. Sharma at the knowledge-sharing website Quora are also of particular interest in relation to pre-determined and improvised musics:

An algorithm is the description of an automated solution to a problem. What the algorithm does is precisely defined. The solution could or could not be the best possible one but you know from the start what kind of result you will get ... A heuristic has no proof of correctness, often involves random elements, and may not yield optimal results. Many problems for which no efficient algorithm to find an optimal solution is known to have heuristic approaches that yield near-optimal results very quickly (What is the heuristic approach / algorithm in computer science?, n.d. posting 2).

Sharma is concerned with truth rather than aesthetic quality, but the lack of 'proof of correctness' in heuristic/improvised music is significant. Brian Eno defines the characteristics of algorithm and heuristic in relation to (conventional) 'classical music' and 'contemporary music' (referring to what is generally described as Experimental Music in this text), but his models could also represent the difference of approach between goal-orientated and investigative musical practices:

[one the one hand] a rigidly-ranked, skill-oriented structure moving sequentially through an environment assumed to be passive (static) toward a resolution already defined and specified. This type of organization regards the environment (and its variety) as a set of emergencies and seeks to neutralize or disregard this

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<sup>2</sup> Further appropriating Beer's terminology, it might be suggested that the traditional approach the undertaking the performance of such scores has been algedonic, rather than heuristic.

variety ... [on the other hand] an adaptive organism ... that contains built-in mechanisms for monitoring (and adjusting) its own behavior [sic] in relation to the alterations in its surroundings. This type of organism must be capable of operating from a different type of instruction, as the real coordinates of the surroundings are either too complex to specify, or are changing so unpredictably that no particular strategy (or specific plan for a particular future) is useful (Eno, 1976 pp. 139-140; parentheses in original).

I would like to refine such essentially binary terminologies by proposing a double level of taxonomy; initially distinguishing between *poietic* (outcome-orientated) or *praxis-based* (process-orientated) improvisation, and then by outlining basic typologies within (but not exclusive to) each of these categories. The permutations available from such a multi-layered model are almost certainly better suited to dealing with complexities of contemporary improvisative praxis.

In proposing such terms, it must once more be emphasised that categorisations of improvised music activity are impossible to apply in a consistent manner, or consistently apply to any given musician or group of musicians. Improvising musicians tend by their very nature to fluidly move across stylistic and genre barriers, sometimes for extended periods, sometimes too quickly for the implications to be fully registered. David Toop comments on the tendency to identify certain given groups as having certain given characteristics, observing that in truth 'each group could sound radically different according to mood, room acoustics, personnel on any given day, instrumentation, recording engineer and equipment, the disposition of the audience and the temper of the times' (Toop, 2016 p. 191).

### ***poiesis & praxis***

With the caveats contained in the previous paragraph firmly in place, I would propose as **poietic** any improvised music activity which tends toward the realisation of a mutually anticipated sonic outcome (or range of outcomes) – outcomes which may be agreed either explicitly, or implicitly through a converging of (un)stated interests. A group (and this category of improvisation is particularly applicable to repeated groupings of similar musicians) may move gradually by osmosis from a praxis-based to an outcome-orientated state, as my own experience with the group IST would testify<sup>3</sup>; however, the poietic state is generally reached when the range of sonic material or performing language becomes (un- or semi-)consciously circumscribed by a (not necessarily explicitly) predetermined stylistic or aesthetic template. When the musicians' choices are made in order to serve the greater end of a cohesive, consistent or convincing exposition or exploration of a identified or identifiable group aesthetic, then the improvisation falls into this poietic category.

It could be argued that Parker's exemplars of both laminar and atomistic styles are within this category. In the 'laminar' case of AMM, Keith Rowe's 1960s interest in exploring a 'wall of sound/noise' (see Tilbury, 2008 pp. 284-285) led to a situation where AMM improvisations might develop homogenous surface-level textures, varied from improvisation to improvisation, but occasionally with a sustained timbre which runs through each

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<sup>3</sup> IST was (and is) a trio of Rhodri Davies, Mark Wastell and myself. We were primarily active during the period 1995 to 2003. Over 8 years we moved from a classic praxis-based dialogic group to one which was demonstrably outcome-orientated; this change was never explicitly discussed between us, but was clearly evident in the performances of 2001-2003.

improvisation (and as the improvisations tended to become performance-length, each performance). As Richard Scott has observed, in contrast to the general dialogic thrust of improvisation at this time, a key characteristic of early AMM music was 'an emphasis on sonic intensity and the development of the long-term shape ... to the extent that the sound-field seems static' (Scott, 1991 p. 62). In simple terms, each improvisation seems to be dealing with very similar questions in a similar way; but although individual examples may have a striking family likeness, they are never replicated except in the broadest of characteristics.

In contradistinction, SME improvisations from the mid-sixties include much surface complexity and unpredictable detail, the homogenous form created by a multiplicity of tiny fragments rather than large swathes of colour. This was achieved by John Stevens (in particular) driving players to fragment (atomise) their normal playing style, dealing with the continuous rapid exchange of molecular motifs rather than the development of musical phrases or expressive gestures. However, on a larger scale the atomistic detailing of this approach lends not only a considerable degree of homogeneity to individual improvisations (the excessive filigree detail resolving into an all-over pointillist hue), but also produces an even greater degree of surface similarity between different improvisations than that exhibited by AMM's laminar approach.

So although Parker's terms were coined to clarify a difference of approach between these two key groups, it should be noted that both of these groups were working within a style which was heuristic but not fully dialogic. Neither of these groups was primarily about the free presentation, exchange and development of (mainly instrumental) musical ideas presented in real time, which was the *raison d'être* of the free playing favoured by musicians such as Bailey, Parker, Rutherford and Guy. Indeed, rather than representing two archetypal exemplars of improvised music activity, both AMM and SME are exceptions to the guiding principles which were to prove fundamental to the subsequent British Improvised Music scene, in that they were relatively fixed groups with a pre-defined aesthetic identity, striving to achieve specific sonic goals<sup>4</sup>.

In contrast, the musicians playing in the ad hoc groups outwith AMM or the SME (but including quasi-regular groupings like the Music Improvisation Company, Iskra 1903 or the Parker/Lytton duo) were primarily focussed on the *practice* of improvisation, including its use in unfamiliar or challenging playing situations, rather than in increasingly familiar environments. This type of playing may be described as **process-** or **praxis-**based. In theory this would suggest less specific focus on the sonic outcome and more attention to the operation of improvisation *per se*, although many of these improvisers quickly adopted a characteristic 'non-idiom'; a fractured language of non-tonal, arrhythmic extended instrumental and vocal techniques, which seemed to prove most flexible for ad hoc meetings and the establishing of a neutral stylistic ground. The characteristic of uncompromisingly prioritising the process of improvisation over an aesthetically satisfying sonic outcome was perhaps most consistently maintained in the longer term by Derek Bailey, whose ambivalence towards certain more conventional aspirations of 'good music' was of a piece with his life-long attempt to fend off 'music' (the outcome) in favour of 'improvisation' (the process). As already noted, Bailey was of the opinion that in regular groupings 'everybody gets to know the music, and as soon as that happens and you start playing the music, you stop improvising' (Bailey, quoted in Keenan, 2004 p. 47).

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<sup>4</sup> However, it could certainly be argued that AMM's early progression was relatively focussed and decisive, while that of the SME tends to be more wayward and intuitive.

This approach is clearly not in alignment with the work of a group like AMM; as Eddie Prévost has remarked, 'AMM has been much more concerned with developing a common language and trying to make it as rich and expressive as possible' (Prévost, quoted in Scott, 1991 p. 307). Unlike AMM and the SME, the key characteristic of the music produced by these fluidly-affiliated musicians was the often extreme heterogeneity both within and between different improvisations. Indeed, the nature of ad hoc group playing effectively mandates this kind of unpredictably variable approach, especially when deliberately perverse or non-sympathetic groupings are promoted as a method of testing the boundaries of the power of improvisation, as evident in some of Derek Bailey's subsequent *Company* meetings.

### ***somatic & associative***

If praxis-based improvisation implies the primacy of the act of improvisation, with the sonic outcome determined solely or primarily by that process, I would propose two basic subdivisions of this category; what I would describe as **somatic** improvisation and **associative** improvisation. Somatic improvisation would describe the main thrust of improvised music activity undertaken by the 'first generation' British players – musicians such as Bailey, Parker, Oxley, Guy and Rutherford. I have already described how this type of improvisation has somewhat different characteristics to the poietic examples above, but it is the inextricable connection with the exploration of instrumental technique which marks out somatic improvisation. Somatic improvisers (especially of the earlier generations) are usually highly accomplished technicians on their instrument (or voice) and may have extensive experience of high-level music-making in more conventional idiomatic situations; they often remain associated with only one instrument (or instrumental family) and derive a great deal of their inspiration and motivation from the *physical act* of playing their instrument.

Derek Bailey was perhaps the most eloquent spokesman for a playing-based approach to improvisation – although his primary emphasis on the physical act of playing should not be taken as automatically implying a lack of interest in conceptual, philosophical or political questions arising through improvisation activity. While Bailey was acutely aware of the implications of his and his colleagues' work on many levels, he nevertheless repeatedly proclaimed the central significance of being 'a guitar player' to his improvisational thinking. After a few experiments with preparations, additional strings and modified instruments in the late 1960s and early 1970s Bailey subsequently confined himself to the six-string guitar in standard tuning, with a standard playing position; it was this 'traditional' set-up which was to occupy him for his entire artistic maturity, the simplicity of the instrumental relationship offering more potential for flexible, rapid and responsive gestures than the often cumbersome interaction found with an invented, prepared or extensively modified instrument. Bailey observes that

A lot of these instrumental adjustments aren't very manipulable, and I'm much more interested in something that can be altered around rather than something that is static, however attractive it is in its fixed state ... regarding the guitar as a sound source doesn't appeal to me. I do think of it as an instrument, which includes among many things being a sound source ... it's an instrument for making music, and a sound source would be a diminution of its possibilities (Bailey, quoted in Dalton, 1978 pp. 21-22).

But Bailey's interest in interaction with the guitar as instrument rather than sound source was not simply a question of enabling the construction of clearly identified (and intentional) pitch and timbre relationships with a

high degree of responsiveness, rather than the creation of relatively slow-moving, ambient sonic imagery. His interest in Curt Sachs' idea of the 'instrumental impulse' underpinned much of his thinking about how somatic improvisation was and is made. In his own book, Bailey quotes a passage from *The Wellsprings of Music*:

The instrumental impulse is ... an agile movement of the hands which seems to be under the control of a brain centre totally different from that which inspires vocal melody ... Quick motion is not merely a means to a musical end but almost an end in itself which always connects with the fingers, the wrists and the whole of the body (Sachs, 1977 p. 110).

before appending his own observation 'that would serve as a description of one of the underlying forces in free improvisation' (D. Bailey, 1992 p. 97). In 1989 Bailey explained to Henry Kaiser

The great advantage of [freely improvised music] is that I've always been interested in playing – playing an instrument – that's my whole involvement in music, although years ago I worked as an arranger and did some composing. Primarily I've always been interested in playing an instrument ... the experience of playing, I think of as being about the best thing you can get out of music. Now you get more playing per cubic minute in freely improvised music than you do in any other – there's more possibility for playing, for something that I would just describe as 'playing' (Bailey, in Kaiser, 1989 c.50m50s).

For Bailey, the act of 'playing' – i.e. using a finely honed yet extensive personal vocabulary and musical syntax to react rapidly, discursively and provocatively to the statements and developments of others, all in real time – was absolutely inseparable from improvisation. Speaking of an encounter with an unnamed 'experimental' cellist', he tells David Keenan

She just fixes things on the 'cello and grinds away for an hour. I'm not interested in that. I like them to play in a conventional way – notes, technique, that shit, that's what attracts me – but a lot of these guys here [in Barcelona] are very into what I call 'avant garderie' (Bailey, quoted in Keenan, 2004 p. 44)<sup>5</sup>.

This interest in 'notes, technique' is a characteristic he shares with all of the great 'first generation' instrumentalists mentioned above, and in some ways this is an inevitable result of their more or less shared background as idiomatic improvising musicians, either within jazz or commercial music. The key factor for musicians from this background (unlike those approaching improvised music from the conservatory tradition) is that improvisation already formed a key part of both their working lives and their relationships with their instruments. While this may be obvious in the case of jazz musicians, as Bailey explains, improvisation is also an essential tool for those working within light entertainment and commercial music:

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<sup>5</sup> As might be extrapolated from such statements, Bailey had an ambivalent relationship with the work of AMM; although he often expressed great admiration for Keith Rowe as a creative artist, he was less than convinced by the AMM idiom which eventually became established. Describing how improvisors could gradually cease to improvise, he told Henry Kaiser 'Maybe then you'll just specialize in playing the guitar in an odd way, or playing whatever has become identified as the music you play. Then it's possible you'll become so interested in that, that that is the end, the end you're pursuing; it might still be a viable activity, but you can't call it, it seems to me, free improvisation' (Kaiser 1975, p. 7).

This is typical improvisation, getting from A to C when there's no B, it's an expedient – that's basic improvisation ... All commercial musicians, outside of this – of course – dreaded European concert music area, have to be able to improvise, they wouldn't survive if they couldn't ... I mean, the thing needs to be a little bit extra here, a little bit extra – stretch it – there, concertina it here... (Bailey, in Kaiser, 1989 c. 1h26m49s).

Frederic Rzewski contrasts the attitude of musicians who have performing (and improvising) experience within the commercial environment with the more composition-orientated improvisers he met in the *Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza*<sup>6</sup>

The problem with all these 'classical' improvising groups at that time, I think is that they were all driven by composers, most of whom had very limited and sometimes naïve ideas about improvisation, did not realise they were reinventing the wheel (Rzewski, quoted in Toop, 2016 p. 190).

However, any implied categorisations are of course treacherous. Eddie Prévost has often moved between the worlds of somatic and poietic improvisation. The group unashamedly (and surprisingly, considering the long-standing collectivity of AMM) identified as 'The Eddie Prévost Band' in the later 1970s played music which is clearly identifiable as free jazz; in the sleeve notes to the group's 1978 LP (the first release on Prévost's own Matchless label) the writer<sup>7</sup> describes bringing 'our individual social and musical experiences to bear on the rich traditions of jazz and other musics' (Eddie Prévost Band, 1978). In fact the duo version of AMM (Gare and Prévost) which recorded the LP *To Hear and Back Again* in 1974<sup>8</sup> was clearly more idiomatic than earlier incarnations of the group, with the saxophone and drumset (rather than percussion) instrumentation, and comparatively traditional styles of playing them, making a clear link to African-American jazz history<sup>9</sup>. Prévost has continued to explore this side of his playing in several subsequent groups, such as the trios with Tom Chant and John Edwards, or with Alan Wilkinson and Joe Williamson. It is perhaps not unduly fanciful to suggest that this strand of activity has fortified Prévost's commitment to dialogic humanisation and 'public meaning', and that it may inform his questioning of Rowe's position of obmutescence in *If the musicians aren't listening...* (Prevost, 2004 pp. 91-95), and his concerns about the tendency of newer technologies to eliminate the 'instrumental impulse' from improvised music making in *Music as new art* (Prévost, 2004 pp. 21-31).

Associative improvisation is closely related to the idea of deconditioning posited in Toop (2016). Like somatic improvisation, this is more concerned with the process of improvisation in its own right than the use of improvisation to generate desired sonic outcomes; however, associative improvisation does not share somatic improvisation's intense relationship with the physical act of playing, and the use of refined technique to enable complex musical discourse. Associative improvisation tends to use the designated improvisation space as a

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<sup>6</sup> Membership of GINC was (at Evangelisti's insistence) open only to composer/performers, not musicians who were 'simply' performers (Toop, 2016 p. 185).

<sup>7</sup> The writer is unidentified on the 1978 release, but is very probably Prévost himself.

<sup>8</sup> The 1974 recordings were published by Matchless in 1978. A 1994 CD reissue expanded the original material with additional duo recordings from 1973 and 1975.

<sup>9</sup> In a conversation with me in the mid-1980s (in Cambridge I believe) Eddie observed that the AMM of this period could be read as a filtered European reflection of the influence of John Coltrane's duets with Elvin Jones and Rashied Ali.

container, during which period of time anything may happen, in any relationship, which may or may not evidence the employment of skill, instrumental technique, stylistic congruity or communicative discourse. For obvious reasons, this type of improvisation is often found in situations where non-musicians might be involved in the performance, or where there might be use of mixed- or inter-media approaches. It is also a style often favoured by musicians who have less confidence or experience in the act of improvisation itself; for this reason, improvisations which involved the participation of classically trained musicians in the 1950s or 60s, for example, often seem to have the characteristics of associative improvisation<sup>10</sup>.

Associative improvisation is particularly linked to the experimental composed tradition, and proved a characteristic working method for groups such as The Scratch Orchestra. Indeed, associative improvisation's 'opening up' of the performance/improvisation space to those who were non-musicians and/or inexperienced improvisers had an irresistible social aspect for Cardew:

That was the theory... that if you do get a lot of people engaging in activity in the same space, these activities will accommodate themselves to each other; this represents some kind of social ideal (unidentified speaker [probably Cardew], in Regniez, 1986 24m40s).

Eddie Prévost sees a connection between this kind of improvised activity and the more disruptive and subversive elements of 20<sup>th</sup> century art history

Most of the Fluxus and Scratch pieces to which much early attention was devoted really fall into this category of 'happening' or neo-dadaism... the effects of these pieces are generally more playful or vehicles for meditation than investigative (Prévost, 2011 p. 104).

Prévost's observation about such work being meditative rather than investigative is significant; although loosely or very freely organised, the work of The Scratch Orchestra does not have the heuristic element which is characteristic of the free improvisation being explored by the 'post-jazz' improvisers. The Scratch process is essentially combinatorial but not synthetic, the juxtaposition of elements not necessarily invoking a relationship between them.

The artistic movement cited by many musicians adopting this associative method of improvisation is surrealism; for example David Toop recounts that 'to counteract that gravitational pull towards routine [Yasunao Tone] felt it was essential ... to draw on the historical example of the surrealists [sic] use of automatism' (Toop, 2016 p. 145), and the emulation of the surrealists' subconscious-liberating strategies is a thread that runs through several groups at this time. For some musicians, the need to break away from habitual conditioning and traditional musical responses (deconditioning) implied a discarding of externally-imposed, conscious language by invoking automatism and chance combinations, and this contributes to the occasional conflation of improvisation, indeterminacy and chance operations. More somatically-inclined improvisers were also of course struggling with the question of deconditioning, but for many of them the answer lay in a *conscious* disassembling of existing idiomatic language, and the deliberate and the intentional forging of a new, potentially non-idiomatic, vocabulary

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<sup>10</sup> Stockhausen's 'intuitive music' series of pieces in the late 1960s are at least in part concerned with diluting the tendency of 'classical' musicians toward associative playing.

and syntax.

It seems likely that The Scratch Orchestra rarely or never performed free improvisations in the sense that the term is generally used in this text. Most SO performances seem to have included multiple simultaneous events and performances, and while some people may be improvising at any given time, in view of the Orchestra's working methods it seems most probable that this would be heard in simultaneity with someone else performing a piece (of some kind). Indeed, the differentiation between these activities may be somewhat artificial, given the nature of some SO scores. The intermediate category of 'Improvisation Rites' further complicates the classification of Scratch activity; Stefan Szczelkun describes these rites as 'rituals which aimed to give a community of feeling or a communal starting point but which should not attempt to influence the music that will be played' (Szczelkun, 1994 p. 2). If this suggests a somewhat oblique relationship to improvisation per se, this is confirmed by Cardew's own descriptions of the Improvisation Rites; in the SO constitution he writes 'an Improvisation Rite is not a musical composition' (Cardew, 1969a p. 619), but it is also explicitly not improvisation, since he writes in addition that 'free improvisation may also be indulged in from time to time' (ibid.). Subsequently (in *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism*) he identified the text pieces as 'rules to limit musical "free expression"' (Cardew, 2004 p. 106). In effect the Improvisation Rites were a mix of preparatory exercise, poetic ambience-building and conundrum, designed to transition performers into the 'special place' of Scratch performance; the important word in the formulation is rite (or ritual), rather than improvisation as it is generally understood<sup>11</sup>.

Notwithstanding these complexities, Virginia Anderson describes what she identifies as The Scratch Orchestra 'in full free improvisation':

a joyful, almost undifferentiated noise level, through which occasional singing, bits of radio and *The Dam-Busters' March*<sup>12</sup> on a wind-up gramophone can be heard (V. Anderson, 2004 p. 229).

Even accepting the suggestion that all these activities are being produced by 'free improvisation' rather than the combination of improvisation and performance of any number of Scratch scores or Rites, it seems difficult to deny the associative nature of the resulting audio-visual performance. (Such performances also have a clear link with a certain strand of American experimentalism, such as Cage's *Musicircus* (1967) or the later *A House Full of Music* (1982), and Wolff's *Burdocks* (1970-71)<sup>13</sup>.) Scratch Orchestra member Roger Sutherland makes a clear distinction between such activity and what he understands as 'free improvisation':

What the Scratch Orchestra did wasn't strictly improvisation in the sense of interactive improvisation. At the practical level that wouldn't have been possible, because you were talking about maybe a hundred

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<sup>11</sup> See V. Anderson (2004) for a valuable categorisation of the Improvisation Rites and their typologies.

<sup>12</sup> The theme music, composed by Eric Coates, to the popular British film of 1955. Playing such records (on a clockwork gramophone) during performances seems to have been a regular part of Psi Ellison's contribution to The Scratch Orchestra. See Tilbury (2008 pp. 393, 410 and elsewhere).

<sup>13</sup> *Burdocks* was inspired by The Scratch Orchestra (at least the idea/principle of The Scratch Orchestra, since Wolff had not actually heard them at the time of writing the piece). The Scratch Orchestra were to give the piece its first complete, large-scale performance in March 1972.

people filling Hampstead Town Hall and engaging in an enormous variety of acoustic, visual, theatrical, and other activities which had no planned relationship to each other. It was more like a collage of theatrical and musical events that would happen simultaneously, following I suppose Cage's idea that everybody is in the best seat, that everybody could choose their own point of focus and you could just wander around and listen to and maybe join in different things. It was a very '60s kind of phenomenon really... more like a huge cocktail party perhaps than a concert (Sutherland, quoted in Scott, 1991 p. 407; ellipsis in original).

One of the characteristics of associative improvisation is that its players occasionally seem more interested in locating themselves at some kind of experimental practice interface than concerning themselves with the nature and/or perceived quality of the resulting artistic 'outcome'. This may initially suggest a similarity to the non-poietic somatic improvisers I had described above; however, a clear difference between the two groups tends to reside in the fact that associative improvisers are in general also much less concerned with any ideas of quality with regard to the process of improvisation itself; the emphasis on the stasis of container-state rather than evolution of process-state provides an implied link to poietic improvisation, but the associative event achieves apprehended success simply by taking place or existing, rather than whether the outcome has any perceived aesthetic value aside from the means of its production. It is here that one of the primary paradoxes surrounding improvised music activity becomes clear; the somatic improvisers' concern with individual voice and articulateness, and their interest in developing and manipulating actual sonic material is often seen by those who are primarily concerned with external form as being inherently conservative, essentially an extension of the traditions of either jazz, composed chamber music or both. For these observers, the waywardness, unconventionality and lack of coherence in many associative improvisation performances is evidence of this practice's truly experimental nature, and establishes its artistic credentials.

### ***free jazz & free improvisation***

The dialogic, discursive aspect of somatic improvisation, coupled with its frequent reliance on a developed instrumental technique, often leads to uncertainty about this music's relationship with the jazz tradition. The historical lack of consistency in the application of terms such as 'jazz', 'free jazz' and 'improvised music' has resulted in confusion and misunderstanding for both critics, performers and listeners. Some writers have shown imprecision in the use of the terms 'jazz' and 'free jazz' during discussions of improvised music<sup>14</sup>, and improvising musicians themselves have often (particularly when discussing the music in an 'establishment' context) used 'jazz' as a signifier of a performance practice which was **not** like that of so-called classical or commercial musics - even though the music in question had little to do with jazz performance practice traditions either. Barry Guy in particular has proposed a definition of jazz as any music based extensively on improvised elements (in private conversation with the author, and in Montgomery, n.d. para. 6). Guy appears to use the term to identify the segment of his music practice which takes improvisation as its main motive force; the (universally unsatisfactory) terms 'classical' and 'jazz' being used merely as shorthand identifiers for musics which are mainly predetermined or mainly realised in real time.

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<sup>14</sup> For example V. Anderson (1983 pp. viii & 164), Dorner (n.d.) and Dervan (1997).

In particular, the differentiation between 'free jazz' and improvised music remains a subject of thorny debate, with the critical community far from reaching a consensus. These differentiations are not matters of hard and fast classification – a particular performance may have both free jazz characteristics in some passages, and improvised music characteristics in others, or a particular group of musicians may have a stronger stylistic allegiance to one of these categorisations, whilst still frequently exploring the other. The term 'free jazz' was initially used in the USA in the 1950s and 1960s to designate a music which, while it was in many ways freer than any previous jazz idiom up to that point, still made significant use of composition (sometimes of a complex and highly developed nature), predetermined structural elements, and traditional instrument roles. Subsequently the term 'free jazz' also became associated with highly expressive collective improvised music with very little or no predetermination, realised by groups of instruments (and instrumentalists) drawn from the jazz tradition, an idiom inspired primarily by the late work of John Coltrane among others. This music often eschews any division into separate pieces, with the corresponding possibility of different tonal centres, rhythmic propulsion or timbral characteristics, and thus tends more towards a homogenous texture, driven by emotive physicality and powerful, occasionally near-hysterical, expressiveness.

If the resulting music does not share the rhythmic or structural characteristics so typical of jazz, may lack any predetermined elements, and often has neither pulsation nor tonal centre, how might this music differ from 'free improvisation' or 'free music'? In fact, the differentiation between free jazz and free improvisation lies in two elements which are little discussed in conventional musical analysis, since they deal with performative intangibles which are less susceptible to text-based classification (i.e. that centred on score or transcription). I shall identify these characteristics as *continuity* and *hierarchical organisation*, although other terms have been used by some performers (see Beresford below, for example).

This proposed differentiation between Free Jazz and Free Improvisation, based on the combination of the fracturing of continuity and the dismantling of conventional instrumental roles, is not one which has universal currency; however, the distinction based on these characteristics corresponds most closely with my experience as a musician working in both fields. The wider academic and critical community are not (yet) in general agreement about what might constitute the defining characteristics of the two strands, and indeed whether there is a distinction to be made between them. For example, Iain Anderson consistently uses 'free improvisation' as a synonym for free jazz (which use allows him to posit a clearer separation between that music and what he describes as simply 'jazz'); this leads to statements which are surprising in the context of the use of the term Free Improvisation in this essay, such as 'Free improvisation included stylists as diverse as John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman' (I. Anderson, 2007 p.2).

According to Todd S. Jenkins, 'a principal distinction between "free jazz" and "free improvisation" is simply the degree to which our musical expectations are circumvented' (Jenkins, 2004 p.xxviii); what Jenkins refers to as 'musical expectations' are probably the (comparatively) idiomatic musical elements which are still present in Free Jazz, and which might be thought to be absent from Free Improvisation. Elsewhere he is more specific:

The general distinctions between music that is considered free jazz and that which is considered free improv, in a more European experimental sense, are that the former uses some type of reference points, be they short composed themes, jazz-based playing techniques, or more general structural suggestions, and some recognizable "swing" inflections or syncopation (Jenkins, 2004 p. xxxii).

Unfortunately, in attempting to clarify of what our 'musical expectations' might consist, Jenkins overstates his case and reverts to a comparatively simplistic identification of the presence of structuring devices or 'jazz-derived playing', when there are actually much subtler and more nuanced idiomatic stylings in play in such a distinction. George Lewis, having dismissed similar definitions based on unsophisticated structural or stylistic markers, returns to Derek Bailey's comments in the introduction to *Improvisation: its nature and practice in music*. Bailey writes that idiomatic improvisation (which would in my reading include Free Jazz)

is mainly concerned with the expression of an idiom ... and takes its identity and motivation from that idiom ... "Non-idiomatic" improvisation has other concerns ... and, while it can be highly stylised, is not usually tied to representing an idiomatic identity (D. Bailey, 1992 pp. xi-xii).

Reflecting upon this, Lewis observes that given such a 'vague' definition, 'it may be difficult to see how free improvisation avoids becoming an idiom like all the others out there' (Lewis, 2015 p. 314); indeed, for some practitioners and observers it is hard to draw any other conclusion. Lewis doesn't provide an answer to the implied question, but does suggest that 'the very being of "non-idiomatic" improvisation must become parasitic upon the existence of an "idiomatic" genre of improvisation' (Lewis, 2015 p. 315), and I shall explore this idea further on page 81.

Continuity can be considered a helpful identification marker, although not a defining characteristic. As music moves from a free jazz state into an improvised music state (or vice versa), the most immediately audible symptom of the state change is often a fracturing (or cohering) of a sense of continuity in the direction, propulsion or momentum of the music. As previously observed, most free jazz has a fairly homogenous sense of forward momentum, driven by the expressive impulse, and the disintegration of this tissue of homogeneity is often a sign of the leaving behind of the soloistic, expressive character of jazz improvisation. (This is, of course, a process which Stevens and his collaborators were consciously trying to inculcate in the early Spontaneous Music Ensemble through the process of molecularisation described above.) However, while the presence or absence of timbral or expressive continuity can be a useful marker when seeking to differentiate between free jazz and free improvisation, it is by no means infallible and many examples could be quoted of improvised music with a high level of internal homogeneity or propulsion which are almost certainly not free jazz in any widely accepted use of the term.

Martin Iddon observes that for Karlheinz Stockhausen free jazz

cannot accurately be described as free because the results are continually constrained by the linguistic space within which they exist. That is to say, free jazz cannot be free because it requires itself to be jazz. The terms are, for Stockhausen, in a limited sense incommensurable (Iddon, 2004 p. 5).

Stockhausen is probably no-one's idea of an expert jazz commentator, but here he may well have a point. Richard Scott argues that in free jazz

Traditional instrumental divisions of labour, for example, those between rhythm instruments and lead instruments, disappeared, bass and drums became liberated from time-keeping, rhythm being instead negotiated by the whole group (Scott, 1991 p. 44).

but he is only partly correct. Liberation from time-keeping does not necessarily mean automatic equality with 'lead' instruments. There are more fundamental hierarchical questions which need to be addressed.

The question of internal instrumental hierarchical relationships is of course partly related to the questions of continuity discussed above. These instrumental hierarchical relationships are not simply a question of instrumentation, although clearly a relationship exists. Most ensembles which could be categorised as free jazz tend to have a relatively traditional instrumental configuration, often including one or more percussion instruments, one or more instruments active mainly in the bass register (archetypally the double bass, but sometimes tuba, bass guitar or similar), possibly one or more crossover harmony/single-line instruments (such as keyboard or guitar), and finally a group of monophonic instruments operating in the medium-to-high pitch register – usually wind instruments with the dynamic range to dominate the ensemble when desired, but also possibly amplified voice, strings or similar. It is, however, the relationships that these instruments maintain with each other which is the key characteristic of free jazz playing, being for much of the time based on the hierarchical roles inherited from the jazz tradition. In practice this means that the instruments tend to fall into one of three categories, and rarely subvert these categories<sup>15</sup>.

The percussion and bass instruments in a free jazz ensemble will tend to play as a 'rhythm section', i.e. as an almost-constant source of momentum and dialogue running through the vast majority of the music, either supporting or dialoguing with a prominent 'solo' voice (or group of voices). If these 'rhythm section' instruments solo, it is often in both senses of the word, in that all other instrumentalists may remain tacet for that section of the music. In general, those instruments I have identified as 'lead' will play in blocks of activity, sometimes in combination with other lead instruments, but often singly, usually in combination with the rhythm section. While they are playing, these instruments tend to dominate and often lead the music, in many cases only the percussion having sufficient power to forcibly impact on the flow of their improvisation; in these classic sections of solo instrument plus rhythm section one hears the relationship of free jazz to its parent most clearly. Those instruments I have identified as crossover elements tend to move freely between the two roles outlined above. They may or may not play quasi-continuously as part of the rhythm section, but will also sometimes step into the 'solo' spotlight, their ability to do this sometimes being dependent upon them being given space to do so by those instruments with whom they cannot compete in terms of dynamic power.

Clearly the sonic characteristics of specific instruments, and their ability (or lack of ability) to dominate within a dense timbral spectrum is a key part of the relationships one finds within free jazz, and in free jazz these inbuilt implications of instrumentation are not only generally accepted, but are often positively relished<sup>16</sup>. In Free

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<sup>15</sup> In discussing these interactions I shall use the jazz-derived terminology 'solo' in the sense it is normally understood in jazz (and free jazz) playing, i.e. where a given voice becomes the prominent improviser for a particular period of the music, although this may well be supported or accompanied by several other instruments, and may feature interjections or provocations by other dominant instruments who are not the designated 'soloist' at this point. Such an improvisation may also occasionally be solo in the formal technical sense of the word, but in fact is rarely so for 'lead' instruments – this being the difference (in jazz vocabulary) between a solo saxophone and a saxophone solo, for instance.

<sup>16</sup> I remember playing (in the mid 1990s perhaps?) a concert with an improvising group which was (I thought) playing Improvised Music. After the first set, a musician in the audience mentioned to me that it might be better if I play some more 'bass-like' figurations (rather than the very abstract music I had contributed thus far). It would seem he had been expecting to hear free jazz, and I had not fulfilled my designated role.

Improvisation, this traditional instrumental role-playing is frequently one of the first things the musicians set out to dismantle. A pithy assessment of this difference comes from Steve Beresford; in a 1988 interview with Richard Scott, he describes what he felt was the difference between the British free improvisation he was involved with in the mid-1970s and the arguably more free jazz-derived playing of musicians like Peter Brötzmann:

We really liked the jigsaw aspect; the way things lock together, how things would mask each other. I was very horrified when I heard things like Peter Brötzmann albums because there didn't seem to be any interlocking at all, it was just three people playing their arses off, that seemed very retrogressive to me at the time, it was like, 'Well, they're playing *jazz*, and we're playing *Improvised Music* which is a different thing' (Beresford, quoted in Scott, 1991 p. 338-339; emphasis in original).

What Beresford identifies as the 'interlocking' is actually the fracturing of both continuity and traditional instrumental hierarchies. This new style of playing (at that time still particularly British in manifestation) had (ideally) enough internal social mobility to allow any instrument or voice, whatever its traditional role, to lead, dominate, provoke or support as the player saw fit. In other words, the music contained (and contains) much more sensitive and rapid vertical communication between instrumental voices and timbral registers than that normally found in free jazz. Nevertheless musicians, listeners and writers will inevitably continue to have varying opinions about the exact point of crossover between the two fields, despite these suggested markers – and whether such definitions even have any significance.

### ***non-idiomaticism***

Among some of the players investigating improvised music in the mid to late 1960s, there was a conscious attempt to sever or dissolve any links to the jazz tradition<sup>17</sup>. Tony Oxley's description of his rejection of jazz vocabulary explicitly embraces the same narrative of freedom that has run throughout jazz history:

I don't think I ever made any intellectual decision to limit myself. The exclusion of the jazz vocabulary was an emotional act of feeling ... When you're wearing chains you don't become aware of them through intellectual processes. You can feel them (Oxley, quoted in Bailey, 1992 p. 89).

Unlike Oxley (who by the late 1960s was widely acknowledged as one of Europe's finest idiomatic jazz drummers), Bailey's pre-freedom musical experience was centred around commercial music-making – session work, television and theatre shows – rather than jazz per se, but he too wanted to move further than exploring freedom within that idiom. As he tells David Keenan 'I'd played a bit of jazz ... but I would not have been interested in trying to take that into free playing. I didn't want to know about that, I wanted to play from scratch' (Bailey, quoted in Keenan, 2004 p. 47). As discussed above (page 30), Bailey's primary interest was in forging new grammatical (or as Lash points out, syntactical) relationships between sonic elements. This would include trying to disrupt traditional (or idiomatic) implications of pitch sequences as previously noted, but also breaking the flow of 'the instrumental impulse'. Bailey even wished to suggest a quasi-non-idiomatic approach to the

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<sup>17</sup> Virginia Anderson writes that 'AMM was the only group which thought it necessary to disassociate themselves from the term "jazz"' (V. Anderson, 2004 p. 113), but this is arguable.

physical act of playing his instrument. Speaking to Henry Kaiser, he explained that

if you're playing an instrument in a certain way that's got a physical side to the playing of it – that is, it's not just two wires plugged into your brain, there's a whole physique about it, you use both feet, both hands – then many times there are going to be occasions where there are physical continuity things (Bailey, in Kaiser, 1975 para. 67).

It was this physical motor continuity that Bailey wanted to be able to work both with and against in his playing. He was interested in

allying that sort of natural instrumental drive which is associated with the dance to a deliberate control of all four limbs in a particular way is a strange thing to do, you know; to not lose that feeling, that sort of “up there” feeling for about thirty minutes, the tenseness, committedness, that involvement, whatever it is – and yet still be trying to do something with absolute control. And I have one or two exercises for that type of thing which has to do with waggling feet and doing certain things on the instrument. (Bailey, in Kaiser, 1975 para. 61)

Bailey (1980) identifies improvisation seeking to break such habitual links as ‘non-idiomatic’; in August 2000 Bailey wrote that

When I put together a book on improvisation based on opinions expressed by players from a wide variety of musics, it quickly became apparent that there was a divergence of views between, on the one hand ‘free’ improvisors, and on the other hand, everybody else. This difference expressed itself in a number of ways but most starkly in opinions about the purpose of improvisation. For these, and other, reasons I chose to indicate this division by referring to free players as non-idiomatic and to other kinds of improvisors as idiomatic. This, at times, seems to have upset one or two readers. Previously, I've ignored this occasional carping, content that most readers appear to understand why I make the distinction and to appreciate its usefulness. (D. Bailey, 2000).

Bailey's pragmatism notwithstanding, ‘non-idiomatic’ remains a contested term, with musicians and writers – including Parker (1992) and Prévost (2004 pp.13-18 and elsewhere) – disbursing much energy on explaining why such a categorisation is far from accurate<sup>18</sup>. However, Bailey's proposal of a differentiation between existing idiomatic improvisation and the recently developed style of improvisation which aimed to purge those idiomatic references was an important factor in clarifying what was changing in the music at this time. As Prévost himself explains, ‘Derek's point, I think, was to distinguish the kind of improvisations in which he was engaged from other forms of free improvisation which clearly owed an (albeit uneasy) allegiance to pre-existing forms, most

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<sup>18</sup> Dominic Lash observes that both Parker and Prévost's observations ‘refer only to Bailey's guitar playing, not to the music he made with other musicians’ (Lash, 2006 *The Implications of the Vocabulary* para. 2) – and that they thus rather miss the point. Bailey himself pointed out that ‘in the development of linguistic discussion during the late 18<sup>th</sup> early 19<sup>th</sup> century ... idiom came to indicate a group or sub-species of a language. For instance a dialect of a people, region or class. Nothing at all to do with, in fact the opposite of, an individual style or expression; that's idiosyncratic’ (Bailey, n.d.-c [emphasis in original]). See Lash (2006) for further discussion of this idea.

obviously jazz' (Prévost, 2011 p. 71). The proposal of this new kind of improvisation as 'non-idiomatic' might have appeared to make perfect sense in the context of the late 1960s, when the music was without idiomatic precedent; subsequently (and by the time Bailey's book was published) this type of improvisation quickly established its own idiomatic language; indeed the shock value of many 'second-generation' improvisers such as Beresford, Toop et al. was the result of them wilfully disregarding those aspects of free improvisation practice which were already tending toward ossification. However, the *ideal* of non-idiomatic improvisation remained a valid goal for Bailey throughout his improvising career. I would suggest that, as with almost all historical-critical labels attached to artistic practice, we should accept the current technical inaccuracy of a term such as 'non-idiomatic' while focussing on the generally understood meaning that it was intended to convey, especially within the historical context in which it was coined. Perhaps David Toop is correct in describing the terminology of freedom and non-idiomaticism as 'historical baggage from an era when musicians dared to express utopian ideas for a different kind of society' (Toop, 2016 p. 18). In his writings Bailey repeatedly refers to the 'failure' of improvised music practice to rise to the challenge of true non-idiomaticism, but the legacy value of the term is the identification of the music that resulted (and results) from this failure.

Even if we accept the use of the term non-idiomatic as a historically-derived but ultimately flawed identifier, there is certainly room for further clarification and definition of its use. In *Metonymy as a creative structural principle...*, Dominic Lash writes that 'Bailey was wrong when he claimed that free improvisation "pre-dates any other music"' (Lash, 2010 p. 86), but Lash is not suggesting that mankind's first experiments with sound-producing objects were dependent upon a quasi-score which determined what the proto-musicians were to do. Rather he suggests that any posited non-idiomaticism in Free Improvisation<sup>19</sup> can only have meaning if there are existing idioms against which the non- can be applied. He expanded upon this theme in an e-mail:

the pre-idiomatic is also the pre-nonidiomatic: it precedes the very distinction! I suppose one could just about claim that the development of the very first music is likely to have been similar to the natural tendency of free improvisation to ossify into the idiomatic that Derek discusses, and thus that the emergence of the first musical idiom - which must have happened *at some point*, however that were to be specified - would imply that that which preceded it was non-idiomatic. But how can we know whether or not the emergence of this ur-idiom was coterminous with the emergence of *music itself*? If it were, there would be no preceding non-idiomatic *music* because the sound-making activity prior to the emergence of the first idiom would not be best described as music. Hence my feeling that the claim that free improvisation "pre-dates any other music" obscures more that it reveals: though one can easily understand the intuition that underlies it, it strikes me as both conceptually a little muddled and empirically implausible. (D. Lash, e-mail to the author 27<sup>th</sup> February 2017; emphasis in original).

As Lash points out, mankind's first attempts at music-making could be more accurately described as proto-idiomatic, rather than non-idiomatic. But interrogating the terms so closely also raises the question of whether we can apply the term non-idiomatic to those improvisers who, through lack of instrumental technique or the use of an invented instrumentarium, have never had access to any idioms other than (the idiom of) Free Improvisation. Perhaps these musicians' work should be considered extra-idiomatic or anidiomatic, rather than non-idiomatic,

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<sup>19</sup> The capitalisation is significant; as Lash observed 'I was pointing out that Free Improvisation (not free improvisation) couldn't have come before everything else' (D. Lash, e-mail to the author 27<sup>th</sup> February 2017).

since they are not negating or denying existing idioms but are simply innocent of the received usage of them. Similarly, perhaps the work of Bailey and his colleagues in the late 1960s would be better described as either neo- or trans-idiomatic. However, as Lash observes “non-idiomatic”, for all its limitations, highlights the malleable, fluid nature of the musical exchanges Bailey became most interested in’ (Lash, 2006 *The Implications of the Vocabulary* para. 3), and thus remains valuable.

### **on groups**

The relationship between regular and ad hoc groupings of musicians needs to be examined with care, but often is not. The idea of a ‘group’ (rather than a particular selection of musicians playing together at a given moment) sits uncomfortably with the activity of many improvising musicians; a group with (semi-)fixed personnel would be anathema to some of them (and for others might very well be the less compelling part of his or her work). Nevertheless, the fact remains that several such groups have existed during the music’s history and have sometimes proved very influential – a fact which clearly needs to be recognised. However, some of the critical work done on improvised music relies perhaps too heavily on such groupings (particularly the long-lived ones), thus distorting critical understanding of some aspects of the music. This is often a result of the wholesale adoption of modes of listening and assessment which are valid for some other types of music-making, but which have less relevance within improvised music, and these will be discussed further in section 2b (page 83). Of course long-lived regular groups (which may have a considerable discography for analysis) enable critics to follow much more easily the established conventional methods of seeking time-based ‘progression’, musical ‘development’ or ‘refinement’, seeking musical ‘maturity’ or a development of expressive capability<sup>20</sup>. But for many improvisers (and listeners) the driving force behind the practice of improvised music is the use of improvisation to deal with, negotiate or confront unfamiliar, unpredictable and often unrepeatable (or at least unrepeated) playing situations. For these musicians and listeners, some critics’ obsession with linear development and identifiable personal style is a red herring – while these things may exist, they are not the outcomes which **only** improvisation renders possible, nor is true improvisation best suited to encourage these characteristics to flourish; indeed they are not core characteristics of improvised music at all. As Derek Bailey has remarked of playing in a regular group, ‘everybody gets to know the music and as soon as that happens and you start playing the music, you *stop improvising*’ (Bailey, quoted in Keenan, 2004 p. 47; my emphasis).

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<sup>20</sup> For example, see Andrew Callingham’s approach to AMM’s music in Callingham (2007).

## 2b: restoring critical balance

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*I know Keith's playing. I think he's a remarkable artist. I think he's the kind of person we should all be in a way. But AMM... (Derek Bailey, quoted in Watson, 2004 p. 425).*

*The dialectic of form takes precedence over the possible; everybody arouses everybody else; [improvisation] becomes a kind of public onanism (Pierre Boulez, unsourced quotation in Attali, 1985 p. 146).*

### **AMM, Nyman and re-mixing the un-mixed**

There is a temptation (for some) to regard the history of Improvised Music as the history of a sequence of performing groups, which have worked with varying degrees of longevity, varying degrees of musical 'success' (more on this later), and varying degrees of philosophical and political articulateness. Probably the most written-about British free improvisation group in the current academic literature is AMM – partly thanks to several of the group's members having had a marked propensity to write about their own activities. Writers such as Callingham, V. Anderson and Nyman have also focussed their discussion of improvisation around this emblematic group. As Derek Bailey observes:

In some way, AMM are the 'official' improvising group, something of an institution. In addition to their longevity, this is partly an acknowledgement of their overt seriousness, a stance not immediately apparent in many improvisors or groups and violently rejected by some. It's a seriousness reflected not only in their playing but in their concern for the philosophical and educational implications of improvised music, articulated in lectures, statements and writings of various kinds (D. Bailey, 1992 p. 128).

The 'official' status of AMM may have begun with Nyman (1974), where they are the only British improvisation group discussed, although considerable space is also devoted to MEV. Nyman's book does not include a section on improvisation as such, and the AMM discussion forms part of the book's sixth chapter, *Indeterminacy 1960-70: Ichiyonagi, Ashley, Wolff, Cardew, Scratch Orchestra*. As this title makes clear, Cardew is at the very least an important factor in AMM's presence in the text; the discussion of the group is part of a chronological sketch of Cardew's work. While Nyman was clearly not presenting an overview of developments in improvised music, and thus did not feel obliged to include other British improvisers of the period, AMM's presence in this seminal text (even if as part of a Cardew chronology) has – for some writers at least – conferred a unique status upon the group. But Nyman's omission of any discussion of the work being undertaken as part of broader trends in British Improvised Music has had long-standing consequences. As Benjamin Piekut observes, the

mixed avant-garde [of 1960s London] became rather unmixed in Michael Nyman's important 1974 text, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, which is the enduring document of this period ... [Nyman] was reasserting Cage's opinion on improvisation over and against the discursive and material elaboration of an experimentalism that was more ecumenical in London than in New York (Piekut, 2014 pp 4 & 42).

When I mentioned these concerns to Christopher Hobbs, he had a pragmatic assessment of the selectivity of Nyman's book, observing that as far as British music was concerned Nyman tended to focus on performances he had personally attended, or musical developments in which he had been personally implicated – thus the

resulting omissions in his book may have as much to do with practical questions of direct exposure as implying any meticulous categorisation of what could or should be considered experimental<sup>21</sup>. Whatever the reason, Nyman's consistent exclusion from his definition of the term 'experimental' of most musicians who did not share a background in either composed music or the fine arts has generated a rift within the critical discourse which still marks the landscape of British creative music studies<sup>22</sup>.

For some post-Nyman authors, there arises a circular logic which means that certain musicians can never achieve the status of experimental, and shake off a perceived or presumed jazz heritage, because their background and associations mean they are not experimental, whatever approach they might adopt to their work. In this respect, the working class British improvisers find themselves in an analogously paradoxical situation to that of the African- American experimentalists, about whom Fred Moten has eloquently observed that 'the idea of a black avant-garde exists, as it were, oxymoronicly – as if black, on the one hand, and avant-garde, on the other hand, each depends for its coherence on the exclusion of the other' (Moten, cited in Lewis, 2008 p. xi). George Lewis has written of black working-class American musicians that 'the socially determined frame of jazz definition continually transformed its topography to accommodate virtually any direction these and other black musicians might take' (Lewis, 2008 p. xlv). Although few British improvisers from the 1960s shared the identification of blackness, the apparent prejudice based on their background seems (for some writers) to render them similarly incapable of being perceived as anything but jazz musicians – regardless of the characteristics of the music they might make. Lewis observes that 'in order to distinguish improvised music as a field from Eurological work "incorporating" or "using" improvisation, or featuring "indeterminacy" or aleatoric practices, the simplistically racialized taxonomies found in texts such as the Nyman and Cope works must be discarded' (Lewis, 1996 p. 110)<sup>23</sup>.

However, the founder members of AMM shared this post-jazz working-class background, so why do they appear to be the sole improvising group that Nyman and others accept as 'experimental'? Responding to an earlier draft of this text, Philip Thomas suggested that 'the main contributing factor' to the disproportionate attention paid to AMM by those who follow Nyman's definition

is the presence of Cardew ... Hence AMM is discussed within academic and 'musicological' texts because there is immediately an academic and musicological context ... Cardew is also the root of the bias in intellectual debate (P. Thomas, note to the author, 16<sup>th</sup> April 2015).

The presence of Christopher Hobbs, Christian Wolff and John Tilbury among the roster of AMM members also helps to confirm the 'significance' of this improvisation group for the academic and composition-orientated communities, as do the writing and publication activities of Eddie Prévost. This 'normalisation' of collective activity towards the model of a single important actor is an important part of the Eurocentric critical approach (and of Western artistic thought in general); responding to the writings of David P. Miller, Benjamin Piekut observes that Miller's 'artifactual' questioning

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<sup>21</sup> C. Hobbs, conversation with the author, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Although Nyman does devote space to AMM (most of whom did not have this background), as subsequently observed this is probably a direct result of the temporary presence of Cardew in the ensemble.

<sup>23</sup> The works cited are Nyman (1974) and Cope (1993).

interestingly reveals precisely the ways in which the experimentalist network is stabilized into a conventional model of canonic definition, score parsing, and author-centred explication (Piekut, 2011 p 17).

As Derek Bailey observed, this author-centralization is part of the dynamic which has gradually sapped Western European notated music of its spontaneity:

Obsessed with the 'timeless masterpiece' and the 'immortal genius' [European Straight Music]'s main design seems to have been the destruction of that which makes music unique: it's [sic] non-documentary, essentially ephemeral nature (D. Bailey, n.d.-e).

In some senses, the irresistible rise in AMM's critical esteem is a manifestation of this tendency in group form, i.e. a search for one exceptional group which can be identified as the catalytic force enabling the creativity of many others – hence perhaps Bailey's rueful comments about AMM being 'the official improvising group'. This is not, however, to imply that the idea of a particular specialness within the work of early AMM is without foundation; it is clear that AMM's deliberate break with conventional ideas of musical discourse and development (apparently stemming at least in part from Keith Rowe's attempt to transliterate into sound approaches which he found stimulating in visual art) marked the group out as having a different artistic agenda to those 'evolving' from freer jazz practice. Victor Schonfield feels that there was an inherent difference between AMM and (for example) the MIC; in his opinion even from its beginnings AMM was about a post-Cagean approach to the ethics of ensemble performance, whereas the MIC were essentially a jazz group, albeit one which frequently ventured 'beyond' free jazz (V. Schonfield, telephone conversation with the author, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2017).

This 'specialness' is reinforced by the somewhat hermetic nature of AMM, which contrasts with the wide-ranging variety of playing partners and contexts which became the norm for the free improvisation world as the 1960s became the 1970s. However, the recorded evidence available is, perhaps foreseeably, not without evidence of stumbles and sidesteps in the work of the early improvising groups; while the SME discography includes many moments which are clearly related to jazz (or actually *are* jazz), such idiomatic heritage also occasionally appears in the contemporary documents of AMM. See for example the observations of John Tilbury (and Victor Schonfield) on the expressionist tendencies of the November 1965 performance at the Mercury Theatre (Tilbury, 2008 pp. 286-287, 327).

Despite their growing centrality in critical discourse, and the clear inspiration provided by the early work, in some respects the relationship of AMM to the wider development of British freely improvised music was arguably tangential, and certainly replete with paradox. In spending decades stabilising the quotient of the unpredictable, the inconvenient and the transcendental in their group music, and developing a clearly identifiable signature style, Prévost and his colleagues have to some extent sidestepped the mainspring forces which power much improvised music-making. In this sense AMM represent a notable *exception* to the key characteristics of British Improvised Music, rather than being emblematically representative of them, as many commentators seem to believe. Bailey bemoans 'a tendency... to franchise a bit of [free improvisation], to chop bits off and turn it into a *music*' (Watson (2004) p. 197), and it could be argued that this is exactly what AMM have done. It is worth noting that Ian Carr's diligent and even-handed record of the birth of British free music records the crucial activities at various London venues and organisations during the period in question - The Old Place, The Little Theatre Club, The London Musicians' Co-op – but makes no mention whatsoever of AMM or the Scratch Orchestra (except in relation to Cardew as a composer) (Carr, 2008, pp. 93-95). It may be thought that this might be explained by the

evident jazz bias of Carr's own background and that of many of his interviewees; but in fact such an interpretation of the history of Improvised Music was the widely accepted one when I began my association with the music; although AMM were considered a significant special case, they were seen by many musicians as operating apart from the organic development of the music.

### ***what they say they play and what they play***

For some musicians, a pragmatic concentration on practice rather than theory is part of their natural, adopted or constructed personality; this attitude is connected to the perceived centrality of artistic practice, and the dubious associations surrounding critical and aesthetic investigations often carried out by non- (or less-)practicing musicians. Derek Bailey's commitment to somaticism led him to frequently express admiration for older generations of jazz musicians who had steadfastly resisted the intrusion of theoretic abstraction into their practice: 'So when the old guys – jazz players I mean – used to go, "Well, I just play, man," maybe that was the best possible answer' (Bailey, quoted in Scott, 1991 p. 222)<sup>24</sup>. Richard Scott posits two possible readings of this statement: 'I *just* play' and 'I just *play*'. He decides (in my opinion rightly) in favour of the latter. Whenever I have heard a musician utter such a phrase, it is to emphasise that they are the ones actually making this music, rather than the people responsible for much of the comment about it; a familiar trope amongst creative musicians is that their lifestyle of restless creativity does not permit time for 'idle' philosophical speculation.

In Bailey's view, one of the most attractive characteristics of the idea of 'playing' was the difficulty parsing such a somatic act posed for music's verbal theorists. He asserted that 'music, art, improvisation – that kind of stuff can be talked about; not playing' (D. Bailey, n.d.-f). For Bailey, the act of talking about music was part of what he described as The Sclerotic Tendency: i.e. 'trying to nail down, to stabilise, any highly fluid activity' (D. Bailey, n.d.-d). This is of course a paradoxical position to be adopted by someone who was a gifted thinker and writer about music in general and musical improvisation in particular. But Bailey's scepticism about critical writing seemed to stem from his feeling that in many cases this writing was (for the greater part) responding to and developing the work of other writers about music, rather than being a direct response to the music itself. Any reasonable survey of academic literature will suggest that this is a difficult charge to refute; as Bailey put it, 'Although writing about music is necessary, sometimes instructive, I've never been sure about writing about writing about music' (D. Bailey, 1999a). Such musicians' distrust or rejection of critical discourse or theoretical discussion can render them invisible to literature- (rather than orature-)orientated analysis.

Bailey prefers practitioners to philosophers, noting a practical caveat about writing about music by those people who are not practising improvisers: 'Most people who get anywhere near saying something meaningful are usually players. [Critic Jason Stanyek] doesn't know the difference, for instance, between what players say they play and what they play' (D. Bailey, 1999a). One of Bailey's particular concerns is that certain musicians may adjust their practice to fit a verbal articulation of what they do, one which seems clearer or tidier than the messy business of creativity. Long-standing groups in particular can be inclined to rewrite their own history (or have it rewritten for them) to suit the outcomes produced when their music is subsequently 'stabilised'. Bailey declines

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<sup>24</sup> Scott subsequently added the comment 'I should point out, of course, that far from "just playing", Bailey was a great talker and a fine writer' (Scott, 2014 p. 6).

to name names to Richard Scott, but he observes

there are guys who've kind of shifted their aesthetic positions to fit in with their best description. They do something which is pretty well undefined - because I mean they don't know precisely what they're doing anyway - then they come to talk about it, and they present this edifice about it. Now, what they do is over *there* and what they say about it is over *here*, and what they say about it is much more attractive, possibly, than the thing they do and gradually what they do comes over here to match what they say! (Bailey, quoted in Scott, 1991 p. 282).

Drawing on the work of Kenneth Pike, Virginia Anderson has some interesting observations about emic and etic understandings of specific musical cultures; in these terms, the etic scholars are inevitably doomed to failure in their attempt to codify the practices of the emic musicians:

Emic knowledge will also include held assumptions about what makes good music, even the definition and nature of the music itself, and this is usually the kind of knowledge which it is difficult to elicit from the emic participants or for the etic scholar to internalise (V. Anderson, 2004 p. 49).

However, unlike the anthropological situations for which Pike's terms were coined, there is a real possibility within the theory of improvised music of genuinely emic scholars; Bailey and Prévost are extra-institutional examples, while experienced musicians such as David Toop and George Lewis undertake such work within a more conventional academic context. Nevertheless, the difficulty for the study of improvised music is perhaps not the lack of emic scholars, but the fact that the emic knowledge of improvisation specifically does not include Anderson's proposed common assumptions about the definition of the music and criteria for assessing its implied quality. There is consistent difficulty in finding mutual agreement amongst performers (or listeners) of music that has just been played; liberating the music from predetermination seems to sensitise the individuals' varying personal aesthetic criteria, rather than calling up an assessment template based on shared expectations derived from explicit verbal or stylistic cues.

Of course, both what the musicians play and what they say (and what they think) may change, particularly over the longer term. Evan Parker has been honest enough to admit that his initial attempts to develop a critical theory led him into categorical declarations which he later regretted: 'I reproach myself for having early on generated a lot of the theoretics that actually tried to make a distinction between improvisation and composition. I realised later on that this was nonsense' (Parker, quoted in Shoemaker, 2003 p. 7)<sup>25</sup>. However, there is more to the issue of musicians' widespread mistrust of critical exploration of their work than simple questions of theories being potentially right or wrong. As Richard Scott observes, this is a tradition which runs deeply in the music of institutionally-disenfranchised musicians: 'By refusing to identify or abstract the activity of playing music to journalistic, academic or biographical discourses, jazz musicians attempted to affirm what they saw as their activity's true nature and importance' (Scott, 2014 p. 6).

Scott rightly implies that the tradition of 'just playing' also relates to questions of power and ownership. He sees this isolation from theoretical discourse as an 'attempt on the part of musicians themselves to retain control over

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<sup>25</sup> See page 61.

the meaning and interpretation of their music by refusing all public discursive abstraction of it' (ibid.). He sees 'the non-idiom [as posited by Bailey] and the negative definition in general as largely defensive tactics' (ibid.); in Scott's view this desire to avoid explicit articulation of aesthetic principles is prevalent because 'part of the aesthetic of free improvisation may be to retain the fundamental insecurity and porousness of this field and, by doing so, secure an essential condition of improvisation itself' (op. cit. p. 11)<sup>26</sup>.

In his explanation of why this insecurity and porousness is such a key factor in the character of improvisation, Scott aligns himself very closely to Bailey-ite thinking regarding improvisation as a practice-based process rather than a poietic method for generating outcomes:

The problem lies less with the facts of the analysis than with its abstraction from the time and space of the musical event it describes ... In improvised music ... there is never really any possibility of a viable *object* of analysis. Improvisation is fundamentally a process, and some important part of its nature simply cannot be abstracted from its condition of being a process (Scott, 2014 pp. 12-14).

### ***the great composers speak to us***

A recurrent concern regarding improvisation, frequently expressed by composers and the authors who write about them, is that improvising musicians can only ever 'play what they know', and therefore can never achieve true invention. It is not clear whence this belief springs, although Adorno may perhaps be a godfather; as Gary Peters points out

Improvisation requires a powerful memory: memory of the parameters of an instrument, of the body, of available technology, the parameters of a work's structure and one's place within it at any one time, the parameters of an idiom, a genre and its history, its possibilities. For Adorno all of these memories, both voluntary and involuntary, become fused and encoded in formulae, clichés, pre-digested chunks of aesthetic matter where everything new is really old (Peters, 2009 p. 82)<sup>27</sup>.

The argument is stated in various forms; Virginia Anderson asserts that 'Good improvisation is never really free: experienced players will collect a repertoire of sounds and responses to anticipated contributions by others' (V. Anderson, 2004 p. 131). Gavin Bryars observes that 'in improvisation you could develop a whole armoury of devices and things you could do and then do them. You might permutate the order but you were limited to those things you could do' (Bryars, quoted in D. Bailey, 1992 p. 114)<sup>28</sup>. Elliott Carter suggested that 'a musical score is

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<sup>26</sup> The depth of distrust which some (improvising) musicians feel toward public theoretical discourse may be underestimated by some scholars and critics; during the writing of this thesis I encountered musicians who, while repeatedly bemoaning the absence or mis-representation of their ideas in analytic writing, declined to permit their opinions, recollections or observations to be reproduced in this text. One such musician indicated to me that by opting to write this thesis I had 'crossed over' and become part of a problematic 'political process', one in which musicians' ideas simply become fodder for status- or career-building academics.

<sup>27</sup> I would take issue with Peters here. Improvisation does not *require* the memory capacity that Peters implies, although a certain kind of improvisation (particularly idiomatic improvisation) may be facilitated by the factors he lists.

<sup>28</sup> Elsewhere on the same page Bryars observes 'I couldn't reach an equal conceptual excellence in improvising as in

[footnote continues on next page]

written to keep the performer from playing what he already knows' (Carter, quoted in S. Bailey, 2013 p. 42), and Luciano Berio (1985) suggests that improvisation has been a haven for dilettantes, who may be fluent in inventing socio-musical alibis but are in most cases quite incapable of evaluating and analyzing themselves in relation to any historico-musical perspective. His objection to improvisation appears to rest on what he describes as the cruder segmentation of musical space, resulting in the generation of 'syllables' rather than 'phonemes'. For Berio, this leads improvisation to act 'on the level of instrumental praxis rather than musical thought ... And by musical thought I mean above all the discovery of a coherent discourse that unfolds and develops simultaneously on different levels'. (Berio, 1985 pp. 81-83). Note here Berio's opposition of 'instrumental praxis' and 'musical thought', with its implication that instrumental praxis cannot result in 'coherent discourse'.

Even Cardew feels the need to guard against the habit-encrusted improviser. Discussing *Treatise*, he writes

The danger in this kind of work is that many readers of the score will simply relate the musical memories they have already acquired to the notation in front of them, and the result will be merely a goulash made up of the various musical backgrounds of the people involved. For such players there will be no intelligible incentive to invent music or extend themselves beyond the limitations of their education and experience (Cardew, 2006 p. 129-130).

Leaving aside the observation that it is not entirely unknown for composers and other non-improvisers to repeat themselves either<sup>29</sup>, there is a clear tendency here to take the least satisfactory outcome of the improvisation process as being emblematic, and to extrapolate a condemnation of the whole method from the shortcomings of less inspiring examples. This seems an extraordinarily harsh assessment system, one under which almost any type of music-making process (or wider human endeavour) would be doomed to failure.

What none of the comments cited above seem to take into account is the improvising context's potential for inducing transcendence. This term does not necessarily denote a spiritual or mystical aspect to this phenomenon, but merely refers to the point in the improvising process where a certain combination of factors results in the performer transcending the limits of what was previously known, or was thought physically possible. In responding to Gavin Bryars' reservations about 'being limited to what you could do', Derek Bailey (himself hardly subject to mystical flights of fancy) refers to the attraction of improvisation as being the

things that can happen but perhaps rarely do. One of those things is that you are 'taken out of yourself'. Something happens which so disorientates you that, for a time, which might only last for a second or two, your reactions and responses are not what they normally would be. You can do something you didn't realise you were capable of (D. Bailey, 1992 p. 115).

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composing. The inadequacy may have been in myself, but, if so, I transferred it to improvising'. Gavin Bryars was arguably the most interesting of all the post-Cardew experimental composers, but was perhaps less compelling as an improviser. Being in a trio with two of the great improvisers in the history of European free music may have left him feeling a little frustrated.

<sup>29</sup> 'Berio's critiques would carry more weight were it not for the lifeless corpse of so much academic composing in the twenty-first century' (Toop, 2016 p. 19). We should all be wary of such critiques, and our responses thereto; there are plentiful skeletons in the closets of improvisation, composition and everything in between.

Incredible as it apparently seems to those who have not experienced it, these moments of transcendence can and do result in the musician playing things that they do *not* already know, spontaneously inventing techniques that they have not previously prepared, and actually bypassing the normal limits of their physical abilities. I have certainly experienced all of these effects, including feats of physical agility which I was subsequently unable to replicate, however much I worked on them<sup>30</sup>.

While dramatic moments of extreme transcendence may be comparatively rare, unrepeatably and unforeseeable flashes of profound insight during improvisation are not infrequent, and the power of unique juxtapositions of musical events to stimulate this short-circuiting of knowledge is one of the attractions of free improvisation for many players. Indeed, for some players this can be a marker of the 'success' or 'failure' of an improvisation, since the upscaling of invention which normally occurs at such moments tends to signify the fulfilment of improvisation's promise. Cardew tells how in an improvisation 'two things running concurrently in haphazard fashion suddenly synchronise autonomously and sling you forcibly into a new phase' (Cardew, 2006 p. 126); the word 'forcibly' is important, since it hints at the dramatic level of disassociation from habitual practice which can result from highly charged improvising situations. Simon Bailey describes this transcendental state with reference to Csikszentmihalyi's idea of 'flow':

Flow describes a state of optimal experience where the self is forgotten temporarily whilst deeply engaged in an activity, a "state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p.4). Seen in this way selflessness is a form of being present in the moment with attention focused in such a way that normal regulatory systems, behaviors [sic] or habits (such that help to constitute a sense of self) are not triggered. There are two relevant aspects of this theory. One is that improvisation is a particularly flow-inducing activity and the other is that perceptions and ability are enhanced through flow (S. Bailey, 2013 p. 21; parentheses in original).

Evan Parker links these moments of discovery to the inevitable dissolution of conscious control during intense improvising situations:

there are things you have under your control, but every so often something will go wrong. You'll lose control. [And] in that moment you are given an opportunity to learn something else that the instrument can do . . . the nature of the instrument and its will in relation to *its* destiny . . . [its] set of intentions in its relationship with you, and you start to find it difficult to distinguish yourself and your intentions from the instrument's intentions (Parker, quoted in Fischlin, 2009 p. 1; emphasis and brackets in original).

Whatever the source of these transmundane moments, their existence is widely recognised by practitioners. However, this is not to suggest that the less-than-satisfactory type of improvised response which many of the composers quoted above seem to be describing does not exist; reliance on personal cliché and gratuitous virtuosity are of course not unknown in improvisation any more than they are in composition. Derek Bailey believes this is a particular danger in solo playing (not excluding his own):

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<sup>30</sup> This proposition is not as far-fetched as it might initially appear; there are numerous documented cases of human beings performing theoretically impossible physical feats in situations of great stress or emotional turmoil. For discussions of so-called 'hysterical strength', see Wise (2009 chapter 2) and Hadhazy (2016).

there will be times in solo improvisation when the player relies entirely on the vocabulary used. At such times, when other more aesthetically acceptable resources such as invention and imagination have gone missing, the vocabulary becomes the sole means of support. It has to provide everything needed to sustain continuity and impetus in the musical performance. This, it seems to me, is where the main danger in solo improvisation arises (D. Bailey, 1992 p. 106).

But as Bailey makes clear, these situations arise when improvisation temporarily ceases to 'work', either through lack of external stimuli, insensitive playing partners, a difficult acoustic or any of the numerous other reasons why an improvisation may not flourish.

Another source of composerly resistance to non-poietic improvisative praxis may lie in its challenging or undermining of the idea of the artistic 'work' itself<sup>31</sup>. As S. Bailey observes

improvisation takes place in a cultural arena where objects are highly valued. Taking their cue from Capitalist economics, cultural critics conventionally ascribe value to the utility, unity or perfection of objects. Actions and interactions of any kind - let alone compromised ones - are less permanent and harder to ascribe a fixed and immutable value to ... Engaging in an activity that so fervently valorises process in the context of a culture that so fervently valorises product is almost an act of political resistance by default (S. Bailey, 2013 p. 34).

The consciously provocative rejection of concepts of 'development', 'improvement', 'completeness' or 'perfection' by musicians such as Derek Bailey presents a direct challenge to the poietic underpinnings of the work of composers in the Eurological tradition; Berio's 'musical thought' requires a 'coherent discourse', which he explicitly links to the unfolding and developing of musical and conceptual ideas. This significance of rationality and traceable intention is clearly implied here, and this sits uncomfortably with the unrepeatability and unpredictability of the 'flow'-based transfiguration described above. (While Eurological composers do have their moments of flow, these 'inspiration' events usually represent the beginning of the poietic process.) As Dick Hebdige has pointed out, improvisation 'calls into question the myths of individual agency and innovation-in-isolation on which the dominant Western understandings of artistic production are found' (Hebdige, 2001 p. 337) – the very myths which are essential for the self-belief of those immersed in the system of 'critical canons of genius' (Toop, 2016 p. 19).

While the taxonomic suggestions and attempted precision of definitions undertaken in this Section clearly cannot be considered as definitive, it is my hope that such proposals may at least stimulate or encourage a more sophisticated or perceptive approach to writing about the *matter* of improvised music. In addition, recent work by writers such as Piekut and Toop, sensitive to the shortcomings of the post-Nyman orthodoxy, suggests that a more balanced understanding of 'the mixed avant-garde' is in the process of being developed. In Section 3 I shall return to some of the archive material introduced in Section 1, and explore a series of case studies from this period in closer detail.

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<sup>31</sup> See page 142 (note) for observations on the 'work concept' and the writings of Lydia Goehr.



## section 3: interfacing

### 3a: some compositional consequences of improvisative praxis

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*As a composer ... I will not willingly abdicate my right to remain in control of all major elements of a piece (Banks, 1970 p. 6).*

*Group improvisation ... offers an escape from a composer's inevitable intentions forced upon the hierarchically inferior performers (Evan Parker, quoted in Scott, 1991 p. 65).*

#### **general principles**

Despite the uneasy and sometimes antipathetic relationship between poesis and praxis described above, musicians from both composition and improvisation backgrounds have been drawn to exploring ways of incorporating the creative power and spontaneity of improvisation within the long-term structuring and conceptual possibilities of composition or pre-determination. Usually this involves a great deal of agonising about the 'telling people what to do' question, and invokes significant issues of trust and respect. Many would-be composers / instigators / directors have found that, if an improvising musician's *raison d'être* is to explore freedom, structuring the context of that freedom *can* feel like a slap in the face. The introduction of structural ideas, or direction modifying strategies, into the context of improvisation does *not* constitute an implicit assertion that improvisation can be (or needs to be) 'improved' by these interventions – but nevertheless this is a fact which many improvising musicians find counter-intuitive.

George Lewis (2008) has invoked Samuel Floyd's principle of 'individuality within the aggregate' as a trope for the music of the AACM, but I would suggest that it could stand as a primary objective for an Afrological approach to composition in general. In seeking to incorporate the creativity and individuality of improvisers within pre-determined structures, composers of all backgrounds are effectively forced to adopt an Afrological standpoint (collectivity, flexibility, jettisonability) with varying degrees of success. The strategies adopted by both composing improvisers and improvising composers have to deal with the same range of practice-modifying factors; for example, the ability to effectively read standard music notation is by no means ubiquitous amongst improvising musicians (especially of later generations), nor is it necessarily seen as a prerequisite for creative music-making. Consequently graphic and verbal/text-based scores are particularly prevalent among scores for these players, along with a range of other stimuli which may be used as structuring devices. For example, in his *Colour Energy Reaction* series for the LJCO, and his *Fire – In The Air* for the London Improvisers Orchestra, Philipp Wachsmann used projected colours and graphic images to direct the ensemble's activities. Knut Aufermann's *Birthday Piece* for LIO used the figures contained within performers' birthdays as a way to suggest responses to a series of numbers shown to the orchestra, while in a piece for LIO by Caroline Kraabel the opportunity (or obligation) to participate was transferred between musicians by throwing sponges at one other, in a form of musical 'tag'.

More traditional structuring options include the simple organisation of who improvises when, or the episodic interleaving of composed and improvised sections; however both of these methods often prove unsatisfying,

exactly because they sidestep the true difficulties of effectively combining the two disciplines. There are also underlying tensions revolving around the compromising effect that any kind of distracting simultaneous activity can have on an improviser's ability to focus on the realisation of effective improvisation. For many players, the moment attention is split between creative playing and relating to some structuring device, attention to improvisatory detail can suffer quite dramatically.

These observations, and similar ones in the section which follows, are drawn mainly from my personal research over many years, working with a series of medium- and large-scale ensembles combining improvisation and structuring methods in a range of different ways. Such experiences would include the seven years I spent playing in, conducting and composing for The London Improvisers Orchestra, the two week period spent rehearsing and performing with Butch Morris' London Skyscraper project in late 1997, subsequent performances with Morris' New York Skyscraper in 2001, a 1999 residency with the Fracture Big Band in Liverpool, the *enEnsemble* at HCMF in 2007, a 2009 commission from CoMA North West, experience conducting the Oxford Improvisers Orchestra in 2004, commissions for the LSTwo ensemble of the University of Leeds and the Anglia Sinfonia at Anglia Ruskin University, plus community music projects for Haverhill Town Council in Suffolk and the communes of Panazol and Ambazac in the Limousin region of France. In addition to numerous pieces written for LIO, compositions for my own larger improvising ensembles would include *Music For 10(0)* (1993), *Compilation III* (1994), *Leosuite* (1996) and *Compilation IV* (2002). Finally, since 1999 I have been writing extended pieces for my SFX series of ensembles, which have ranged in size from two to sixteen performers.

Experience suggests that a reluctance to appear authoritarian on the part of the instigator can sometimes result in a mode of 'default improv language' activity; the players have lost faith (or have not yet found faith) in the structuring strategy, but have not the freedom of self-direction that would enable their improvisation to develop significantly in its own right. This kind of no-man's land is common when the level of intervention is relatively high, but without any clear or worthwhile conceptual justification.

Conducted improvisation can be problematic; in the hands of some practitioners the level and rigidity of discipline required renders questionable any meaningful relationship with improvisation (at least on the part of the players, although the conductor may still be improvising). Its more successful practitioners tend to use smaller vocabularies, have more open-ended goals, and are able to resist the temptation to over-direct. A key skill for structuring improvising activity (and one which is very difficult for some composers to acquire) is the ability to relinquish and jettison an idea, no matter how wonderful, elegant or skilfully crafted, simply because it is no longer appropriate.

A simple and often-used compositional method is the insertion of blocks of freedom within notated or pre-determined material. This technique is relatively easy to effect, and has been used extensively, particularly by composers within the contemporary and experimental jazz traditions. However, this kind of approach can generate aesthetic and stylistic problems, especially with regard to questions of continuity and the satisfactory interfacing of different types of material (in addition to the marked tendency for this type of composition to produce a potentially unsatisfying episodic type of large-scale structure). But by simply framing the improvised sections this technique does at least enable the improvising musicians to produce something more closely resembling Free Improvisation, although of course it will be heavily contextualised by the music which precedes (and follows) it; nevertheless, the musicians have the choice of reacting to this music with exactly the same range of options as to an improvised contribution.

An extension or development of this kind of structure is the 'horizontal' rather than 'vertical' approach – rather than alternating the blocks of certain types of material during the time flow of a given piece, the different types of material are also allowed or obliged to simultaneously occupy the same time periods, or interleave themselves in unpredictable and not always clearly perceptible ways. Evidently, at certain points in a given piece this type of structure can introduce a much greater degree of both logistical and aesthetic complication for the performers involved; playing any kind of fixed notation, especially complex notation, at the same time as musical events which are never the same twice (and which may in fact aim to disrupt the notation), can be very challenging. At the same time, producing convincing improvisation despite the awareness of a simultaneous musical discourse of a different kind, and from which the player may wish to remain isolated, can also require a new level of inventiveness, flexibility and patience from improvisers. (Of course, the interest of this kind of work is that during these sections neither the notated nor the improvised elements can avoid being metamorphosed by the alchemy imposed by the structuring, thus enabling the ensemble to realise a type of music which contains many of the qualities of these two disciplines, but with a somewhat different character to both of them.) The pioneer of this kind of deeper interfacing of improvisation and composition in the 1970s and 80s was Anthony Braxton, especially with his multi- and variable-timestream compositions of the 1980s and subsequently. It is also a field in which I have undertaken a certain amount of work myself, with a series of compositions since 1985 in which I have explored these ideas.

### ***fame or blame?***

An occasional source of tension within such hybrids is the concern regarding listeners' difficulty in allocating responsibility for creative elements. Cardew's caricature of the average concert musician's approach to Modern Music was 'we play it, but don't blame us for what it sounds like' (Cardew, quoted in Tilbury, 2008 p. 109), in other words these disagreeable sounds are demonstrably the composer's fault. For many jazz musicians, a comparable subtext might be 'this person's composition is unremarkable, but may subsequently be redeemed by my exceptional improvisation'. Some musicians find much comfort in the relatively clear allocation of credit or blame. The question of what constitutes proper composerly responsibility remains a sensitive one: as recently as 2011 I experienced a situation where a performer was not prepared to consider my suggestions (as composer) about what might happen in a more open section of a newly commissioned piece, because he felt that if I had had any interest whatsoever in what happened at that point I should have written it down. For this musician my invitation to participate creatively signalled an abdication of authority, and introduced into the piece a *zone blanche* in which no artistic or aesthetic criteria could be brought into play<sup>1</sup>.

The question of when a composition ceases to be a composition and becomes an invitation to improvisation is

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<sup>1</sup> The relationship of the living, present and participating composer to the fixity implied by previously-realised notation is a potential source of unease in notated music practice. Renée Levine Packer relates how rehearsals for a section of Cardew's *Treatise* (during the latter's residency at the State University of New York at Buffalo) 'provoked frustration and even anger among some of the Center members; the paradox being that whereas the notation was so extremely open, in the rehearsals Cardew was meticulous and demanding in his expectations' (2010 p. 57). The players in question were presumably not disconcerted by Cardew's graphic notation as such; rather by the exercise of composerly authority and precision in ensuring that Cardew's own interpretation of the notation was the one which prevailed. The composer's attitude in person may have appeared to contradict the implications of his notation.

often muddied because of the considerable institutional and practical pressures riding on the outcome. Three questions are inextricably linked here – one of aesthetics/philosophy, one of prestige/responsibility and one of value/revenue. Were the question solely an aesthetic/philosophical one, it would be simply be a question of identifying an agreed level of compositional input that would merit the designation ‘composition’. Of course, in reality such agreement would never be found; but even if it were, such an assessment pales into insignificance alongside the question of prestige/responsibility.

Here the underlying issue is who should receive the artistic credit for perceived success, or accept the responsibility for perceived failure, with respect to a given musical performance. Is it a question of gifted and imaginative improvisers creating rewarding music despite the half-baked, poorly realised suggestions of a would-be composer, or rather a noble inspiring leader, doggedly coaxing jaded performers from the repetitive shackles of familiarity and professionalism? (Or with both simultaneously of course, as each party may have its own view on the proceedings.)

It could be argued that – outside the specialised ‘New Music’ field – the infrastructure of the wider world of ‘classical’ composition (its promotion, its critical bases, its career structures, along with the perceptions of many of its listeners) allows for different interpreters having a gradational effect on the outcome of the performance of a work, but even now is generally unequal to the task of dealing with a composition the nature of whose sonic existence may ultimately be determined solely by the tastes, choices and creative agenda of the ‘interpreters’. Unlike the value-system of jazz, where the improvised contribution of the performer has almost always been the main repository of prestige, that of composed music does not have aesthetic and technical mechanism to comfortably accommodate (or evaluate) the contribution of the improviser. The disagreements of composer-performers Globokar and Gehlhaar with Stockhausen for example (see Iddon (2004 p. 94)) are symptoms of this disjunct, with such players no longer happy to stand by mutely as their improvisational expertise led to plaudits, honours and further work opportunities for the composer, while accepting that the weaving of sparse strands into fine tapestries was simply part of their artisanal remit.

The third question, that of value/revenue, rears its head less frequently in creative art music than in musics with more commercial potential. But on those rare occasions where music involving improvised elements manages to attract a slightly wider audience, and possibly cross into the infrastructure of the mainstream, there can be prosaic yet pertinent questions regarding intellectual property rights. While these retrospective ‘clarifications’ of creative contribution within a band setting can occasionally arise in pop and rock music<sup>2</sup>, jazz, improvised and contemporary composed musics rarely generate sufficient revenue to merit the costly intervention of the legal system. But given the financially precarious lifestyle of many performers in all genres of creative music, even a relatively modest amount of success can generate sufficient composer royalties to make a significant difference.

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<sup>2</sup> Two examples: firstly, Paul McCartney’s attempt to invert the agreed ‘Lennon & McCartney’ authorship formula for those Beatles songs which he had written alone (see Bilmes (2015)) – which was simply a question of allocation of prestige/responsibility, and would not have had any financial implications. Secondly, the UK court case where Matthew Fisher was awarded a retrospective composing credit for the introduction to Procol Harum’s *A Whiter Shade Of Pale* (see Procol Harum organist Matthew Fisher wins share of *A Whiter Shade of Pale* royalties (2009)), a judgement which would have had significant financial implications for both parties.

In *Minute Particulars* Eddie Prévost writes begrudgingly about the continuing claim of Cardew's publisher upon AMM performances which were created through realisations of *Treatise* (Prévost, 2004 pp. 34-35). While Prévost's main point is the failure of both legal and financial institutions founded in author-centric copyright to devise a relationship which reflects the collaborative nature of realising a graphic or indeterminate score, in order to make his point he temporarily overlooks the non-obligatory nature of creative musicians' engagement with such scores. Prévost and AMM (and colleagues before and since) must have had a *reason* for identifying their improvisation as *Treatise*, or agreeing to perform (excerpts from) *Treatise* when they could have improvised freely without the implication of a score. At least in theory the performer has a choice whether to indulge in, submit to or continue to endure practices which they find morally questionable – even if that choice is sometimes subverted by baser questions of income and professional standing. Many of the reasons for indulging in compromised activity are those which are normally identified with the 'vulgar' side of musical life – the need to work, the need to secure a performance opportunity, the desire to associate with a higher-profile colleague, the need to generate a publicity 'selling-point' for a particular performance – but the element of choice remains, nevertheless. Prévost himself acknowledges this when he writes that 'to have a piece attributed to John Cage or Cornelius Cardew meant that the outcome would be taken more seriously than if identical music was credited to a young or relatively unknown musician' (2004, p. 36); perhaps it would have been more accurate to write 'would be approached in a different manner' rather than 'would be taken more seriously', but in either case it seems unduly harsh to blame either the composer or their publisher for the superficialities and deficiencies of much music appreciation and criticism.

If AMM choose to play *Treatise*, or identify an improvisation as being derived from *Treatise*, then whatever their reason for doing so it subsequently seems unrealistic to deny the contribution of Cardew to the performance event; Keith Rowe has observed that playing *Treatise* tends to change the music, interrupting the horizontal flow associated with AMM music (i.e. its laminality), and introducing vertical elements<sup>3</sup>. Unfortunately, under the current work-based system of *droits d'auteur*, in such a case this contribution is rewarded by 100% of performance royalties (probably shared with a publisher). Much as improvisers may find such a situation unjust, as a producer and publisher of long standing Prévost knows well that if one plays a composer's composition, the composition rights will remain with the composer, however much one might improvise. (This, of course, has been a bone of contention for jazz musicians throughout that music's history, as Prévost also observes.) The current system is ill-adapted to such posthumous collaboration, because it is based on a work-concept rather than a process-concept.

This work-concept orientation of the Eurological music infrastructure derives from an intrinsic belief that a 'composition' implies some constant identity which marks that particular composition as being itself, rather than being any other composition<sup>4</sup>. In music derived from the Western European authorial tradition, this identity is normally expected to reside in the acoustic characteristics of the composition. In the simplest reading for copyright purposes this has often been taken as the 'melody', but of course this is more applicable to popular song (where the vast majority of composing and publishing royalties are generated) rather than concert music. But even in this latter case, it is the ordering of pitches (and perhaps elements of orchestration) which would

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<sup>3</sup> K. Rowe, public discussion at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

<sup>4</sup> And that this identity is robust enough to shape all subsequent improvised accretions.

normally constitute the identity of a composition<sup>5</sup>. Experimental composers have of course thoroughly outgrown this basic principle, as different performances of many of these works may have no sonic characteristics in common whatsoever – in this case the identity lies in *the score* (whatever form it may take), and the use of *the score* to generate, stimulate or facilitate a performance identified with that score. The score need not be physically present (or even physically exist), nor be directly referred to by the performers during performance – the identification that this is a performance of a given composition is sufficient to establish the performance's identity.

Two observations arise from this. Firstly in the cases of the most abstract approaches to composition it is not the score's characteristics, its specificity or lack of it, which allow it to earn the authority of a *score* – it is quite simply whether performers choose to either 'perform' it in some way, or identify their performance with the score. Secondly, there are no real limits to what might be identified as a composition, since there are an infinite number of factors which can affect the progression of an otherwise theoretically free improvisation. The simple act of publicly specifying a title or name for an improvisation before it is played could be sufficient to influence that improvisation to have a very specific character. Changing the lighting of the performance area could be sufficient to determine the character of the music that follows. Having a violent argument with a fellow performer in the dressing room immediately before the performance likewise. In such situations, whether a particular act constitutes an act of composition, an act of performance or an act of daily life are essentially matters to be negotiated between composer(s) and performer(s) subject to their individual perceptions of justness and appropriateness. Except that, unless one is in a *truly* collective situation, all the usual power dynamics and hierarchical pressures will apply. Senior or more established figures will exert a gravitational pressure to be agreed with, or financial implications may outweigh reservations of principle.

### **3b: case studies 1965-1975**

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*By refusing to identify or abstract the activity of playing music to journalistic, academic or biographical discourses, jazz musicians attempted to affirm what they saw as their activity's true nature and importance (Scott, 2014 p. 6).*

*Am shaking off the avant-garde idea of 'flawless impact' and trying to communicate struggle, flexibility, actual thinking, change as development and growth, and above all optimism – especially about the shortcomings (ie. that they are temporary) (Cardew, quoted in Tilbury, 2008 p. 772; emphasis and parentheses in original).*

#### ***the British Music Collection scores***

In 2013-14 I undertook an examination of nearly 400 scores from the 1960s and 1970s held in the BMC and originally categorised by the British Music Information Centre as 'experimental'. I aimed to establish to what

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<sup>5</sup> In their 2015 judgement In the controversial US legal case Williams, Thicke & Harris vs Bridgeport Music Inc., Gaye, Gaye & Gaye, the (non-specialist) jury decided that a similarity of 'feel' or 'vibe' in a recording could be sufficient to constitute plagiarism. This was a precedent which set alarm bells ringing for composers, musicians and publishers world-wide. (See <http://www.businessinsider.com/blurred-lines-case-music-copyright-2015-12> and <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/thr-esq/blurred-lines-appeal-gets-support-924213>.)

extent the scores being archived by the BMIC during this period reflected contemporary developments in improvisation practice, and whether the compositional aspirations of some of the improvisers had left any institutional trace. Certainly, there seems little doubt that, for example, Cardew's own experience of improvisation with AMM represented, for him, a personal and aesthetic watershed. Cardew's verdict was that improvisation 'could be viewed as the highest form of musical activity' (quoted in Harris, 2013, p. 142) – but had such practice affected these composers' approach to pre-determined music? The scores examined exhibited (perhaps unsurprisingly) a wide range of approaches to incorporating the possibility of improvisation within pre-determination; I was particularly interested to identify whether any scores reflected developments in what I have described above (page 70) as somatic rather than associative improvisation, and how that had been effected.

There is of course a paradox in searching for 'free' improvisation in such a context. While clearly there is often a great difference between theory and practice, in theory Free Improvisation might presuppose no prior determination of content, attitude or other parameters of the performance situation, apart from those implicit in the physical practicalities of a performance by these people, in this space, at this time. Such a blank canvas, even if we accept it could ever be achieved, represents a very fragile state; even such apparently lightly-interventional devices as graphic or text scores will produce accordingly a modifying effect on the process of improvisation<sup>6</sup>. (This is perhaps self-evident, since otherwise composers would not find interest in such methods.) Thus works which seek to orientate or influence improvisation by graphic or non-specific verbal means (poetic, mystical or abstrusely obscure) may represent an interesting engagement with improvisation, but could not truly be considered 'free'. The ethos of many such works is probably more closely aligned with the post-classical (frequently) associative approach to improvisation of pioneers such as Larry Austin, Lukas Foss and Earle Brown, than with the practice-based approach of Europeans such as Bailey, Stevens, Rutherford, Guy and Parker.

For example, the works of Cardew and his Scratch Orchestra colleagues from this period include many open-ended scores of all kinds – text, graphic and just plain inscrutable – but it could be argued that none of these scores deal with the tangible immediacy of somatic or dialogic Improvised Music performance. David Bedford, a key figure of this period<sup>7</sup>, observed 'it should be noted that none of Cardew's works ever gave total freedom to the performer' (quoted in Harris, 2013, p. 41). While this statement is perhaps technically correct it could be considered debatable, since it would depend upon what qualifies as a work, and what qualifies as total freedom. Pieces such as *The Tiger's Mind* and *Schooltime Compositions* could be considered to be sufficiently abstruse and cryptic in their instructions as to effectively give the players 'total freedom' in any practical performing sense. But of course they don't, because the texts cast a shadow over the performance which is inescapable – much as does the non- or partially-specific presence of works such as *Treatise* or *Memories of You*. The *Improvisation Rites* collected in *Nature Study Notes* have, as discussed on page 74, a variable relation to improvisation per se. (Arguably, some of the *Improvisation Rites* are distantly related to the 'heads' employed in free jazz; a composition which sets up the context of an improvisation, without necessarily providing raw material for it.)

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<sup>6</sup> Assuming the performers do not choose to deliberately ignore the existence of these score elements, or disregard their intentions.

<sup>7</sup> Bedford was a key collaborator of Cardew during his leaving behind of modernism and the early life of the Scratch Orchestra. Eddie Prévost's list of 'those making waves' in the classical music establishment during the mid-sixties consists of Cardew, Bedford and John Tilbury (Prévost, 2001a p. 25).

CCIR149 At some point in an improvisation let the absence of something strike you. Set to detecting its hidden presence and exposing it (drawing it out).

CCT&22 Commence improvising discontinuous music. In the gaps in your playing: without masking their expression, allow your eyes to wander amongst your fellow players. On meeting the eyes of a fellow player: play in accordance with their expression.

TMCR 39 A pack of cards is shuffled and laid face down. Each performer takes at least one card. When every performer has a card, improvisation can commence. Cards can be exchanged or discarded any number of times. Discarded cards are placed face up by the deck. When all the cards are discarded, activity ends.

Figure 6: three *Improvisation Rites* from Cardew (1969b)

The BMC archive is notably lacking in any work from composers working outside the broader classical tradition (in which I include the contemporary and experimental subgroups), at least during the period with which this thesis is concerned. The library of the British Music Information Centre (from which the BMC derives) was ‘a voluntary library of deposit where composers and publishers of 20th century British classical music could deposit scores and recordings of their work, which allowed would-be performers access to these works to study and play’ (Heritage Quay, 2015 para. 2). The restrictions on who was able to deposit were clearly based on status within the composition establishment and its satellites; ‘the collection was initially just restricted to the work of members of the Composers’ Guild, and later BASCA (British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors) concert music members’ (ibid.), although restrictions evolved over the lifetime of the collection. Heritage Quay note that

by the 1990s the acquisition policy of the BMIC stipulated that eligible works included: work that is published by a major publisher ... unpublished work by professional composers of significant standing ... work by full members of a leading professional body ... work commissioned by the BMIC as part of its projects and professional development programmes ... and work commissioned or funded by leading commissioners or funders (ibid. para. 3)<sup>8</sup>.

As a result, many strikingly creative ‘non-classical’ British musicians of the 1960s are not represented, or if so almost invariably by works submitted during a later period of the archive’s existence (especially during the 1990s as a result of the New Voices and Contemporary Voices schemes)<sup>9</sup>. Thus the exclusion of Afrologically-orientated work from the BMC is in part due to the self-selecting nature of the material in the archive – the acquisitions policy quoted above makes it clear to what extent this was indeed an archive of work by *composers* (in the traditional Eurological sense of the term - especially those with traditional publishers), supplemented by those independents who aspired to such a status (or had ascribed it to themselves).

The skewed representation of improvisation-derived composers in collections such as the BMC reflects (in Lewis’ terms) the Afrological composition tradition’s lack of engagement with the Eurological paradigm of the score-as-end-result. Compositions drawing on Afrological principles, be they for jazz musicians, commercial and popular music performers or for improvisers, *must* remain provisional, negotiable and malleable; therefore they almost always eschew the obsessive detailing characteristic of highly evolved Eurological predetermination. As a result, these scores are often simpler, more transparent and easier to communicate – the Afrological tradition preferring the detailing richness, complexity and mystery of unforeseeable individualistic performance gestures, and the

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<sup>8</sup> My own researches suggest that in addition to this list, anonymised scores submitted to the SPNM reading panel were also sometimes added to the collection.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Keith Tippett and Graham Collier (the first ‘jazz composer’ to receive an Arts Council bursary, in 1967) are two ground-breaking and renowned composers from this period working outside the classical tradition; their representation in the archive is only provided by works written some 20 to 30 years later. There are several similar absences.

consequent endless mutation of the material in performance, over the fixed complexity of highly prescriptive predetermined complexity. However, this characteristic means that these scores have had very little traction in the Eurological composition establishment, where historically the score had evolved to be seen as (hypothetically) a *full* document of the music. In many contemporary music contexts, and particularly in the contexts of academia, composition competitions, archiving and award-giving, the score is *read* many more times than it is heard (if it is heard at all). Thus scores who present a richly finished *augenmusik* have tended to fare much better in these contexts than scores which offer a provisional proposal for action (an approach characteristic of the Afrological tradition), rather than an indicator of outcome.

Having said which, it is also arguable that what I have defined above as an Afrological approach *can* find its way into a collection such as the BMC if this approach is arrived at via Eurological methods, such as by studying with (or being otherwise associated with) established Eurological peers, having a Eurological publisher, or as 'outreach' activity from an established Eurological base – and includes a commitment to the making of a (definitive) score. Thus the archive contains scores by (for example) Cardew which could be considered more Afrological in intent or practice, but which are included because of Cardew's established Eurological standing, connection with establishment music publishing and continued commitment to notation. The Scratch Orchestra composers, the Experimental Music Catalogue and composers such as Stephen Montague, Richard Orton and Trevor Wishart all occasionally push at the boundaries of the archive's Eurological foundation; but the fact that this is a self-declared archive of *scores* by *composers* means that such a bias ultimately cannot be overturned. As Barry Guy suggested to me (see page 39), simply being represented in the archive implies a connection to (or an aspiration toward a connection to) an institutionalised idea of composition which has its roots in the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>10</sup>.

One group of compositions among the BMC scores that allow for Free Improvisation, while not exhibiting a particular awareness of or concern for its methodology, are those compositions which are sufficiently open-ended to allow this kind of improvisation to take place, although they neither specifically refer to it nor seek to influence it. Such works would include Alan Brett's *Composition or Improvisation Rite*, Cardew's *Memories of You* and *Rite*, and Bryn Harris's *Symphony* and *Unwritten Score Rite*. This last piece, with its simple instructions 'Imagine a score and play it. If you can't imagine one, remain silent' (Cardew, 1969b, p. 6) is an interesting (but nonetheless resolutely score-based) reflection of one possible approach to free improvisation, although probably only solo improvisation would allow the playing of an imaginary score in the way Harris describes. However, the text contains a strong implication of 'Imagine a score and then play it' rather than 'Imagine a score while playing it', an implication which suggests any outcome might be doubly composed, rather than improvised.

Two scores seemed to suggest some understanding of improvisation practice, while seeking to incorporate it within a more traditional Eurological notation paradigm. The composer of both scores, David Bedford, has already been mentioned as a key part of British experimental music in the 60s, but his subsequent career seems to have resulted in him slipping out of the field of vision of much critical writing about the subject. Like Cardew, Guy and Rutherford, Bedford represents a key bridge between the worlds of contemporary and experimental

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<sup>10</sup> The classification system employed by the BMIC is indicative both of these historic roots, and of its original purpose of assisting performers looking for new repertoire. Scores were arranged by category (rather than by composer), with categories such as Chamber, Duo, Keyboard, Music Theatre, Opera, Orchestral, Organ etc.

classical music, improvised music, and – of special interest in Bedford's case – 'progressive' and artistically ambitious rock music of the late 1960s. In particular, his membership of Kevin Ayers' seminal group The Whole World in the late 1960s brought him together with legendary improviser Lol Coxhill, with whom he had a close working relationship for several years. The bass player in the group was prog-rock multi-instrumentalist Mike Oldfield, and this connection was another thread that was to run through much of Bedford's work of the 70s. Subsequent developments in Bedford's commercial music career – one of several strands of activity he maintained throughout his life – included associations with music (semi-)mainstream notables such as Madness, Elvis Costello, Frankie Goes To Hollywood, Enya, Billy Bragg and Robert Wyatt.

The BMC scores of particular interest are *Eighteen Bricks Left On April 21* (Bedford, 1967) and *A Horse, His Name Was Hunry Fencewaver Walkins* (Bedford, 1973). In both these pieces Bedford makes explicit use of the dialogic, individual-based type of improvisation associated with the Free Improvisers, both in its own right, and as part of a structuring strategy for ensemble passages. *Eighteen Bricks Left...* is scored for 2 electric guitars, and is dedicated to Timothy Walker and Sebastian Jörgensen, who gave the first performance on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1967 at London's Wigmore Hall<sup>11</sup>. Timothy Walker was also the dedicatee of *A Horse...*, although he is identified as Tim Walker in both scores. Walker was at that time the guitarist with the London Sinfonietta and played with the London Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Opera Covent Garden and others. In the 1960s he had a duo with Australian guitarist Sebastian Jörgensen, in which they both also played electric guitars (or possibly – as evidenced in the 1969 film *Popcorn* – semi-acoustic guitars). The duo became part of a late-1960s counter-cultural thread, for example playing at the 'Guitar-In' at the Royal Festival Hall in September 1967, along with Paco Peña, Bert Jansch and The Jimi Hendrix Experience (it is footage from this event which is included in *Popcorn*).

As might be expected from Bedford's experience in the world of rock music, *Eighteen Bricks Left...* is of particular interest to guitarists as one of the first scores that explore the electric guitar as an instrument in its own right, with specific characteristics, rather than an amplified version of the classical guitar. Like many of Bedford's works of this period the piece includes several kinds of contemporary notation techniques, with some passages of a dense and chaotic character. It also includes what appear to be several references to the work of improvising guitarists and their technical discoveries; there are passages where one or both of the guitars are to be played lying flat on their backs in a horizontal position (on the floor), prepared with an ashtray, a jam jar or similar item. Historically, this comes at a point where (outside the lap steel style) it appears only Keith Rowe was known to be playing horizontal electric guitar<sup>12</sup>. More strikingly still, Bedford's piece incorporates a substantial section of free improvisation (5 minutes in duration) based on feedback sounds – both improvising and rock musicians were in the process of developing a vocabulary for this conspicuously non-classical sound source<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Information retrieved from <http://www.classicalguitardelcamp.com/viewtopic.php?t=56263&start=15> on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2017.

<sup>12</sup> Rowe was also the primary exponent of guitar preparation in 1969; Fred Frith's seminal *Guitar Solos* album did not appear until 1974. For more information see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prepared\\_guitar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prepared_guitar).

<sup>13</sup> Bedford notes '1.) there should be sound for the entire five minutes i.e. no silences; 2.) the whole five minutes should be extremely loud'. (Bedford, 1968 p. 8).

This page, lasting 5 minutes should be filled in by the performers, if possible in collaboration with the composer, since what is played will be determined to a large extent by the type of equipment being used. It should consist entirely of sounds obtained through various types of feedback. The only rules to be followed are: 1.) there should be sound for the entire five minutes i.e. no silences; 2.) the whole five minutes should be extremely loud.

Diese Seite (Dauer 5 Minuten) soll von den Spielern ausgefüllt werden - wenn möglich in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Komponisten - da das musikalische Material größtenteils von der Art der benutzten Anlage bestimmt wird. Das Material sollte ausschließlich aus Klängen bestehen, die durch verschiedene Arten der Rückkopplung erzielt werden. Die einzigen zu befolgenden Regeln sind: 1.) während der gesamten 5 Minuten durchgehend Klänge ohne Pausen; 2.) das Ganze äußerst laut.

The image shows a musical score for two staves, labeled 1 and 2. The score is divided into five measures, each with a time duration indicated above it: 30'', 1'30'', 2'30'', 3'30'', and 4'30''. The staves are mostly empty, with some faint lines and a large '5'' written vertically at the end of the fifth measure. The score is for a piece titled '18 Bricks Left On April 21 (1967)' by David Bedford.

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Figure 7: the feedback page from David Bedford's *18 Bricks Left On April 21* (1967)

The second piece, *A Horse, His Name Was Hunry Fencewaver Walkins*, is a mini-concerto for (classical) guitar (the guitar is once again prepared, this time with a teaspoon, and with a newspaper) and sextet (flute, clarinet, piano, violin, cello, double bass); it was commissioned by the English Bach Festival in 1972 and premiered in 1973. At figure L in the score, the guitarist takes the double bass player's bow and gives the bass player a plectrum; there then follows an exchange between bowed guitar and plectrum bass. The bassist then improvises ad lib "using as unusual sounds as possible", which the guitarist copies. It's significant that this piece was commissioned for the English Bach Festival – it seems quite possible that Barry Guy may have been the double bass player for the first performance, as these are exactly the circles in which Guy was moving at this time. When I asked Barry Guy about this (in August 2014) he felt the (memorable) title of this piece was familiar to him,

and that he had had some connection with it; however, he was unable to be sure as to whether he had played in the first performance. What is not in doubt is that The London Jazz Composers' Orchestra performed Guy's *Ode* at the 1972 English Bach Festival (Nogliki, 1996, para. 2) – it certainly seems not unreasonable to imply the possibility of some influence having been exerted on this composition by Guy's improvisation work.

Figure 8: two systems from David Bedford's *A Horse, His Name Was Hunry Fencewaver Walkins* (1973)

While these two scores would seem to represent a meagre harvest from several months' work in the BMC, the interesting aspect of my BMC research seems to relate to what the archive does **not** contain, along with the very composer-orientated way the archiving and processing of material has been undertaken, and what that may tell us about British 20<sup>th</sup> century music and its institutions.

### **the 'enigma' of Strindberg**

One Cardew work which promised to illustrate some of the contradictions and complexities of writing more specific material for improvisers was his score for the film *Strindberg*, written for AMM. Since this work is little known – Tilbury (2008) contains one short paragraph regarding the work, which he describes as an enigma (p. 634), and the work is not mentioned at all in Cardew (2006) – the score merits investigation in some depth. Gresser (2013) provides an invaluable overview of what little is known about Cardew's film music activity,

including this piece (which Gresser identifies as being written for the 1971 Swedish-US TV co-production *A Search for Strindberg*). Like Gresser, I have neither seen the finished film, nor heard the soundtrack recording, so all discussion is based on the manuscript score and sketches held in the British Music Collection at the University of Huddersfield<sup>14</sup>; clearly this means that any elements which might have been subsequently improvised, whether indicated by the score or not, cannot be taken into account. (If the audio-visual materials are eventually found or identified, further light will inevitably be shed on the process of creating this music.)

The extant *Strindberg* score (dated by the composer '19th July 1971') clearly justifies Tilbury's 'enigma' label. It consists of four parts, whose relationship with each other is less than clear. They are (1) a typed list of 'Music sections' [1 page]; (2) a series of semi-graphic scores (or sketches) for most of the sections identified [7 pages]; (3) a more detailed graphic layout of the first three music sections [1 page]; and (4) conventionally notated scores and parts for several of the music sections identified in list 1 [13 pages].

Parts 1 and 3 are the most readily comprehensible, and represent relatively conventional aspects of film music preparation. The first section of Part 1 is essentially a list of music numbers, with approximate timings, probably the result of an initial 'spotting' session with the director. The resulting eleven music sections run from M1 through to M8 (including M5A, M7A and M7B), with projected lengths ranging from 0m5s to 3m35s. The 'scenario' reproduced by Gresser (2013 p. 5) represents the next stage in this process, with timings having been noted for individual montage elements within each music section. Part 3 appears to be Cardew attempting to get a sense of scale for the length of these sections, by laying them out graphically in time-space notation – this would doubtless give the composer a much better sense of temporal architecture than simply reading a list of timings. The second section of Part 1 is more interesting however, as it lists a series of six 'Wild music sections', numbered W1 to W6, which very probably were to be improvised during the recording process, and which are not mentioned elsewhere in the score<sup>15</sup>. The original type-written list reads

- W1 Concertina and flute
- W2 Sequence of chords
- W3 Insect-like tremolos
- W4 Pizicato [sic] piece
- W5 Solos by Flute, concertina, violin, violin, cello, cello, xylophone, bells, guero [sic]<sup>16</sup>, cymbals, drums.
- W6 Free improvisation by AMM as a whole, approx 30 minutes.

to which various hand-written timings, corrections and other notes have been added.

The list of instruments in W5 gives a clue as to one of the most noteworthy aspects of the music notated in Parts 2 and 4 of the score – the breadth of instrumentation which Cardew employs. Indeed, when I first read through this score, I carelessly formed the impression that it had been written for a chamber group of notation players, plus AMM. But detailed study makes it clear that the score is indeed written for Cardew, Prévost, Gare and

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<sup>14</sup> This appears to be a photocopy of the British Library manuscript examined by Gresser (although without the hand-written scenario pages which Gresser reproduces).

<sup>15</sup> I read the term 'wild music' as not necessarily indicating the nature of the music to be played, but rather the status of these inserts. This 'wild music' (or sections thereof) could be used like a 'wild card' in poker (such as a joker or a deuce), i.e. freely used to substitute for one of the foreseen music pieces should the need arise.

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of the spelling of guero, see V. Anderson (2009 p. 280).

Rowe alone, with each player playing multiple instruments and having sometimes to deal with quite a considerable amount of traditional notation – I shall explore this point further below. The score uses a mix of the players' first names and instrument names, but collating all the notation and following the individual instrumental lines through the various sections the following instrumentation is arrived at:

Eddie Prévost – snare drum, bells, xylophone, guero [sic], tomtom and cymbal

Lou Gare – flute, gong, disc, sax [sic] and violin

Cornelius Cardew – 'cello 1 and piano

Keith Rowe – 'cello 2, sleigh bells, gong, disc and cymbal

It is immediately noteworthy that Prévost, Gare and Rowe spend much of their time playing instruments other than those considered to be their main voice. Most of Prévost's notated material is for the xylophone, and much of it possibly quite challenging for a non-specialist. Similarly, the vast majority of Gare's notated material is for flute, although the part is less demanding than that of the xylophone (between them the flute and xylophone supply most of the upper-register notated material for the score). Gare also has some notation for violin in the written-out version of M2, although (presumably) in deference to a possibly rudimentary technique Cardew writes only open strings.

Particularly striking is the fact that Rowe isn't explicitly asked to play the guitar at all (even as a sound-source) – there is certainly no notation for guitar, and it will be noted that in W5 above the list of improvising instrumental soloists does not include guitar. There is one cue in M3 which is simply marked 'Keith', and which consists of the instruction 'plaintive pizzicatos with slides' – although this *could* apply to the guitar, it seems more likely that it indicates 'cello activity. Rowe's 'cello part ('cello 2') is for an instrument with a scordatura tuning of Db, Bb, Eb and Ab – Cardew's own 'cello ('cello 1') being tuned to the traditional C, G, D and A. Most of the 'cello 2 part is constructed of open strings and octave harmonics thereof and, although Cardew occasionally departs from this schema when the music demands it, the part is clearly designed to be relatively simple to realise.

In the absence of any recorded evidence, the enigma of the *Strindberg* score rests on the relationship between what I have identified as Parts 2 and 4. As previously indicated, Part 2 consists of a series of simple graphic scores with occasional text or music notation, providing music for all the music inserts, with the exception of M4. The Part 2 scores leave much space for free interpretation, and are very much what one might have expected Cardew to have written for AMM. They are clearly comprehensible and designed to quickly realise specific moods and effects, but nevertheless needing the improviser's input to respond satisfyingly to their slender suggestions. It seems quite possible that the Part 2 scores were used for recording purposes, since several of them are marked in a hand which may well be Cardew's (although writing quickly, rather than with the elegant neatness normally seen in his scores); these markings are added later, sometimes written across or on top of existing notation. M2 bears the marking 'could use gong sound where sun appears', while M3 is marked 'possible retake, less morose'. M5 is marked 'Mmm, redo it??', with '?cd end here' noted at the 1 minute mark. M6 is also marked 'Re-do'. The fact that these Part 2 scores are marked up in such a way strongly suggests that they were used for recording and subsequent playback purposes. Cardew is probably assessing the outcome of particular takes, and it seems very likely that he would have noted these on the score used for the session. This is of interest, because the scores in Part 4 contain no such markings, and give no similar evidence of having been used.



'... harsh ...' and at 47s '... sustained ... fade'. This overlaps with a guiro entry<sup>17</sup> at 55s, playing a similar pattern to M2, marked 'intense but soft'. To this are added 'low sax notes LOU &/or low cello phrases KEITH'. The through-composed version of M5 has xylophone, flute and 2 'celli playing slow arpeggiated figures in a mixture of 9/8 and 6/8 using clear diatonic harmony – Ab major, Eb major and Bb major. At 35s simple diatonic (or modal) flute figures repeat against a descending 'cello bass line, punctuated by sleigh bells or snare drum. At 53s (i.e. slightly before the guiro cue in the graphic version) the snare drum begins a roll which is transformed into a sustained trill by the 'cello. Prévost moves to the xylophone (he has 0.83 seconds to do so!) and picks up the looping figure (still) being played by the flute; after a general crescendo these figures end at 1m16s and a long 'cello note and gong resonance are left hanging, presumably for the next 12 seconds, although no exact end point is marked.

M6 lasts 1m08s; the graphic version consists solely of the (general) instruction 'Improvise to picture. Should include guero [sic]'. The Part 4 version begins with a 13 second snare drum roll (without snares), and at 13s a change (presumably) in the visual image provokes three groups of 'cello chords, moving through Bb major, D major to G major. ('Cello 2 has presumably now returned to standard tuning; if not the part would be unplayable at this point.) After some graphically-notated xylophone and flute runs and trills, the 'celli repeat the harmonic sequence, adding an A major chord to end the section. At 40s there is a further sequence of 'cello chords, using Gmaj, Amaj, Bmin, Fmin and Bb7. At 54s the xylophone plays a loud and frenetic falling minor third figure, diminishing in intensity until 1m00s; here the descending xylophone/flute lines and trills are reprised, set against a chord of open fifths (C, G, G 8va and D) in the 'celli.

M7 is marked 'Sailing', lasts 1m52s and once again there is a marked difference between the two extant versions. The graphic score version features a verbal breakdown of events on screen, with the instruction 'Improvise to picture'; there are also some graphic representations of activity and the note '2 [indecipherable] while water sparkles', but these seem to have been added subsequently, possibly after listening to playback of an initial take. At the end of M7 there is a calculation: one 4/4 bar at 80 bpm is equivalent to 3 seconds<sup>18</sup>.

The Part 4 version of M7 consists of 38 notated bars at 80 bpm. Harmonically the music remains markedly conservative, and opens with a series of parallel thirds in C major. At 39s the thirds are in F major, over a held 'cello F. A slightly more adventurous section appears at 52s, where the flute freely plays a figure in D major tonality over the continuing F drone, overlaying with the F major figures in the xylophone and piano. This ends at 1m00s, from which point the harmony becomes richer (the thirds are vertically stacked to create a series of parallel seventh chords); these four-note chords move more chromatically than previously, but since they are all either 7<sup>th</sup>, minor 7<sup>th</sup> or major 7<sup>th</sup> chords the effect actually resembles the 'smooth' jazz voicings of a musician such as George Shearing, although the sharing of these chords between xylophone and piano adds a little piquancy.

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<sup>17</sup> The guiro is clearly a leitmotiv in this version of the score – the pattern it plays occurs in M2, M5 and M5A, and the instrument also features in M6.

<sup>18</sup> This is written in a neater hand than the other 'listening notes' that I have identified, and so may either be part of the original score or added later. If it was part of the original score it reinforces the possibility that this was a preliminary sketch, but nothing else about the way M7 is written suggests this.

This notated version of M7 appears to follow the list of visual cues given in the graphic version in a clear and traditional way. The striking of the disc at 32s and the empty two and a half bars of resonance which follow match the visual transition where the water of the lake goes out of focus and a flashback section begins (this is also the point at which the tonality changes to F major). The out-of-time (and tonality) flute interjection at 51s fits the shot of the castle lighthouse and island (the significance of which is not clear from the materials we have). The sequence of four-note seventh chords starts with the return to images of Strindberg sailing his boat, and the 'cello entry at 1m22s matches a visual image which Cardew has reproduced in a sketch in the graphic version ('pan down to lake'). In addition to the score of M7, there is also a separate xylophone part with much characteristic sustaining of notes and chords through tremolo (tricky for a non-specialist), and a combined 'part for Lou & Keith' with xylophone cues.

I have spent some time on these comparisons because the character of the two versions seems clearly schizophrenic, and may well have direct bearing on the results of Cardew's experiment, attempt or desire to use improvising musicians to generate a film score. Cardew himself seems to have held his media-composition work in relatively low esteem, and given that the need to earn money is a constant thread in Cardew's private (and occasionally public) writings it is not unduly cynical to suggest that Cardew (and perhaps by extension AMM) may have undertaken the work on the *Strindberg* score mainly as way of securing a little income. (Given the artistic ground the group had covered by 1971, and their clear preference for long-form organic improvisation, improvising tiny sections of music of a minute or so in length would not seem to have been something they would be driven to by direct artistic imperatives.) As Gresser observes, 'Cardew's involvement in providing all aspects of the film music would mean he could charge money for all these services' (Gresser, 2013 p.4 n. 15), and Eddie Prévost reiterated this point in an e-mail to the author:

Cornelius, for sure, was trying hard to use AMM for the purposes of film soundtrack. Not only for the music but as a way of paying us something. Everyone was skint! (E. Prévost, e-mail to the author, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2017).

But what might be the explanation of the Part 4 notated versions of the score? Clemens Gresser writes

Of course, without either being able to hear the film music through the films, or ascertain which musicians recorded the 'missing' film music, one could also imagine that some of the music was improvised whilst seeing the film. (Cardew undoubtedly had the skills to do this, and a lot of his musician friends would have been happy in such a recording situation.) Judging by the scores available, one does, however, need to consider that Cardew's professional attitude to compositional tasks at hand would have led him to write down a score to fit the moving images better and to coordinate the interplay between music and screen via a fixed notation to enable the musicians to supply a recording quickly (Gresser, 2013 p. 4).

Gresser's account of *Strindberg* is rather unclear about the score's structure, and doesn't really explain that there are effectively two parallel versions, the clear implication of the statement quoted is that the graphic score is a sketch which was then realised in conventional notation for 'straight' musicians to play. Gresser's point about a better fit for the moving images, and supplying a recording quickly are good ones, in that such things are of paramount importance in the production of film music. However, these points do not fit the particular case in hand. Firstly, it is hard to see how Cardew's traditional notation, with its steady pulse set against the clock time of the film would necessarily supply a *better* fit to the moving images than musicians working with a graphic score with precise stopwatch timings, and/or improvising directly to the picture – especially when one of the

improvisers would be Cardew himself, who by this time would have seen the footage several times<sup>19</sup>. Secondly, there is no doubt that the notated music was written for AMM, rather than notation specialists – the players' names occur frequently in the score, especially when players' individual parts are written out with cues with which they need to synchronise. If we accept this, then writing such notation for musicians who are primarily improvisers (remembering, for example, Keith Rowe's approach to playing his parts in the Westbrook Band) seems unlikely to result in a more rapid and efficient – in other words, 'professional' – recording session. Although Cardew's notation is not complex, it does involve numerous time signature changes, abrupt changes of tempo, and significant co-ordination challenges within the ensemble; his pure diatonic writing for the two 'celli also implies a precision of intonation which Rowe may have found challenging on his 'alternative' instrument. While none of these factors would slow down experienced notation specialists, it seems to me incontrovertible that to present such music to AMM is going to imply significant preparation time, several takes or runs-through, and much general discomfort (not to mention ideological arguments which might be raised by the musicians having to deal with such material)<sup>20</sup>. Therefore I would propose that such an approach would dramatically *slow down* the recording of the music, rather than expediting the process as Gresser suggests.

It is possibly significant that the two of the sections I compared above, M5 & M6, are both sections on the original graphic version of which Cardew (or whoever was assessing the recordings) has written 'redo'. Were the fully notated scores a response to Cardew's disappointment with the results he achieved through a more open, improvisatory approach? If so, this seems a dismaying reflection on Cardew's involvement with improvisation at this time – but the date of *Strindberg* is relatively close to the point at which Cardew left AMM, and may even have been one of his final creative interactions with these musicians<sup>21</sup>. But there is more going on here than simply questions of expediency in realising a commercial commission, for the notated versions of the Strindberg cues not only serve to fix (and put back under the composer's control) a previously mutable and collective music, they also emphatically translate the music's language from the abstraction and unnotatability of 1971 AMM to the directness, regularity and unambiguity of Cardew's late 'socialist realist' style.

Without access to the finished film, or its soundtrack, we may never know how the music was finally realised for *A Search for Strindberg*, and which sections proposed in the score were actually played or used (improvised, graphic or notated). Indeed, we may never know whether the resulting music was played by AMM, perhaps by notation players more suited to the written-out version, or some subsequent mix of the two. We may never know why two versions of the score were prepared, and which actually came first<sup>22</sup>. Unsurprisingly, Eddie Prévost was

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<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Cardew's use of fixed tempo and simple rhythmic notation in the written-out versions means some of the musical events are *less well* synchronised to the items noted in the spotting list, since he is restricted by the temporal grid of the notation he has adopted. While this may be addressed by some flexibility of tempo during the recording session, the notation used actually makes the task more difficult, and therefore the process less efficient.

<sup>20</sup> John Tilbury notes that 'many Scratch musicians (including Eddie Prévost and Keith Rowe of AMM) did not read music; nor did they have any desire to learn' (Tilbury, 2008 p. 530).

<sup>21</sup> See Gresser (2013 p. 7); however, in his note (no. 19) Gresser writes *Sugar* when he appears to be referring to *Strindberg*. (The music for *Sugar* was written and recorded in 1976, well after Cardew's departure from AMM.) It should be noted that Cardew's withdrawal from the group was long-winded and ambiguous (see Tilbury, 2008 chapter 15); Cardew himself identified 26<sup>th</sup> March 1972 as being his last performance with the group (Tilbury, 2008 p. 651).

<sup>22</sup> For the most part, my analysis supposes that the fact that the 'Part 4' scores were written subsequently to the 'Part 2' ones, and that the order in which they appear in the archive score is an indication of temporal sequentiality. However, there is no

[footnote continues on next page]

not able to offer precise recollections:

It is difficult at this (time) distance to recall the occasion of the Strindberg recording ... But, I recall that it was difficult. [Cardew] needed (if I recall correctly) to illuminate/chara[c]terise certain (often quite short) sections within the film's narrative. This way of doing things was awkward for us. I am not even sure the material we produced was ever used (E. Prévost, e-mail to the author, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2017; parentheses in original).

Whatever the true story (stories) behind the *Strindberg* score<sup>23</sup>, one thing is clear; despite being written for AMM, its value as an example of composition for free improvisers is limited. Even in the graphic version of the score, the brevity of the composed music sections means that any improvisational input into the music is going to be extremely compromised, and the illustrative nature of some of the musical effects robs them of any real generative power within improvisative practice (while the written out scores make virtually no call on the performers' improvisational abilities). At best, one could imagine that the sequence of improvisations required for the 'wild music' sections might have been edited, combined or sequenced to image in a way that may have proved stimulating or exciting, but without the evidence of the finished film this is pure conjecture. Unfortunately, this kind of *musique concrete* using found improvisation objects does not generally leave score traces in generally phonophobic institutions such as the BMC. If anything, the graphic version of *Strindberg* represents an instance of a composer using improvisation as a 'detail generator'<sup>24</sup>, i.e. the use of improvising musicians to quickly and simply generate a certain type of texture or ambience (or thicken a given texture) on demand, without the need for time-consuming notation. This can often produce interesting musical results, but is far removed from the practice of Free Improvisation as currently under discussion.

### ***the Bailey archive***

Derek Bailey (1930-2005) had an uneasy and sometimes antagonistic relationship with the ethos of composition. As discussed previously, Bailey was one of the key figures in the history of British (and international) Improvised Music, and in his 40-year career as an improviser (which was preceded by a distinguished career as a commercial musician) Bailey played with almost every musician of any note in the field of improvisation, and improvised with many noteworthy musicians from other fields. Although his writing was only sparsely published during his lifetime, he was a clear and incisive thinker about the philosophy and practice of musical improvisation; his relatively slim but wide-ranging volume *Improvisation; its nature and practice in music* remains a key text for anyone interested in musical improvisation, whether idiomatic or otherwise. In 2011 Dominic Lash had undertaken research in Bailey's archive, which had led to his article *Derek Bailey's Practice/Practise* (Lash, 2011); in the article Lash makes reference to some fragments of Bailey compositions which he had found. Clearly the prospect of unknown Bailey compositions was of intense interest, particularly since it would provide

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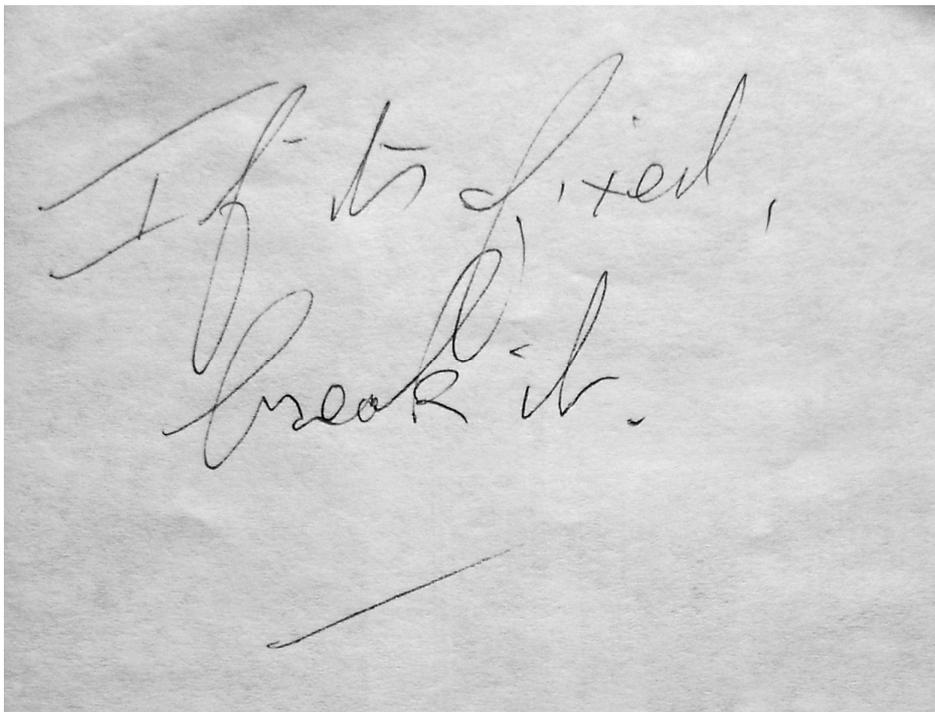
firm evidence for this, and the two versions may have been prepared simultaneously, or the Part 4 version may have been written first, although why such a course of action might be taken would be even harder to conjecture. For the time being the piece remains, in Tilbury's term, an enigma.

<sup>23</sup> Tilbury simply notes that 'there are no recollections of a recording session' (Tilbury, 2008 p. 634).

<sup>24</sup> This labelling of such activity may have been coined by the composer/improviser Martin Archer, in the sleevenotes to his CD *Ghost Lily Cascade* (Archer, 1996).

an interesting counterbalance to the material contained in the BMC.

For almost his entire career Bailey was seen as the improvising musician *ne plus ultra*, in terms of rejection of all compositional aspirations within his own music and that in which he was involved. He progressively disassociated himself from those groups of the late 60s/early 70s which either clung to or sought to reincorporate composition or structuring elements within improvisation (such as Guy's London Jazz Composers' Orchestra, the groups of Kenny Wheeler and Tony Oxley, certain projects with Misha Mengelberg, or Butch Morris' later *Skyscraper* groups). His contempt for some of these compositional aspirations was often only thinly veiled, if at all, and in *Improvisation; its nature and practice...* he writes 'in any but the most blinkered view of the world's music, composition looks to be a very rare strain, heretical in both practice and theory' (D. Bailey, 1992, p. 140). I can speak from direct personal experience with regard to Bailey's views on composition – I worked occasionally with him in improvising groups from around 1977 until his death; although these collaborations were initially extremely infrequent (Bailey's working method tended to preclude regular playing partners), we did work together more frequently in the last 6 years or so of his life. During this time I had considerable contact with Bailey and I would suggest that his views on most things musical were often more ambiguous than the hard-line stance depicted by many journalists and commentators; some of these occasionally give the impression of failing to appreciate Bailey's ironic sense of humour. In reality, he was innately interested in ideas of structuring and organisation, although ultimately he felt that the discipline of composition was over-rated; like many of his contemporaries he was also deeply antithetical to the hierarchical power structures inherent in the apparent pervasiveness of classical music's composer-interpreter model during the mid-1960s.



**Figure 10: the perturbing influence; a jotting in Derek Bailey's hand, found in his archive**

Nevertheless, studying the music of Webern was for Bailey an initial way of unpicking the weave of 'normal' tonal and rhythmically stable music; he told Ben Watson about his passionate interest in the recorded complete works:

I got 'em out of the library, Robert Craft's recordings which I think were done in '59 or something... they all

fitted onto two reels of tape – less than two hours. I copied them. I used to play them over and over, listening to them (Watson, 2004 p. 423).

The music of Webern fed into Bailey's own search for a revolutionary approach to ensemble music-making. Lash summarises Bailey's approach to musical structuring thus: 'it was breaking obvious connections that one had to concern oneself with, rather than creating continuity; that would take care of itself' (Lash, 2011 p. 22). This was at the heart of Bailey's subsequent commitment to non-tonal music (he preferred this term to 'atonal', although he sometimes used the terms interchangeably): 'Atonality has a non-grammatical quality, a non-causal sequence to it' (Bailey, quoted in Watson, 2004 p. 213)<sup>25</sup>.

Although it does not fit with the widely promulgated stereotype, Bailey's interest in composition during the late 60s and early 70s is not new information. The preMICO/Instelimp group (see page 57) and the Bryars/Bailey duo (see page 61) performed works by various experimentalists (including Bailey himself) in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Bailey's first solo guitar recording for Incus, the record label he co-founded with Tony Oxley, Michael Walters and Evan Parker in 1970, featured specially-commissioned solo pieces by Gavin Bryars, Willem Breuker and Misha Mengelberg (D. Bailey, 1971).

However, by the mid-seventies Bailey's attitude to composition had hardened to the point where it is difficult to imagine him wishing to continue such activity. The rejection of composition which Bailey undertook during this period was a clarification (and to a certain extent a radicalisation) of how he saw the relative value and efficacy of composition and improvisation, and the dramatic gap between what he perceived as their true relationship, and that which had been developed and institutionalised by Western European Classical Music culture (which at that time still provided the working models for the legal, moral and financial infrastructures that were supposed to serve non-commercial or 'artistic' musical activity). From conversations with Derek later in his life, it seemed clear that he simply felt he had left composition behind as a clumsy and often ineffectual way of realising what he thought was important in music – but his interest in structure and grammar never left him<sup>26</sup>.

Lash (2011) reports 'the existence of fragments of a composition by Bailey based on [Samuel] Beckett's short text, *Ping*' (p. 145), along with a partial realisation of Stockhausen's *Plus-Minus*. In both cases, Lash lists the pieces as unfinished and/or incomplete, but I was able to make progress on both these fronts. Overall, my investigations emphasised Bailey's considerable interest in composition at this stage of his career (the writings in his archive are almost all undated, although dates can often be implied with some accuracy from adjacent material in the notebooks. Much of the material appears to be from the late 60s and early 70s, but the archive items range from the 1950s to Bailey's death). I found the scores of 24 numbered compositions, many

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<sup>25</sup> See the footnote on page 30 for further reflections on this statement.

<sup>26</sup> In the latter stages of his career Bailey had become sufficiently relaxed about his relationship with composition to allow John Zorn's Tzadik label to release two remarkable recordings (in 2002). One was a new recording of 'jazz standard' ballads, where Bailey states the theme and then improvises upon it freely in his own language, in the way that solo jazz musicians have done throughout the history of that music (D. Bailey, 2002a); the second CD was a release of solo guitar pieces Bailey had recorded at home in 1966 and 1967, including the aforementioned *Three Pieces for Guitar* (D. Bailey, 2002b). A preliminary recording session to the *Ballads* one – two months earlier, in New York rather than London – subsequently yielded the posthumous CD *Standards* (2007).

incomplete but some in fair copy versions. There is also a series of unnumbered pieces, and numerous composition sketches – see Appendix 1 (page 159) for full details. Many of these compositions are miniatures, but there is some extended material; as far as I'm aware, the existence of the majority of these pieces was previously unknown. There are also around 10 pages of notes, observations on or analysis of other composers' works.

In the more substantial exploratory pieces which date from approximately 1966-70, Bailey's concerns are primarily structural ones. As implied by his interest in serial technique, Bailey appeared to find composition valuable for investigating ideas of construction on both a micro- and a macro-level; several works show Bailey specifically investigating the power of composition to create unpredictable and unnatural or counter-intuitive larger-scale structures. Therefore it is not necessarily surprising that there are no specifically identified areas in these scores where improvisation might be included. The recorded evidence that exists, along with notes from Bailey's archive, suggests that these pieces could (or perhaps should) be preceded by, followed by, or incorporate improvisation upon elements drawn from the score (as on D. Bailey, 2002b). Notwithstanding, the final versions of *Three Pieces for Guitar* and *G.E.B.*, the only pieces which exist in a definitive fair copy (with full dynamic and tempo markings), make it clear that Bailey also considered these pieces at least performable in a version without improvised addition.

The almost neo-classical formality of some of these pieces stands in stark contrast to the compositions of some of his peers which Bailey was to play with The London Jazz Composers' Orchestra during his association with that ensemble. Bailey's own overpowering interest in the syntactics of pitch led him to closely focus on serialism and in particular the work of Webern; however, another particular interest seems to have been (perhaps surprisingly) the music of Debussy<sup>27</sup>, and his solo guitar versions of Debussy piano pieces allow him to explore an interest in guitar clusters which was also to manifest itself in some of the early solo guitar pieces, and which he retained throughout later improvising practice.

With regard to the two scores identified by Lash, I was unable to find any further 'finished' material for the version of *Plus-Minus*, although I did find several pages of detailed working out of Bailey's version of the score. Bailey has prepared a version of one complete 'layer' of the score – i.e. 53 moments – for solo guitar. Following Stockhausen's original instructions this would be enough to represent a valid version of the piece, but it's clear from the layer that has been prepared that Bailey intended to make at least one other, and have multiple simultaneous layers; if these other layers exist they have not yet been found.

Researching the setting of Beckett's *Ping* proved more successful. A full score of the final version of the piece was found (Bailey's Composition No. 22<sup>28</sup>), which is scored for soprano saxophone, trombone, guitar and speaking voice. The score is fully notated, although with extended techniques, and runs to between 90 and 100 systems of score, with a performance duration of just over 20 minutes. Demonstrably, it occupied a considerable amount of Bailey's time as there are around a dozen pages of notes for and thoughts about the piece, including a structural schema which makes explicit Bailey's plan for translating the unique structure of Beckett's text into

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<sup>27</sup> See p. 161 for more information on Bailey's arrangements of Debussy.

<sup>28</sup> It is significant that Bailey was at this point sufficiently interested in composition to number his pieces in this 'composerly' fashion.

composed sound. It's not clear if this piece was ever performed – no-one I have spoken to regarding this piece (incl. those close to Bailey, such as Karen Brookman, John Butcher and Alex Ward) was aware of the existence of the work, let alone whether it had been played. Evan Parker was able to confirm that the piece had been written for himself and Paul Rutherford, but could only remember participating in one rehearsal<sup>29</sup>, after which work on the piece lapsed; Parker comments 'I think we all found it hard to play' (E. Parker, e-mail to the author, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2014). Bailey started writing out instrumental parts, but doesn't seem to have completed the process, so perhaps a performance opportunity never materialised; there is a saxophone part, a fragment of a trombone part, a French horn part<sup>30</sup> (which is simply a transposition of the trombone part), but no guitar part. There is a notebook with a speaker's text with musical cues, but this gives every indication of never having been used.

The process of restoring some of these Bailey scores for contemporary performance, and the issues arising therefrom, is described further in Section 3c (page 126).

### ***the Guy archive***

In August 2014 I spent two days at the Swiss home of Barry Guy; together we looked through his archive of material composed for the London Jazz Composers' Orchestra since 1970. While Guy himself was the principal composer for the orchestra during most of its history, the archive also contains a considerable collection of scores written for the group by other members of the ensemble (and occasional outsiders); I was particularly keen to study material by Paul Rutherford, Tony Oxley and Howard Riley, as well as investigating the differences between the published Guy scores found in the BMC, and those pieces he had written for specific improvising colleagues.

Guy's own pieces share many of the characteristics of his published 'classical' work of the early 70s – very detailed scores, often with passages of great notational complexity, using notation techniques familiar from the

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<sup>29</sup> Evan was kind enough to supply further details on this rehearsal: 'It took place in my flat on the top floor of 28 Brondesbury Villas. The trombone part written for Paul Rutherford was actually played by Derek Wadsworth, a good player who Derek knew through the session and West End musical world. I played soprano, Derek B. guitar and an American actor whose name I have forgotten read the Beckett text ... It was not a fluent run through by any means but we gave it a go ... As far as I know it never came out again and Paul Rutherford never saw it. I certainly never saw it again'. (E. Parker, e-mail to the author, 6<sup>th</sup> July 2017).

<sup>30</sup> The musician for whom this horn part was intended remains uncertain. Evan Parker felt it would most likely have been Richard Howe, a former student of Herbert Brün at the University of Illinois. Howe came to London in the summer of 1968 to study French horn with Neill Sanders of the Melos Ensemble, staying until late December (R. Howe, e-mail to the author, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2017). During this time Howe took part in Brün's contribution to the *Cybernetic Serendipity* exhibition at the ICA; the exhibition included (on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1968) a performance of Brün's *Infraudibles*, by an ensemble of Howe, Evan Parker, Derek Bailey, Gavin Bryars and Bernard Rands. While in London, Howe also took part in performances of improvised music; Evan Parker remembers a pre-MIC pool of players which included himself, Bailey, Tilbury, Bryars, Howe, Jamie Muir and Hugh Davies (E. Parker, e-mail to the author 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015) from which the MIC coalesced (see page 57). Richard Howe's own memory of these events is understandably sketchy; when I asked him if he had been involved in a rehearsal or performance of Bailey's *Ping*, he wrote to me that 'I'm afraid I don't have any recollection at all of any Derek Bailey, neither the man nor any of his music' (R. Howe, e-mail to the author, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2015).

scores of Lutoslawski, Penderecki or Xenakis, for example. But in contrast to the BMC material, these passages often run simultaneously with - and (in view of something of a heavy-blowing tradition within the LJCO) are occasionally submerged beneath - passages of aggressive free-jazz style improvising, provoked and modulated by text or simple graphic symbols. For example *Ode* (1970/71) – the score to play which the LJCO was originally convened – contains passages of great complexity and ingenuity of notation, but in performance (and as with several LJCO scores) the homogenous nature of some of the improvisation vocabulary used could be thought to undermine aspects of the compositional ingenuity<sup>31</sup>.

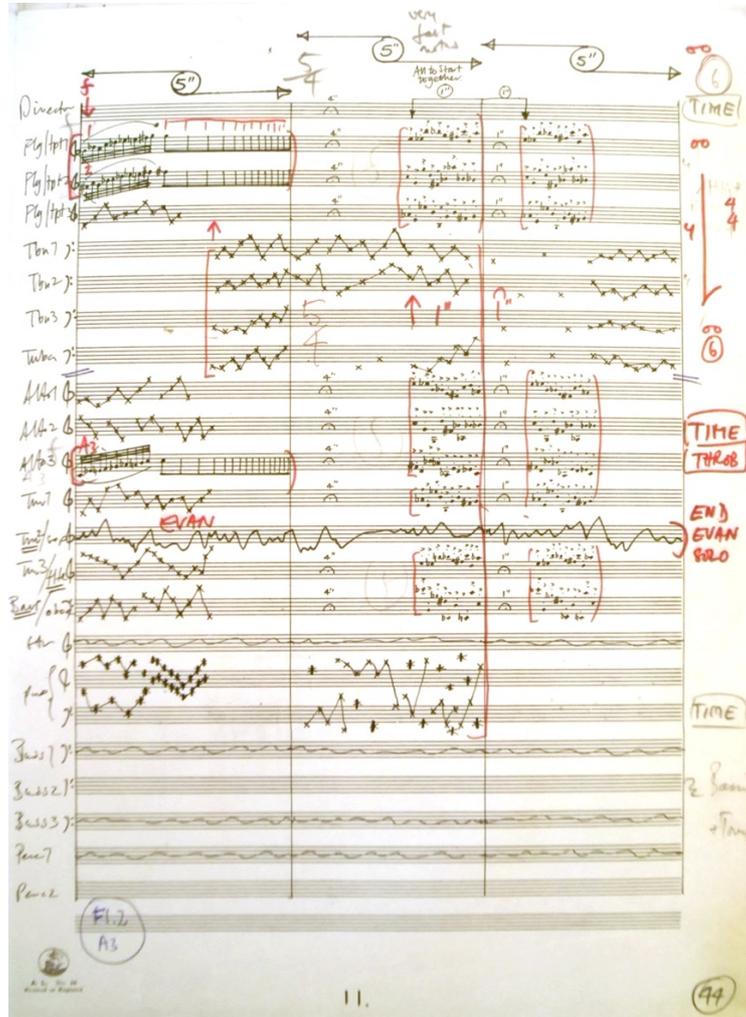


Figure 11: page 11 from Barry Guy's *Ode* (1971)

This characteristic of minute and precise detailing set against huge unruly blocks of sound, and the associated beauty of the scores' draughtsmanship, runs consistently through all Guy's compositions for the LJCO; however,

<sup>31</sup> At one point in the archive score of *Ode*, the LJCO's then-conductor, Buxton Orr, has plaintively written in the margin 'get details right'. Given the ribald abuse to which Orr recalls being subjected by the musicians - who were struggling with the relationship between their newly-found freedoms and the apparently retrograde implications of having both a composer and a conductor to deal with – it seems likely he would have had his work cut out. During our conversations Barry Guy, referring to Orr's patience and sang-froid during this first period of the ensemble's existence, described the latter as 'a saint'.

Guy himself has often described what he sees as various phases in the ensemble's development, and these phases often involve a shift in the balance between notated and improvised elements. It is worth examining Guy's thoughts on the mutations of the LJCO, if only because these are so very often related to questions of hierarchy, discipline, collaboration and freedom, and the attempted resolution of tensions between direction and liberty.

The first version of the LJCO came together in 1970 to record three movements of Guy's *Ode* for the BBC, with the remaining movements being added and the whole work premiered in 1971<sup>32</sup>. As this genesis suggests, this was once again a case of a composer (albeit one with by now extensive experience as an improviser) seeking musicians to perform a specific work – thus a hierarchical relationship immediately tends to suggest itself. However, Guy did not wish to call upon his classical music contacts to realise this work, as he was deliberately seeking to integrate the methodology and collaborative immediacy of improvised music; as discussed on page 39, during this period Guy had not found the improvising spirit he was seeking amongst even the most adventurous of his contemporary classical colleagues. But since Guy decided to focus on playing and not simultaneously conduct the ensemble (as he was to do for much of the LJCO's lifespan), a separate conductor was required. The fact that *Ode* required a conductor only served to emphasise for many of the improvisers the 'classical' and 'authoritarian' nature of the enterprise; moreover, Guy's choice of Buxton Orr might have served to reinforce this impression of retrogression for many of the musicians.

At first sight, Buxton Orr (1924-1997) may well have appeared to represent 'the establishment' for those musicians thirsting for revolution. Barry Guy had been a composition student of Orr at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where Orr had joined the faculty in 1965, and where he subsequently founded the Guildhall New Music Ensemble in 1975. With his training in composition and conducting, his academic position and apparent career focus on 'classical' music, Orr may initially seem to be the epitome of the 'straight' musician, but Guy clearly recognised an open-mindedness and flexibility in Orr's approach which was borne out by the 10 years that he was conductor of the LJCO. In fact, Orr was by no means purely a concert composer; his oeuvre includes music for low-budget British films such as *Fiend without a Face* (1958), *Corridors of Blood* (1958), *First Man in Space* (1959) and *Doctor Blood's Coffin* (1961), as well as the somewhat higher profile *Suddenly Last Summer* (1959).

In his on-air introduction to the LJCO's 1975 *Music In Our Time* broadcast on BBC Radio 3, Orr remarks that 'the mere presence of a conductor epitomises the conflict between freedom and control which is the central paradox of all improvisation, and in such a large grouping as the [London] Jazz Composers' Orchestra this problem exists in an especially acute form' (Orr, 1975). Towards the end of his life, writing a booklet note for the first publication of the complete version of *Ode*, he was even more specific:

My chief memory is of the bad language which I accidentally took down on tape during the rehearsals. It recorded the comments of some of the members of the free-improvisation orchestra who resented the strict rehearsal of the very complex notation by myself, seen as a strict authority figure. The whole idea of a 'conductor' was anathema to them (Orr, 1996 p. 39)<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> My main source for the chronology of the LJCO is Landholt (2003).

<sup>33</sup> Barry Guy relates that some of the musicians, resentful of Orr's implied authority, would – like sneaky schoolboys – leave

[footnote continues on next page]



Figure 12: page 4 from Barry Guy's *Statements III* (1972)

The first phase of the ensemble's existence is identified by Guy as being from 1970 to approximately 1974 – but 'overlapping' with the second; he dates it until his composition *Patterns and Time Passing* (1974). The tensions resulting from Guy's increasing interest in exploring contemporary classical models (and his apparent monopoly of the composer's role<sup>34</sup>) during the first 2 years of the ensemble's existence had started to cause friction with several members of the ensemble. As Guy himself puts it:

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messages for him in the microphone he used for recording rehearsals. Apparently 'fuck off, Buxton' was a common refrain; clearly this was still in his mind some 25 years later.

<sup>34</sup> While this 'monopoly' is a common perception among musicians and writers (including Guy himself), the true situation may have been more complex. Without citing his sources, Ben Watson (2004 p. 171) indicates that the first LJCO performance included composition(s) by Tony Oxley, although in an e-mail to the author Barry Guy suggested that this was incorrect, and that Oxley only began to compose for the ensemble later. However, on the occasion of the first complete performance of *Ode* (2<sup>nd</sup> May 1971 at Ronnie Scott's) the ensemble also performed *Continuum* by Howard Riley (B. Guy, e-mail to the author, 30<sup>th</sup> July 2017).

The first period is represented by my first work *Ode* and subsequent compositions such as *Statements I, III, IV* and *Patterns and Time Passing*. As these pieces progressively moved from the initial *Ode* impulse of a pluralistic music through to a more defined musical vocabulary (perhaps more influenced by European contemporary musics), they incrementally began to alienate some players. My own enthusiasm for both genres (improvisation and composition) somehow took me on a journey that bypassed the practicalities of interfacing the subject matter in a balanced way. I had forgotten that many of the players had not received a classical musical instrument grounding and had no desire to be slotted into a most difficult interpretative situation. (Guy, quoted in Landholt, 2003)

Certainly the scores Guy mentions bear very clearly the marks of his interest at this time, and even a cursory inspection will indicate that they could well present a daunting, intimidating and ultimately frustrating proposal for many of the more improvisation-orientated members of the ensemble. In the 1975 radio introduction, Buxton Orr remarks of this period that 'some of the original members have felt it no longer possible to work in this situation, preferring to operate alone, or in small groups, as they had always done' (Orr, 1975) – for example, Derek Bailey appears to have severed his links with the Orchestra after the 1972 performances at Donaueschingen, Bremen and Berlin. Some pages of *Statements III* (1972) resemble nothing less than a dense, highly complex modernist orchestral score, with each player faced with complex challenges of both notation and co-ordination. While 1974's *Patterns and Time Passing* includes beautifully crafted graphic elements, with a clear indication of the introduction of a greater level of liberty of interpretation, the complexity of a highly-developed cuing system and the persistence of intricate notated passages mark this as a transitional work.

Guy describes the second phase of the LJCO's development, which appears to have begun 'overlapping' with the first phase in October 1972, thus:

The second phase overlapped the first, after it became evident that some of the musicians had their own ideas of solving the obvious paradox of composing for improvisers and started to compose their own pieces. These arrived in various forms: some graphic others verbal, others with clearly defined pitch structures and ambitions. From this period up until the third phase there were compositions from Howard Riley, Paul Rutherford, Tony Oxley, Kenny Wheeler, John Stevens, Phil Wachsmann (with film). Also from the so-called «straight» composers came works from the LJCO's conductor Buxton Orr, Bernard Rands (professor of composition at York University, now Harvard University, Cambridge MA) and Krystoph [sic] Penderecki (a work originally written for the Globe Unity Orchestra) (Guy, quoted in Landholt, 2003; parentheses in original).

It would be temptingly straightforward to see Barry Guy's presentation of his *Statements III* at the Donaueschingen Musiktage on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1972 as representing the high point of his composerly aspirations for the LJCO, after which the musicians rebelled and demanded a more collaborative way of working, and a more egalitarian access to the composer's role. But the facts don't bear out such tidy assumptions, and as Guy notes there was a considerable 'overlap' between the composition- and notation-driven dynamic of the first phase, and the more experimental, accommodating aspects of the second phase. Two days after the Donaueschingen performance, the LJCO recorded a live performance for Radio Bremen at Die Glocke, and this featured no music by Guy, but rather *Merla* by Tony Oxley and *Rope* by Howard Riley, two ensemble members (and bandleaders in their own right) who were to become regular composers for the ensemble during this period. Just over a week later, on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1972, the group performed at the Berlin Jazz Festival, and again no

music by Guy appears to have been performed. The 40-minute set consisted of two pieces, Kenny Wheeler's *Watts Parker Beckett To Me Mr Riley*, and Paul Rutherford's *Pirtoge*<sup>35</sup>; thus it is clear that before the German trip the ensemble had been simultaneously preparing the notated complexity of *Statements III* along with the scores by Oxley, Riley, Wheeler and Rutherford. Although only the score of the Riley piece is known to have survived, it seems likely that the other three scores shared the characteristic concerns which the three composers explored in later LJCO pieces, and which were summed up thus by Buxton Orr:

The nature of these pre-rehearsed structures varies considerably from composer to composer, and often from work to work, so that the precise function of the conductor is equally variable. At one end of the scale is the extremely complex writing of most of Barry Guy's works, and the range extends through the simpler (but equally meticulous) frameworks of Howard Riley, the multiple melodic strands moving freely against each other favoured by Paul Rutherford, to the graphic scores of Tony Oxley, which have to be realised at rehearsal by a process of aural exploration (Orr, 1975).

Howard Riley's *Rope*, the score of which does survive, is a considerably simpler affair than the Guy scores of the period (although with the same visual fastidiousness and elegance in its preparation), and in general limits itself to indications of types of activity, using improvisation to generate the exact detail, rather than notating the minutiae as Guy was tending to do. Specific music notation is mainly reserved for a series of clusters which run through the score, and occasional slow unison motifs. In other words, Riley was using simpler notation and a greater degree of improvisation to realise a music which, in sonic terms, was very similar to Guy's – but involving much less stressful exposure to complex notation than the latter's work of the time. While Guy has never completely abandoned his love of detailed notation<sup>36</sup>, it's clear that his thinking about how to approach the third phase of the LJCO was distinctly influenced by the experience of working with the compositions of Oxley, Rutherford and Riley in particular. He told Patrick Landholt

My piece «Polyhymnia» invited the players into a looser scenario without a formal conductor. I had also re-evaluated the relationship between the players and my own musical objectives. Other than freeing up the performance aspects it indicated a return to a more pluralistic approach, taking greater note of the strength and differences of playing styles whilst structuring the composition in a more organic way. By this I mean that the structures were informed by the expected resolutions of ensemble interaction whilst simultaneously defining many events as sign posts on an (often) long and colourful journey. The consequence of this was that as time passed, each composition had a clear objective and refinement of procedure. Within this process was also the desire to research ways of presenting the score in as concise a way as possible (Guy, quoted in Landholt, 2003 para. 8; parentheses in original).

Particularly significant is Guy's comment: 'Perhaps I was trying to throw away the baggage of the «Twentieth

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<sup>35</sup> This piece gave me chance to witness a marvellous delayed-action critical barb. Some 42 years later Barry Guy and I were studying this score in his workroom, and he remarked that he had never understood what the title of Rutherford's piece meant. Then, before my very eyes, a wistful astonishment crept over his face as he finally realised... *Pirtoge* is a backwards ego trip.

<sup>36</sup> I don't think it's necessarily too fanciful to cite Guy's aborted training as an architect here – architects are notorious for obsessive attention to detailing, which is often seen as the most aesthetically satisfying stage of the design process.

Century Composer» and return to a music of the heart rather than just the intellect and certain expectations what [sic] contemporary music should be' (Landholt, 2003). In other words, *Polyhymnia* (1981) marks the point where (in his relations with the LJCO) Guy abandons the established composer model, and turns towards something nearer to the rotating hierarchy of jazz composition<sup>37</sup>. As he remarks, at least as far as the LJCO is concerned 'the musicians acted like gravitational forces that would shape the structure' (ibid.) – although it should be remembered that throughout his career Guy has also continuously composed 'repertoire' contemporary classical music to be performed by instrument-role based performers.

(29) (water + CRCH FRAMES)

10'15'

SEE ENSEMBLE FIGS. 1-4

PLAY BACKGROUND ENSEMBLE FIGURES IN ORDER 1-2-3-4, THEN IN ANY ORDER CHOSEN BY M.D. FOR DURATION INDICATED. M.D. WILL SHOW WHICH NUMBER TO PLAY WITH HIS FINGERS. DYNAMICS TO BE P OR FF, AS INDICATED BY M.D.

Figure 13: page 29 from Howard Riley's *Two Designs*

Before examining the score of *Polyhymnia* and the third phase it initiated, it might be helpful to discuss some of the other scores from this second phase. Those originating within the ensemble fit with remarkable accuracy the

<sup>37</sup> See Fell (2015).

thumbnail sketch presented by Buxton Orr above. Two of Tony Oxley's graphic scores are still extant: *Alpha* (date unk.) and *Invitation to Karlovy Vary* (1980). Both scores are graphically notated against a horizontal timeline, in what might be described as a simple, even crude, fashion; *Alpha* boldly proclaims its graphic nature by being notated in a 'Giant Drawing Book' manufactured by Children's Books (Rugeley) Ltd. They are essentially graphic representations of desired sonic events, arranged along a series of pages like the imprint on magnetic tape passing before the playback head. There are a very few specific pitches used, but most information is conveyed by graphic symbols; like some Orr and Guy scores, the conductor indicates choices between material options by means of special hand signals. *Invitation to Karlovy Vary* dispenses with all conventional notation, with five simultaneous time streams of activity depicting five sections of the orchestra. Certainly these scores have none of the elegance of Guy's or Riley's notation, but they are by contrast extremely quickly and easily understood – often Oxley simply draws something resembling the sound he wishes to hear at the point he wishes to hear it.

Along with *Rope*, the other Riley scores in the LJCO archive – *Nute* (date unk.), *Two Designs* (1975) and *Appolysian* (1980) – all have similar characteristics: clearly and elegantly notated blocks of material, represented by either simple notation or graphic symbols, usually set against freer activity. In many cases these scores are exemplary in the way they communicate complex structuring devices simply and clearly, and in their ability to resist over-composing the music (a constant danger when working with improvisers).

Once again, Buxton Orr's description of the music Paul Rutherford was writing for the ensemble was remarkably accurate. Rutherford had a life-long interest in modes, and simultaneous independent ostinati, and we find much of this kind of activity in those scores of his which are extant in the archive: *Satellites II* (1975), *Quasi-Mode* (1980) and *Sequences* (1981). These pieces contain quite a good deal of specifically notated motifs and instrumental gestures, but Rutherford avoids problems of co-ordination and metrical imprisonment by rarely having musicians play in synchronisation, and such synchronised passages as there are are often in regular static rhythms (such as the opening of *Quasi-Mode*).

At the same time as these composers from within the ensemble were developing a repertoire, the ensemble inspired a small number of pieces from more established composers (in the Eurological sense) with whom Guy had personal contact. Thus the archive also contains Buxton Orr's own *Interplay* (1973) and *Refrains III* (1975), *Ology* (1973) by Bernard Rands, and *Actions* (1971) by Krzysztof Penderecki – this latter having been originally written for Alexander von Schlippenbach's Globe Unity Orchestra (LJCO members Wheeler, Parker, Rutherford and Bailey had also been playing with this group since at least 1970).

Both Orr and Rands seem to have worked assiduously to produce scores which would not disconcert or antagonise the improvising musicians (other than perhaps by their very existence). Orr's *Interplay* uses separate modules of graphic and notated material, along with a central section where the composer withdraws completely. In his note on the score Orr also refers directly to his feeling of alienation from the improvisers whom he was expending so much energy on shepherding, with a hint that he might perhaps aspire to be one of them after all: 'The way the composed material is gradually re-introduced is in the hands of the conductor who can perhaps, though in a limited sense, be considered as one of the improvising members of the ensemble' (Orr, 1973 title page). *Refrains III* develops similar ideas, although here there is a vein of freedom which runs through the piece from beginning to end, since three musicians (Guy, Riley and Oxley) are presented as free to comment on, develop or subvert the composition's proceedings as they see fit – although as will be seen, the composer

cannot completely resist 'structuring' their activity. For the remaining musicians, although there is a certain amount of notated material, the notation remains consistently simpler and more legible than the complexities of Guy's contemporaneous scores. Orr's pieces contain significant attempts at structural flexibility and ingenuity; this includes the use of special hand signals to cue different events, with upward/downward hand orientation signalling different channels through the music in a fashion reminiscent of Boulez's *Éclat* (1965). However, the treatment of improvisation still occasionally threatens to produce alienation among the players. Although as previously noted *Refrains III* includes three improvising soloists who have no notated music, these players are nevertheless subject to the kind of stop/start emotional or dramatic gestures which often frustrate improvisers seeking a more organic approach to performance. For example, Barry Guy's part at letter J follows a tacet period with the instruction "ff frantic angular energy VERY EXHIBITIONISTIC" – which activity is then promptly succeeded by a further tacet passage at K. Whilst the structural role of this kind of activity may be clear to the composer, for the improviser there is little chance that such instructions will lead to a rewarding exploration of collectivity.

Bernard Rands' *Ology*<sup>38</sup> is a mainly graphic score, with much independent activity within the ensemble. There are notated modules for individual musicians, but these are used in a free, 'constellation' style – the only notated passage which resembles a conventional score is at rehearsal letter D, and even then this only concerns six of the musicians. *Ology* combines the precise and complex standard notation found at D with the graphically beautiful Stockhausen-like 'moments', which float in time and space outside the main thrust of the score. Although the score is visually most impressive, the level of detail notated is almost certainly excessive and counter-productive when the material is performed by an improvising musician; as almost a century of jazz composition has shown, music written for improvisers generally needs to leave undefined parameters through which the musicians can express their own creativity and personality. In what may have seemed a very 'classical' experience to some of its members, the LJCO undertook an Arts Council Contemporary Music Network tour in 1973, playing the Penderecki and Rands pieces along with Guy's *Statements III* and Kenny Wheeler's *Waiting For Beckett*.

As noted above, the reaction against the perceived increasing academicism of some LJCO compositions eventually led Guy to revise his own practice and produce *Polyhymnia* in 1981. In interviews, Guy often speaks of this piece as coming after a period of LJCO inactivity and initiating a new start. But as he and I discovered when examining the chronology, this is not really the case. 1980 seems to have been as busy a year as any for the ensemble, with a six-concert Contemporary Music Network tour (playing Oxley's *Invitation to Karlovy Vary*, Rutherford's *Quasi-Mode*, Riley's *Appollysian* and Guy's *Four Pieces for Orchestra*), in addition to a BBC recording session and a further performance of the *Four Pieces* at the Bracknell Festival. The new, re-thought version of the LJCO made its first appearance at Berlin's Workshop Freie Musik on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 1981, so clearly Guy's impression of a layoff and rejuvenated return is a reflection of his psychological feeling of starting afresh with the ensemble, rather than any real sabbatical period of re-orientation.

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<sup>38</sup> Rands does not currently (at 19<sup>th</sup> April 2015) include this piece in the works list on his personal website, <http://www.bernardrands.com/works.html>. However, an undated Rands composer catalogue from Universal Edition (found in a 1980 folder in the SPNM archive, therefore presumably from this date or before) does mention the score: 'Ology (1973) for 17 piece jazz orchestra', score catalogue number UE 15584.

In a programme note for the Berlin performance published in *Jazz Podium*, Guy pulls no punches about the political and motivational problems that have resulted from his attempt to combine composerly sensibility with the powerful drive towards individual expressive freedoms:

Psychologically speaking, the terms 'free music' and 'composition' have made many musicians difficult to deal with, especially those who do not wish to write music. This factor – and the idea of the conductor – led to many conflicts; although, of course, the composers (who often also played in the orchestra) did everything they could to create scores that were flexible, and inspired by the playing styles of the individual musicians. However, this could be regarded as exploitation, since the essence of music is the instrumental vocabulary of the musicians, and as there was no general agreement on such questions it was difficult to move forward. My own scores were complex, precise, and required a conductor to direct the musicians; these scores did not perhaps permit the accusation of exploitation, but they did lead to comments about inflexibility, in the sense that free improvisation was not foregrounded. I had thought that clearly delineated scores would enable us to compile a repertoire of pieces in the short time that was available; if we had been lucky enough to have the luxury of endless rehearsal and other meetings, the changes in the music would perhaps have surpassed my wildest dreams. But, as I have said, the music has moved forward, and the Workshop Freie Musik comes at a time when important changes have taken place in the orchestra: i.e. the formation of a smaller, unified group of musicians, without a conductor (Guy, 1981)<sup>39</sup>.

There are several interesting points touched on by Guy here, many of which illustrate keenly the particular knife edge along which those who compose for improvisers are forced to walk. As he implies, the resentment felt by improvising musicians who find themselves shoehorned into uncomfortable playing situations (in order to realise the aesthetic explorations of a third party) is a polluting force which can undermine a creative working environment. But this resentment is all too easily replaced by the resentment felt by improvising musicians who

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<sup>39</sup> « In psychologischer Hinsicht haben die Begriffe „freie Musik“ und „Komposition“ vielen Musikern schwer zu schaffen gemacht, besonders solchen, die nicht den Wunsch haben, Musik zu schreiben. Dieser Faktor und die Vorstellung von einem Dirigenten führten zu vielen Konflikten, obwohl natürlich die Komponisten (die auch im Orchester mitspielten) alles taten, um Partituren zu erstellen, die flexibel waren und auf die Spielweisen der einzelnen Musiker eingingen. An sich könnte das als Ausbeutung angesehen werden, da das Wesen der Musik in dem reichen instrumentalen Wortschatz der Musiker liegt, und da es keinen umfassenden Konsens gab, war es schwierig, sich für einen Weg zu entscheiden. Meine eigenen Partituren waren komplex, genau vorschreibend und bedurften eines Dirigenten, um die Musiker hindurchzuführen, was vielleicht den Vorwurf der Ausbeutung nicht aufkommen ließ, dafür aber zu Kommentaren führte, die von Unflexibilität in dem Sinne sprachen, dass freie Improvisation nicht zum Zuge gekommen sei. Ich dachte auch, dass streng festlegende Partituren uns befähigen würden, in der knappen uns verfügbaren Zeit ein Musikprogramm zusammenzustellen. Wären wir so glücklich gewesen, uns den Luxus endloser Probenzeit und anderer Zusammenkünfte leisten zu können, so würden die Wandlungen der Musik vielleicht meine wildesten Träume übertroffen haben. Doch wie gesagt, trotz bestehender Probleme hat die Musik sich vorwärts bewegt, und bezeichnenderweise kommt der Workshop Freie Musik zu einem Zeitpunkt auf uns zu, zu dem sich im Orchester wichtige Veränderungen vollzogen haben: die Bildung einer kleineren, vereinheitlichten Gruppe von Musikern, kein Dirigent mehr... » This published version is a translation of Guy's original interview given in English; the original materials are presumed lost, and Maya Homburger described the German translation as 'really quite bad ... really clumsy' (M. Homburger, e-mail to the author 7<sup>th</sup> June 2017). My re-translation attempts to restore some idiomatic usage and re-create a workable English version.

feel that their own personal skills and technical achievements are being 'exploited' to cover for a lauded composer whose work has insufficient substance to stand without their considerable creative refashioning. Thus the composer is forever trying to strike the right balance between establishing a creative identity for him or herself, and perhaps a specific aesthetic for a given piece, while leaving the improvising musician enough freedom to feel able to contribute creatively, without having to 'do the composer's job for them'. Since the particular balancing point for this happy medium varies from individual musician to individual musician, depending on their reading skills, aptitude for dealing with structural questions, sympathy with the aims/interests of the composer or piece in question and many other factors, it is hardly surprising that – in anything but the smallest and most intimate group – there are always some musicians involved who feel uncomfortable with the particular balance of freedom/constraint that has been struck.

Derek Bailey was a member of The London Jazz Composers' Orchestra between 1970 and 1972: this period coincides almost exactly with Bailey's rejection of composition as a possible working method – indeed given the developments in the repertoire of the LJCO during this period, and the difficulties these generated within the ensemble, it's possible that the LJCO experience helped confirm Bailey's increasing distrust of composition. Barry Guy himself has described the music he was writing for the London Jazz Composers' Orchestra during this period as alienating some players' (Guy, quoted in Landholt, 2003), and Bailey seems to have been among the alienated; in 1986 he was to give a suite of solo pieces broadcast on BBC Radio 3's *Jazz Today* the title *The Only Good Jazz Composer is a Dead One*<sup>40</sup>.

Bailey's own archive contains a sketch for a piece headed *Piece for B's B.B.* (probably 'Barry's Big Band' – because of its instrumentation, the LJCO was often referred to as a Big Band during this period). But rather than a genuine idea for a piece, *Piece for B's B.B.* is more likely to be a reflection on Bailey's own frustration as a participant in the ensemble, with the text acting as a cathartic distillation of concerns which had struck Bailey during performance or rehearsal – a practice which seems to have been of value to Bailey, since his archive contains several such notes. However *Piece for B's B.B.* seems particularly waspish – the orchestra was to be conducted by 'R.G.'<sup>41</sup>, who – having failed in his attempt to sustain activity in the orchestra by conducting – launches into an improvised banjo solo. This is enough to reawaken the orchestra, who re-enter and play a long continuous crescendo (perhaps to the point where the banjo is finally drowned out). Exactly what stimulated this surreal sketch will probably never be known, but it provides an interesting echo of Bailey's former life as a commercial musician. His work with British comedy legends Morecambe & Wise is well known, and one could

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<sup>40</sup> Although the bitterness suggested by this title may be deceptive; one of the pieces in the suite is entitled *Duke*, and it's possible that the suite also contained an element of homage to the great (dead) jazz composers of the past.

<sup>41</sup> Although the other initials in the piece – J.M. and C.J. – probably represent Jamie Muir and Christine Jeffrey, Bailey's colleagues in the Music Improvisation Company at this time, I had difficulty identifying the R.G. to whom Bailey might be referring. Neither Barry Guy nor Karen Brookman-Bailey were able to offer any suggestions. However, Tim Fletcher provided the excellent insight that R.G. might be Ron Geesin. Bailey probably had crossed paths with the legendarily eccentric Scottish (to quote Geesin's own website) composer, performer, sound architect, interactive designer, broadcaster, writer and lecturer during the mid 1960s; according to Gavin Bryars, Geesin had played at Greasborough during Bryars' time there and became a personal friend, while both Bryars and Bailey were in Sheffield (see <http://www.gavinbryars.com/journal/mercy-and-grandMar?page=3>, the entry for 17<sup>th</sup> December 2009). Bailey mentions a 1970 Purcell Room (London) concert with Parker, Muir, Tilbury and Geesin in Childs et al. (1982 p. 46). Solo banjo improvisations are one of Geesin's many specialities.

imagine Eric Morecambe as the hapless conductor-cum-banjo soloist (with shades of his famous interpretation of the Grieg Piano Concerto under the baton of André Previn)<sup>42</sup>.

### 3c: *Ping* in Huddersfield & Philadelphia

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*Be again, be again. (Pause.) All that old misery. (Pause.) Once wasn't enough for you. (Beckett, 1965 p. 19; parentheses in original).*

*Each [musician] probably means something a little different. Its [sic] possible, sometimes, to figure some of this out. Particularly if you know them and you know their playing. But to surround it in scholastic arabesques? Forget it. (D. Bailey, 1999a).*

#### **re-opening the can of worms**

Subsequent to the discovery of the range of scores contained in Derek Bailey's personal archive, the question inevitably arose whether it would be possible to transcribe or reconstruct some of the scores and perform them, some 50 years after they were written (and, in the majority of cases, not performed). Even more significant was the question of whether it would be ethically desirable to do so, given Bailey's subsequent rejection of composition as a worthwhile approach to the creation of music<sup>43</sup>; on the same day that I had made my first score discoveries in Derek's archive, I also found a scrap of paper in his inimitable handwriting with an admonition from beyond the grave: 'composition is like believing that the important thing about whisky is the shape of the bottle'<sup>44</sup>.

Such scathing put-downs notwithstanding, I felt that while the historical interest of these compositions might justify possible performance, and that the substantial and accomplished nature of some of the solo guitar pieces and *Ping* meant that they deserved to be heard as stimulating compositions in their own right. *Ping* seemed to explore a structural idea which was both ahead of its time and intensely composerly, and would have surely merited performance whoever its composer might have been. However, I was acutely aware that such ideas might, for some improvisers, seem disrespectful, inappropriate or even traitorous, given what Bailey's rejection of composition had come to mean for so many musicians of subsequent generations. The journey involved in bringing some of these compositions to performance in Huddersfield in 2015 (and Philadelphia in 2016)<sup>45</sup> was a relatively long one, with many cautious and occasionally prickly interactions with musicians who cared deeply about Bailey's legacy, but which shed much light on the political and aesthetic issues surrounding composition

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<sup>42</sup> At one point in this legendary sketch, from the 1971 Morecambe & Wise Christmas Special, Eric Morecambe advises Previn that he should ensure that the second movement of the Grieg is 'not too heavy on the banjos' (broadcast BBC1, 25<sup>th</sup> December 1971).

<sup>43</sup> Although as discussed on page 158, later in his life Bailey came to see composition – by others – as a potentially valuable method of generated unknown material with which he could interact.

<sup>44</sup> A note in a spiral-bound reporter's notebook in the Bailey archive. The note had subsequently been amended by Bailey to read 'a preoccupation with form in music is like believing...'

<sup>45</sup> Three performances took place as part of hcmf// 2015; *Plus-Minus* on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2015, *Ping* (plus Rutherford's *Quasi-mode III* and *Lo's Tunes* by Coxhill/Hobbs) on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2015 and Bailey's nos. 10, 18-20 and 23 for solo guitar on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2015. *Ping*, *Plus-Minus* and *Quasi-mode III* were subsequently performed in Philadelphia on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2016, and the Bailey solo pieces on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

and improvisation; issues which continue to generate suspicion and frustration half a century after these particular pieces were composed. For this reason I have documented the relevant discussions, disagreements and observations which arose during the process of preparing the scores, and the rehearsal and concert periods.

My initial soundings about how improvisers would respond to the resurrection of lost Bailey compositions were taken at Downs Road<sup>46</sup>, in discussions with three people who knew Bailey and his music particularly well: Karen Brookman, Alex Ward and John Butcher. Brookman and Ward were cautious about the prospect of making the pieces public, Brookman in particular citing understandable concerns about possible effects on Bailey's reputation and legacy, particularly should the compositions be felt to be less compelling than his subsequent work in free improvisation. Butcher's initial reaction was more directly negative, representative of a first response typical among some improvisers. John felt that to perform such pieces would indeed be a betrayal of Derek's legacy, and that Bailey himself would have, in Butcher's words, 'absolutely hated the idea'. While I understand this kind of response perfectly, it plays too neatly into a retrospectively compartmentalised tidying-up of Bailey's art, forgetting that during his lifetime Bailey remained consistently unpredictable, contrary and provocative. As has already been discussed, his relationship with composition remained ambivalent throughout his career.

These initial discussions ended with a general agreement that were such a project to be undertaken, the contextualisation of the performances would be absolutely crucial; my feeling was that there was absolutely no interest in presenting Bailey's compositions simply as further examples of new (or in this case newly discovered) composed music. Half a century of developments in contemporary composed music meant that Bailey's scores might now seem comparatively traditional or even simplistic to those embedded deep within the language of 21<sup>st</sup> century composition<sup>47</sup>; in addition to which, Bailey's composition work is clearly merely a step in his musical development, and the pieces need to be understood as such rather than exemplars of poetic output. We all agreed that any presentation of such pieces needed to make this context perfectly clear<sup>48</sup>.

A further point I felt strongly about was that the ensemble pieces should be performed by improvisers, rather than an experienced ensemble of notation specialists. As with most Afrological composition, the compelling aspect of realising the scores would be hearing the notated ideas being transformed by strong and creative individual voices, burgeoning with invention – these were the kind of performers for whom these pieces had been written. This final ingredient of collaboration-in-performance is also what differentiates such pieces from

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<sup>46</sup> Bailey never allowed any opportunity to plug the Incus mail order catalogue to pass unacted upon, and thus 14 Downs Road (in Hackney, London) has been described as the most famous address in improvised music. It was Bailey's home for several decades, and the headquarters of Incus Records and Compatible Recording and Publishing Ltd. It is still the home of Derek's widow Karen, who continues to run Incus and CRaP from the address.

<sup>47</sup> Indeed, with the exception of *Ping* and the late solo version of *Bits*, the interest in precise manipulation of conventionally articulated pitches would possibly have seemed *passé* even at the time of the composition of these pieces; but to criticise the scored pieces (as opposed to the text ones) for being neither hyper-complex nor explicitly 'experimental' is to miss the point of why they were written – they were experiments in pitch manipulation, and part of Bailey's explicit attempts to de-idiomaticise his relationship to the semantic elements of music. The relatively simplicity of the scores' notation almost certainly stems from the tradition in which Bailey had learned his craft; in the orature-based tradition of 'practical' music-making, scores are written in order to be played (and heard), rather than to be looked at, studied and analysed.

<sup>48</sup> Having said which, personally I would argue that the *Three Pieces for Guitar* and *Ping* are intriguing pieces by anyone's standards, and that *Ping* in particular has several conceptual aspects of significant interest.

most of the Eurological composition tradition, and would mean that such performances would not sit easily within possible comparisons with poiesis-orientated 21<sup>st</sup> century Eurological notation.

### **Huddersfield**

When the possibility arose of forming a purpose-built improvisers ensemble to perform some of the Bailey pieces at the 2015 Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival – along with my reconstruction of Paul Rutherford's *Quasi-mode III* and pieces by John Stevens and Lol Coxhill – the importance of the contextualisation discussed above became even more apparent. HCMF has been the UK's primary showcase of contemporary classical music for 40 years and has historically been focussed on the mainstream avant-garde (oxymoron intended), although since his appointment as artistic director in 2006 Graham McKenzie has persistently expanded the festival's remit, introducing a wide range of both improvisers and experimentalists into his programming. Nevertheless, it remains a festival substantially underwritten by publishers, educational institutions and cultural agencies, and in several ways represents The Establishment against which Bailey and many of his colleagues were reacting in the 1960s and 70s<sup>49</sup>.

Once the dates for the 2015 Huddersfield performances were established (there were to be two concerts, one of ensemble works by Bailey, Rutherford, Stevens and Coxhill, and one of solo and duo guitar music by Bailey, including his version of *Plus-Minus*), it became clear that John Butcher would not be able to participate due to pre-existing commitments. After considerable reflection I invited Trevor Watts to participate in the ensemble concert; although the original concept had involved musicians of a younger generation (but who had all worked with Bailey) interpreting the 1960s compositions in a way informed by their own subsequent navigations through conflicting improvisation/composition demands, the involvement of Trevor introduced a greater level of vertical continuity to the generational relations, from Watts (only 9 years younger than Bailey himself, and a key member of the group of 'founding fathers' of British improvised music), through to Alex Ward (who was born in 1974, and first played with Bailey in 1986). Alongside Watts, Ward and myself, other participants in *Ping* were the improvising trombonist, composer and sound artist Robert Jarvis, and the master percussionist Mark Sanders; the speaking part was realised by Franc Chamberlain, Professor of Drama, Theatre and Performance at the University of Huddersfield. For Rutherford's *Quasi-mode III*, the five musicians were joined by improviser and composer Chris Burn on piano and improvising 'cellist Hannah Marshall, along with a group of 5 student brass players from the University. The Bailey guitar pieces were played by Alex Ward and Diego Castro Magaš, at that time a postgraduate at Huddersfield.

In exploratory discussions with the participating musicians prior to rehearsals beginning, three important questions were raised by them. Firstly, do the qualities of the compositions in question actually merit the time and effort involved in restoration, reconstruction or realisation and subsequent performance? Secondly, by contributing to such an exercise are participants not reinforcing the poietic museum-culture of a composition festival, particularly when all the composers programmed are no longer living? Is this not the antithesis of the

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<sup>49</sup> There was a precedent for Bailey's music at Huddersfield, but it was not necessarily an auspicious one. Bailey had played a late-night trio concert with Thebe Lipere and Louis Moholo as part of the 1991 HCMF, which (according to Watson (2004 p. 269)) was relatively sparsely attended and typically disconcerting; unfortunately, the festival's awkward attempt to 'sell' Bailey's performance ('A great way to start the weekend!') has also become part of the improvised music legendarium.

activity living creative artists should be undertaking? Finally, what is the motivation for such a project? Is it driven by genuine artistic enquiry, or by the eye-catching saleability of a contemporary music 'event'?

Sensing the importance of such incisive questions to sceptical musicians (and understanding that, if I was confident in the work I was proposing we should undertake, I should be able to address them head on) I set out to reply to these questions as frankly as I could. Reference having been made by the musicians to the variable quality of certain compositions for improvisers, I explained that *Ping* was the compositional meat around which the Huddersfield programme was built, and that without this piece I doubted very much that we would be proposing such a concert at a festival like HCMF. I pointed out that my opinion *Ping* was a piece of great compositional interest, even disregarding the fact that its composer was Derek Bailey. The piece shows Bailey moving on from his earlier Webern-esque pieces to something much more radical and contemporary – and even today the character of this piece provides thought-provoking challenges for both performer and listener. As a result I didn't feel we should be shy about presenting it in a forum like HCMF. We all agreed the contextualisation would be very important – there should be no attempt to 'rehabilitate' Bailey as a composer.

Addressing some participants' criticism of the lack of current work in the proposed programme, I explained that there had originally been a plan for a series of three concerts, combining archive and current examples of composition for improvisers with examples of 21<sup>st</sup>-century Free Improvisation practice, but the Festival had been unable to support this more inclusive project, and only the 'historic' element had been retained. This fact notwithstanding, the proposed concert was indeed motivated by a genuine desire to respectfully explore the work of the improvising composers represented, within a context which reflected their changing relationship with the ideas of composition and repertoire. It was initially proposed that these issues would be explored during a public lecture/discussion as part of the festival programme; unfortunately this idea was never realised, although some of the presentation material was retained for the festival programme booklet (see page 134).

### ***an inspector calls: re-enter the 'chief of police'***

My own role in the proposed performance of *Ping* was to serve as another focal point of various sensitive questions surrounding the ethics of collaborative performance. Bailey's original score specifies that the three notation-reading musicians (soprano saxophone, trombone and guitar) should be synchronised by cues given by the guitarist – such cues are indicated by 'D.B.' in the manuscript score. However, Bailey's notes reveal that the degree of synchronisation between these three musicians, the degree of synchronisation of them with the spoken text, and how this might be achieved, was something he was uncertain about. It seems very likely that, having written a score of remarkable intricacy and a jigsaw-like interlocking nature, realising it with the degree of precision that its text seems to require was incompatible with the drive towards non-hierarchical freedom which was motivating the players for whom he had written it<sup>50</sup>. Bailey muses the possibility of full synchronisation, approximate synchronisation (re-synching at the beginning of each new section of music), or no synchronisation,

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<sup>50</sup> Given the speed at which improvised music was developing in London during 1966-67, and the amount of time necessary to prepare a score such as *Ping*, it is fascinating to consider just how much attitudes might have changed between Bailey starting the composition and his presentation of the finished score to his colleagues. Referring to the musicians' changing relationship to the *Ping* score, Evan Parker notes that 'things were moving very fast [sic] at that point' (E. Parker, e-mail to the author, 6<sup>th</sup> July 2017).

but in the materials so far found gives no definitive answer. As I worked on preparing a performing version from Bailey's manuscript, it became clear to me that the cellular motif-based construction of the score (each word or phrase of the text has a corresponding musical gesture) strongly implies a high degree of synchronisation between the players, since the complex overlaying and interleaving of gestures is often shared between two or more players, and the very precise effects Bailey notates would be lost were the musicians not synchronised. This is not to say that a less precisely-synchronised (or even unsynchronised) version of the piece would not be possible, but such a version would seem likely to lose or at least dilute those aspects of the score which are the most interesting and original.



Figure 14: the opening of *Ping*; Bailey's manuscript score

Apart from these more abstract arguments, the fact that the score changes metre frequently but irregularly, contains occasional dramatic changes of tempo, and disconcertingly shifts repeated motifs into different positions in the bar means that for any musicians playing such a text an external coordinating force would be helpful – but for a group of improvisers who are not primarily notation interpreters it is probably essential. Thus I decided that we would incorporate a conductor into the ensemble, although it seemed important that this should be done without any hierarchical implications; many experimentalists and improvisers still see the (traditional orchestral) conductor as akin to a secret policeman serving a repressive regime, as in Bailey's own 'chief of police' passage quoted from Canetti (D. Bailey, 1992 p. 20). The first step in the deconsecration of the conductor's role was the decision not to invite a 'specialist' conductor to work with the ensemble. I resolved to conduct the performance myself; although I was responsible for realising the performing version and

organising the performance, I was essentially a colleague of the musicians involved rather than any kind of 'hierarchically elevated being', having worked collaboratively with some of them over several decades. The fact that I am not principally a conductor, and had only previously conducted my own works (and then only the simpler elements), meant that the musicians also knew that – like them – I was operating outside my normal field of activity, and that we could make mistakes and explore and clarify the text together during the rehearsal process, rather than my policing the accurate realisation of a fixed truth. Certainly undertaking the conducting of such a relatively involved score at a major new music festival was a significant challenge for me, and such concerns doubtless matched those of the musicians who had agreed to participate in the performance.

I also wanted to use this opportunity to explore a further more subtle dissolution of the conductor's perceived authority over the musicians. Drawing on several suggestions of possible performance variants made in Bailey's composition notes, I decided to explore various degrees of conductedness; thus the version of the work presented in Huddersfield and Philadelphia consists of an initial 'free presentation' of motivic information by the musicians, cued but not directed by the conductor. After the passage through the main notated score, during which the musicians are coordinated traditionally by the conductor (except for the moments where time is frozen by the Ping and percussion interjections), a third section was designed to explore the gradual dissolution (even inversion) of the directing relationship between conductor and musicians (see page 132).

In practice, the presence of a conductor did not generate too many political or ethical conflicts during the preparation for the Huddersfield performance; once the musicians started working on the score, I suspect they realised only too quickly that attempting such notation without a visual coordination aid may have been prohibitively time-consuming. Although we never achieved the degree of notation-realisation accuracy that one might expect from a conventional contemporary notated music ensemble, my conducting allowed the musicians to navigate the complex score without having to sacrifice to too great an extent their individual voices as improvisers, and the characteristic personal inflections which such players bring to notation; the reason for playing this music with improvisers was to realise this synthesis, which then also allows the mutation or evolution of these voices through the improvised sections (rather than approaching such sections with a notably different set of priorities and instrumental characteristics). There was only one moment during the main score rehearsal which reflected some of the possible tensions which might have arisen; having adopted an extremely clear and precise (almost mechanical) approach to timekeeping and cuing during the rehearsal period, during the dress rehearsal I had hoped to make some minor developments in terms of slight flexibility of tempo, more expressive and fluid conducting, etc. In retrospect this might have been a mistake, since the score is itself quite dispassionate, almost mechanical – but I did not get chance to explore this possibility and find out. After a few bars, Trevor Watts stopped the ensemble and asked me if I could just go back to keeping time – my conducting had become too 'flowery'; although this may have been partly a practical question, I felt that I was also being asked not to move too far towards another, inappropriate, paradigm – that of the orchestral conductor whose main role is to (appear to) shape the expressive content of the music, the higher matter, while the musicians deal with the nuts and bolts of counting, keeping time, etc. Such a world was a paradigm which Watts at least did not wish to be associated with, and from a purely musical point of view he was probably right to restrain my attempts to 'improve' my conducting. However, it did strike me that it seemed the presumed hierarchy had now effectively been inverted; having spent several rehearsals encouraging the musicians to work through the mechanics of the score so they could bring to it their own idiosyncratic voices and modifications, I as conductor was not to be allowed to share this same freedom.

## Philadelphia

For various practical reasons (unrelated to musical issues), the ensemble for the Philadelphia performance of *Ping* was slightly different, with Alex Ward, Mark Sanders and myself being joined by John Butcher on saxophone and Americans Dan Blacksberg on trombone and Matthew Landis as speaker. Like many technically proficient musicians of a younger generation, Blacksberg was markedly relaxed about the prospect of combining the realisation of notation with personal improvised input; as he had no direct connection (apart from as a listener and appreciator) with the 'first generation' British improvisers, he also seemed less concerned by possible contradictions between the work we were undertaking and their subsequent careers or manifestos, either explicit or implicit. John Butcher on the other hand, despite being involved in the project from the very earliest stages of its development, still seemed to be greatly concerned by the validity of what we were trying to do; these concerns, when combined with the pressures of international travel, a punishing rehearsal schedule and administrative stresses, led to some tense moments during rehearsal. As frustration mounted (and good humour evaporated), John suggested that *Ping* was perhaps nothing more than a musical booby-trap left by Bailey for those Eurological imperialists who insisted on asserting a paper trail for even the most orature-orientated artists, and that Bailey himself would find our attempts to bring to life his great 'lost score' both hilarious and disappointingly typical of the hagiographical approach of The Establishment<sup>51</sup>. Such criticisms were of course sufficiently pertinent that they had to be discussed. Eventually we decided to continue with the project (from a purely practical point of view it would have been difficult to do otherwise), but I suspect that John's scepticism did not entirely evaporate.

The proposed third section of *Ping*, in which I hoped to blur and dismantle relationships of direction and compliance, proved more difficult to realise than foreseen. Rather than simply playing through the score and then freely improvising, I had proposed to the musicians that we could explore a transition from a notation-playing conducted state to free improvisation in a way which I felt might allow us to blur the familiar binary approach of notated/improvised. In practical terms this would involve a gradual 'cross-fade' in the conductor's direction of the ensemble, from initially directing almost all activity in the main score, through to being merely one actor among equals in the improvised collective realisation of the third part (even perhaps less-than-equal, since the disenfranchised conductor would have no means of generating sonic activity except through the temporary generosity of a given musician's compliance). This was to be effected by the musicians continuing to play a virtual 'score' after the end of the notated material, using (freely chosen) remembered or reiterated passages, but played more freely, without predetermined synchronisation with others (who may have chosen to play different passages), and without a binding relationship to the conductor, who would continue to conduct similarly remembered or reiterated passages. Although this may *sound* complicated, we were simply playing our memories of the score (or busking hypothetical missing passages), using our improvisational skills to supply score-idiomatic material to fill in a gap in the available text – something Bailey saw as a fundamental and invaluable use of improvisation in idiomatic music (see the quote on page 72). My intention was that this kind of playing would gradually morph through a still relatively hierarchical conduction model to a free improvisation in

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<sup>51</sup> Writing to Ben Watson in 1999, Bailey sent a digital audio tape of the surviving 1960s rehearsal recording of the Joseph Holbrooke Trio, threatening it would be 'accompanied by 44 leather-bound, gold embossed volumes containing the composer's scores, sketches, notes, diary, Nazi Party membership card plus fine reproductions of his toupee and false teeth. Detailed descriptions of his sexual proclivities with drawings and x-rays available on request' (D. Bailey, 1999b).

which the conductor had no more or less authority than any other performer, to be ignored, responded to or contradicted as the musicians saw fit.

A primary aim in structuring the third part of the piece in this way was to avoid the all-too-obvious disjunct which is often observed when improvisers (or notation players) move from notation-dominated material to improvisation, or vice versa. This disjunct is often significant and usually both audibly and (in performance) visually apparent; whilst this is not problematic *per se*, and may be treated as a matter for investigation in its own right, in many performances combining improvisation and composition such transitions remain unconvincing or inorganic. It was this awkwardness which I particularly wanted to avoid, with its particular facilitating of comparative assessment of the perceived 'success' or 'failure' of distinct composed and improvised elements in relation to each other.

Ironically, but perhaps not surprisingly, the best realisations of this idea came when the musicians were still a little uncertain about exactly what was going on. In Huddersfield, our first two or three run-throughs of the entire piece were (at least in this respect) exemplary; the musicians were still sufficiently unsure of their relationship to the notation that when I continued to conduct when they thought they had played everything written, they hedged their bets somewhat by playing a bit more of the same, whilst focussing on trying to work out where in the score they should have been. Of course, this degree of uncertainty varied from musician to musician, but the destabilising effect of doubt led to some excellent 'halfway-house' playing; Mark Sanders, whose part had no musical notation to guide him, believed that we were continuing to play the score, and that he had miscounted his cues. In fact, we were improvising a continuation of the score, in a fascinating way.

Unfortunately (at least from the point of view of the objectives stated above), these early rehearsals provided the high water mark for the realisation of this idea. Once the musicians became more familiar with the score, and understood what was happening after the notation had finished, a certain amount of consequent relaxation undermined the intensity which this section had previously displayed; as they realised they had not lost their place in the notation, and actually were free to play the notation or not, their inclination to continue with Bailey's text seemed to decline. The model which ultimately prevailed in Huddersfield resembled (perhaps too closely) the 'improvisation as reward' approach, familiar from much modern jazz, or pieces like Rzewski's *Moutons de Panurge*; once the musicians had discharged their 'obligation' of playing the fixed notation, they rewarded themselves by doing what they would perhaps have preferred to do all along – improvising freely. Of course, the degree to which this tendency was evident varied from musician to musician, and from occasion to occasion, but the tendency as a whole was unignorable.

In Philadelphia, this part of the process proved more satisfying. John Butcher's ambivalent relationship with the idea of realising the text, and his discomfort with the straightjacket it suggested, seemed to sensitise him (and everyone else) to the delicate and fascinating relationship between the notation and the (quasi-)improvised sections. Ironically (or perhaps not, since this might have been part of the same process), the actual performance of the score in Philadelphia was somewhat less accurate, but the moments of destabilisation which resulted actually served to more effectively weld together the different sections of the piece. The musicians seemed to appreciate my intense effort to help us all navigate successfully through the score; when John

commented to me after the performance 'that was some pretty good conducting Simon<sup>52</sup>, I believe it was said without irony, but rather to celebrate the fact that we'd got through it together as a *team*.



**Figure 15: a message from beyond? A newspaper found tucked behind a urinal mechanism in the gents' lavatory at FringeArts, Philadelphia, during afternoon preparations on the day of the first U.S. performance of *Ping*. The paper is *The New York Times* of 19/6/16 (the performance was on 24/6/16); the article on Charna Halpern (improvised theatre and comedy pioneer) is headlined 'Improv's Hidden Architect'**

The other important element identified in initial discussions, that of the contextualisation of these performances, also proved to be problematic. The original plan in Huddersfield had been an ensemble concert in which the works by Bailey, Rutherford, Stevens and Coxhill were to be played in an order which made both musical and musicological sense, to an audience who were there to hear a concert of composed works by first generation British improvisers (without these being directly programmed against Eurological 'New Music'), in an atmosphere which would allow some presentation of the works and their background. Due to factors outside the control of the ensemble, we were presented late in the day with a *fait accompli*, whereby the Stevens piece was jettisoned and what remained of the proposed concert was interleaved with a portfolio of works by other featured composers at that year's festival, performed by a range of musicians spread across differing performing areas. After much discussion and expressions of frustration, the ensemble decided to proceed with the revised plan, although certainly with regret regarding the dilution of the original distilled and considered proposal. In the event, there arose an opportunity to present at least a précis of points from the abandoned lecture, in the form of a biographical essay on Bailey for the hcmf// programme book; this text and the intention behind it was, I know, much appreciated by Derek's widow and several of those close to his work. The text is reproduced as appendix 7 (page 217).

Fortunately, the issue of contextualisation was much more satisfactorily dealt with for the Philadelphia

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<sup>52</sup> Or words to that effect; at that point in the evening I was no longer taking notes.

performances. The programme for the ensemble concert (*Quasi-mode III, Plus-Minus, Ping*) was decided by the musicians, with the whole concert being devoted to the notation work of Rutherford and Bailey (the concert was given in a superb venue, to a large and appreciative audience). Furthermore, the lecture originally proposed for Huddersfield was given, illustrated with performances of Bailey's solo guitar pieces by Alex Ward and Nick Millevoi.

A final important observation on the project would be that Paul Rutherford's *Quasi-mode III* did not present ideological or philosophical difficulties similar to those raised by *Ping*; the Rutherford piece is in many ways more conventional, with a quasi-traditional approach to the relationship between improvisation and structure, and a much less experimental approach to form. This stylistic familiarity led the musicians to feel much more at ease in performing the piece, whatever their individual feelings about its compositional merits might have been. Interestingly, many of the listeners who spoke to me after the performances felt much more satisfied with the conventional freedoms of the Rutherford piece, and admittedly these did allow us to make an aurally impressive sound with relatively little aesthetic controversy; however, this only confirms the significance of *Ping*, which manages to be both (superficially) more conventional and yet fundamentally challenging to our preconceptions of what might constitute 'good' or 'successful' music.

While the compositional material and approaches involved in the case studies examined in Section 3b vary greatly, the complexities and difficulties of working with improvised material within such contexts is common to them all. My experience with the Bailey works discussed in Section 3c confirms that, even when working with an extremely sympathetic group of performers, difficult questions of aesthetic intention and creative liberty can arise. When these potentially destabilising concerns are combined with some of the practical issues discussed in Section 3a, it is clear that composition for improvisers remains contradictory, and replete with pitfalls. In Section 4 I will address the sources of this underlying tension, and consider why such apparently compromised activity may nevertheless be of vital importance.



## section 4: framed or edgeless?

### 4a: compositional poiesis and the signifying frame

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*That is, you know, your cultural attitude towards improvisation. It's a denial ... it's a denial of the ability to develop using a system that has not received an academic recognition (Cecil Taylor, in Bailey et al., 1998 p. 7).*

*Classical music is a refuge for those who think they don't get the world they deserve (D. Bailey, n.d.-b).*

John Butcher has written that 'big ideas are of little value in improvisation' (Butcher, 2011 para. 3), and this compact formulation is the clue to the perhaps inevitable parting of the ways of the British experimental composition and free improvisation communities in the early 1970s. I have already discussed above the remorseless need for jettisonability which is a constant factor when composing for improvisers (see page 94), and I believe this is what Butcher is alluding to; any compositional idea, no matter how astonishing or diligently prepared, can be rendered redundant by unforeseeable elements in the development of an improvisation, and if the composition is to retain true elasticity that idea will need to be relinquished and replaced in real time by something more appropriate. This is not, of course, the mechanism by which most compositions arrive at their final version; indeed, much composition starts from the basis of wishing to investigate, explore or exploit a given conceptual or technical idea, and it is the particular form this exploration takes which gives a specific identity to the individual composition, in contrast to similar ones by the same (or different) composer(s). This conceptual field of action is often very difficult to extricate from the *déroulement* of the piece, since it forms its very *raison d'être*.

In his comment Butcher identifies the relentless emphasis (at least in a certain kind of improvisation) on development, investigation and responsiveness, rather than over-arching concepts. Butcher himself doesn't explicitly address the question of to which kinds of improvisation his observation might apply; like many improvised music practitioners he assumes somatic/dialogic improvisation as the default operational state – a presumption which I would tend to share. However, it is worth noting that in what I have defined as poietic improvisation structuring concepts of a 'compositional' nature may well be more employable. It could be argued that the specific soundworld discovered, identified and converted into repertoire by some established improvising groups is a long-form compositional act with some degree of collectivity. But Butcher's assertion that the ad hoc cut and thrust of fleeting and sometimes provocative somatic groupings has little time for the making of conceptual points seems difficult to deny.

Summarising Cardew's diagnosis of musical 'commodity fetishism', John Tilbury observes that musical institutions 'need to create super-objects, which [can] then be packaged and sold on the international music market' (Tilbury, in Regniez, 1986 c.17m). If improvisation effectively devalues the conceptual currency which underpins the Eurological composition market, it similarly undermines the evolutionary historical overview so beloved of the Western European concert tradition<sup>1</sup>. As John Corbett observes 'In improvisation ... history is ... liberated from the notion of a "final state" (utopia) implied by linear evolution; there are no ends to the means'

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<sup>1</sup> At least until the arrival of post-modernism.

(Corbett, quoted in Scott, 1991 p. 190). The compositional search for the 'best' answer to a particular aesthetic problem is a driving mechanism for many composers, and in the standard model of such music the composer often makes several investigations of the same fundamental compositional questions, with a strong implication that throughout the career of a composer one might expect to see such questions and issues addressed with increasing confidence and even mastery, leading up to 'the masterpiece(s)'; after there may be a falling off of immediacy, or in some cases an exploration of differing fundamental questions.

Improvised music has an uneasy relationship to the concept of progressional aesthetic development; while every musician (probably) hopes that their understanding of what they are doing when they improvise will become more focussed with continued exposure to improvisation praxis, and that their understanding of the possibilities of their chosen sound-producing device will become richer with increasing experience, the fundamental importance of the *ad hoc* to a certain concept of improvisation regularly subverts these aspirations. As will have been clear from earlier sections of this text, the idea of taking a given thing and improving or perfecting it is anathema to many who relish the process of improvisation rather than its outcomes.

Derek Bailey referred to improvisers overly concerned with sonic outcomes as 'demonstrators' – their main interest in improvisation was as a method of demonstrating something other than the fascination of the process itself. Despite frequently playing solo himself, Bailey was aware that solo improvisation was particularly prone to this kind of 'demonstration' approach:

The reason why solo performances are of (limited interest) from an improvisation point of view, whatever their other virtues, is that by their nature they reflect what might be considered, in improvisation terms, matters of secondary importance: language, uniform intention, identity, imposed form, an overall consistency of style. It is in its solo form that free improvisation most clearly approaches the characteristics which are admired in non-improvised musics (D. Bailey, n.d.-g p. 6).

In other words, using the terms of Michael Pelz-Sherman (Stenström, 2009 p. 201), while free improvisation in general tends to be heteroriginal, the nature of solo improvisation renders it dangerously close to the monoriginality of composition.

One of the factors that may have fuelled Bailey's bitter and irrevocable split with Evan Parker was the latter's increasing interest in playing solo; in the mid-1970s Parker's solo soprano saxophone performances and recordings generated a huge amount of attention, much of it marvelling at the player's undeniably astonishing technique. But there was a suspicion among some colleagues that it was the playing technique(s) that had somehow begun to lead the development of the music, rather than the improvisational praxis. John Stevens observed that

Evan's solo playing isn't the most important aspect of free music; it's like an art object, a piece of sculpture which he shows off and which you can appreciate, and it shows you his amazing applied creativity towards the potential of an instrument, which is all very creditable, and it can help something he might do in a collective because people know he can 'officially' play the instrument in an amazing way. But, to me, it isn't that important as a statement politically. When Evan goes out to play his solo saxophone he knows what it's going to be like, he knows where he's going to go and adds more and more bits in it or leaves bits out.... I'm not attacking Evan, because I love him, but the thing he's getting attention for is not the most

valuable bit (Stevens, quoted in Scott, 1991 p. 255).

In conversation with Henry Kaiser, Bailey was explicit; he didn't see solo improvisation as a means to develop a refined, idiosyncratic solo musical language that would serve as an end in itself:

that is not what I'm interested in in playing solo. I am not interested in demonstrating the way I play the instrument ... That side of solo playing doesn't interest me at all ... I consider if I've finished playing and I feel I've done only that, then I think I've played very badly. And it can happen that way, unfortunately (Bailey, quoted in Kaiser, 1975 p. 5).

For Bailey, solo playing was almost a technical exercise – a half-way house between practising (an activity he greatly relished) and the full improvisational potential of group playing. He used solo playing to develop the elements of his vocabulary, but saw group playing as the ultimate usage goal of this vocabulary. As he told John Eyles 'I think playing solo is a second rate activity. For me playing is about playing with other people' (Bailey, quoted in Eyles, 2005 p. 7 para. 9); however, certain characteristics of solo improvisation made it a particularly useful method of refining both grammar and vocabulary. Bailey describes the 'enormous reduction in outside information' which playing solo implies as creating 'increased responsibility for overall continuity', which in turn demands 'a more comprehensive and complete improvising language' (D. Bailey, 1980 p. 127). Thus Bailey would assert that his own solo playing was *not* about demonstrating his instrumental technique, but served to develop his ability and linguistic resources for improvisation in general, and group playing in particular. Nevertheless, musicians and critics have pointed out that Bailey's solo recordings and performances – particularly in later years – become as individually expressive, technically exhilarating and inescapably idiosyncratic as anything produced by his colleagues.

Evan Parker has often implied an inverse set of priorities to those of Bailey, emphasising the musical outcomes which improvisation allowed him to achieve as much as the process itself. As Parker told Richard Scott

I'm interested in improvisation because it leads me towards the realisation of a particular kind of music, not interested in music because it allows me to improvise ... The final priority is a sense of music, fulfilled, complete music, that's what I'm looking for' (Parker, quoted in Scott, 1991 pp. 266, 273).

This perhaps is the key to the divergence in the aesthetic aspirations of the two men; such a statement seems to indicate a direct contradiction of the values Bailey espoused. Despite the vituperation prompted by the personal aspects of this split, the truth may be that artistic practice needs both approaches – the praxis-based one which seemed to steer Bailey's career, and the more poetic one which the Parker quote suggests (although in fact Parker has always remained an essentially praxis-orientated somatic improviser).

Despite the constraints on traditional conceptual compositional thinking which result from Butcher's 'big idea' problem, creative musicians have continued to explore the interfacing of at least partially specific pre-determination with 'non-idiomatic' improvisational praxis. The inherent determinism of the concept of composition makes the principle of non-idiomaticity impractical or even unrealisable in composition, and as a consequence composition can only effectively deal with improvised activity once that activity has submitted to a process of idiomaticisation. It could be argued that the self-styled 'non-idiomatic' improvisation pioneered by certain musicians in the 1960s became an idiom in its own right relatively quickly, with a stylistic vocabulary which can

be easily replicated in a superficial manner in much the same way as many other idioms. Along the way the music sheltering under the umbrella term 'free improvisation' has become less provocative and unpredictable, and hence more amenable to compositional contextualisation. Certainly, like serial composition, indeterminacy and *musique concrète*, the perturbing innovations of the 60s improvisers have become part of a post-modern or transmodernist stylistic vocabulary which can be called upon self-consciously, or with varying degrees of passion or commitment<sup>2</sup>. However, even if the language through which it is often expressed no longer seems revolutionary, the *process* of improvisation, and the alternative non-hierarchical approach which it promises, remains vital.

#### 4b: demarcating the edgeless

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*There is no thing! And nobody must make any thing out of it as well. There's no thing, there's nothing! Just play! (Louis Moholo-Moholo, quoted in Scott, 1991 p. 454).*

*[Benedetti] I mean, I can't play it. I've practised it this morning... [Marsalis] I'm sorry, there's no 'it'. This is just... this is just notes (Eley, 2016 4m10s).*

Why should it be – after 50 years of tentative toe-dipping, exchanges of (semi-)friendly fire and occasional attempts at downright annexation – that the domains of the improviser and the composer still so often seem to be separated by a no-man's land encrusted with aesthetic and political barbed wire? If the drive toward liberation in the later 1960s – liberation from previously immutable social constraints, encrusted modes of political operation, restricted cultural aspiration, inherited deference – was sufficiently strong to forge temporary unity between disparate groups of (generally) young people in Western Europe and North America, it seems it was nevertheless either insufficiently strong or insufficiently durable to overcome the implacable mutual suspicion of composition poiesis and improvisation praxis.

If, as discussed on page 98, the creation of a composition-performance environment can be dependent on such intangible (and sometimes imperceptible) matters as simply the agreed designation of a specific time period which will constitute the performance of a composition, then this need to identify a given time period as that which constitutes 'the work' is possibly the only characteristic that links composers of all persuasions. In other words, the only essential pre-requisite for a composition's existence is that something (which could be anything) is identified as a composition. Without this identification, we cannot guarantee to understand the activity/event/object (especially those on the fringes of conventional practice) as being a composition, rather than simply an undifferentiated activity, event or object<sup>3</sup>. This need for 'framing', for explicit identification of the

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<sup>2</sup> While I am not necessarily implying direct influence, the *musique concrète instrumentale* pioneered by Helmut Lachenmann brings many of the extended and unconventional techniques also explored by improvisers into the concert hall. The music of subsequent composers not necessarily considered experimentalists (for example Rebecca Saunders) frequently incorporates such techniques, sometimes in a heuristic soundworld reminiscent of improvisation. The post-Ferneyhough group of composers exploring the disassociation of the physical actions of instrumentalism from the resulting sonic production (Aaron Cassidy, Wieland Hoban, Evan Johnson, Vadim Karassikov, Joan Arnau Pàmies et al.) have, through 'decoupling', also created sonic environments highly reminiscent of improvised music.

<sup>3</sup> A direct assault on this seeming inevitability is presented by one of Tony Conrad's 1961 Word Scores: 'Piece: To perform  
[footnote continues on next page]

existence of the activity, is implicit in composition (and is particularly necessary in composition involving chance processes or non-intention); however, it runs directly counter to one of the life-springs of certain kinds of improvisation praxis – the ‘un-framing’ of the sacred Art Space, and the ability of improvisation (and other ‘unframing’ strategies) to infuse the musician’s whole existence with creativity, rather than the designated moments of artistic practice. As David Toop has suggested

to play as an improviser opens up a life of potential. To think in terms of a continuum of playing – a practice not divided up into professional engagements, practice and the rest of life – is to generate momentum, to link up the most humble, abject experience with those fleeting moments with an audience. (Toop, 2016 p. 130)

This is not to suggest that improvisers do not consciously practice technique, or do not perform in public; nor is it to suggest that notation-interpreting musicians are only creative when performing or practising others’ notation. What I believe Toop means (and certainly what I mean) is that, given that most people live most of their lives in an essentially improvised fashion, the improvisational praxis is much better placed to form a continuity with daily life rather than separating off from it. Stephen Nachmanovitch makes a similar observation; he notes that, for him, ‘improvisation extended the scope and relevance of music making until the artificial boundary between life and art disintegrated’ (Nachmanovitch, 1990 p. 6). While the notation player can stop playing notation (and return to ‘real life’ and its necessary improvisations), the improviser almost never stops improvising. This observation does not have implications regarding the comparative value, validity, justness or necessity of the two practices; both are necessary, for reasons explored below.

A reluctance to institute a divide between life and creative action may explain why many improvisers resist the ‘framing’ effect of high art, not only with regard to the specific frame of the composition, but also other signs of ‘specialness’ associated with artistic performance. In the words of Yasunao Tone ‘the work is always unfinished, fostering the idea that it is equivalent to the everyday, to real objects and daily activities’ (Tone, quoted in Toop, 2016 p. 140); Toop describes this investing of life with artistic validity as ‘the edgeless relationship of work and life’ (ibid. p. 218). Although this ‘edgeless relationship’ is not unique to improvisation, the continuum which is improvisation praxis particularly lends itself to realising edgelessness.

Clemens Gresser posits that the desire to produce discrete ‘works’ is symptomatic of our understanding of the act of composition, even if the composer may choose to attenuate such a motivation:

Every composer, by notating an idea – whether in the form of a traditional, graphic or a text score – declares an intention; even if a composer states that he or she does not have a specific reason for writing a piece, nevertheless the writing of the piece expresses the intention to create a work ... this is clear even if one is not able to pinpoint easily the (sonic) identity of a work or perceive it as a personal manifestation of the composer. It is also true that even if one chooses not to see a composition as a composer’s personal articulation, that intention still exists (Gresser, 2010 p. 193; parentheses in original).

Little matter whether the work brought into being is abstractly conceptual, unpretentiously sensual or

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this piece do not perform this piece’ (Joseph, 2011 p. 159).

mechanically environmental; even in a post-Duchamp, post-Cage, post-Wolff universe (where the aim of the poietic outcome may be to undermine or invalidate the notion of a poietic outcome itself, or to assert a negative-space or anti-matter poieticism), Butcher's 'big idea' still lurks ominously in the background. Even if the big idea is to have no big idea, the intention to make something – even if it's only the intention to make a Cagean space in which the intention to make something is banished – underpins the impulse to fashion, to bring into being, to compose a designated 'work'.

However, in theory the praxis-orientated improviser does not seek to produce 'works', but simply examples of practice within the improvisation continuum. That some of these examples may be more effective, interesting or stimulating than others is of course recognised, but weighing up these examples of practice one against the other in order to select and present the 'best' is not part of improvisation praxis in its purest sense – these examples of practice are not, for example, drafts of a composition, or takes of a recording<sup>4</sup>.

Like the gardener, the improviser accepts the variable outcomes of interacting with a living process, relishing the particular combinations currently flourishing whilst reminiscing about or delightedly anticipating other possibilities which are currently absent or as yet unknown. Like the (non-formal) gardener, the improviser lives and works in a world where what is happening now almost never represents perfection (and where perfection is not usually part of the lexicon), but where it is also practically impossible to imagine a situation that is without dynamic interest. The idea is not to devise a perfect scheme and then fix it, either on canvas or manuscript paper, as a testament to the power of the aesthetic impulse to coerce nature; the idea is to work continuously with nature, to work with the ad hoc and provisional elements of existence, to explore the endlessly variable wonders of active seeing and listening when combined with free and flexible responses to known and unknown phenomena of varying degrees of predictability. For someone working in this way, the idea of stopping the process, of freezing the flow of it, and presenting a fixed 'best' outcome is absurd<sup>5</sup>.

One significant and deeply destabilising consequence of the search to identify and fix 'preferred' or 'best' options in musical performance is the reintroduction into the improviser's performance experience of the 'mistake' – a musical action (or inaction) which is clearly and unequivocally 'wrong'. Free Improvisation is one of the few musical practices where there is (in theory) no stylistic template from which concepts of rightness and wrongness may be derived, and to which admissibility of action may be quantised. Clearly the appropriateness of an action may be challenged, but the question of appropriateness becomes so central simply because there is no legislative template which explicitly proscribes or prescribes any kind of action. One implication of this state is the need for each performer to finely balance questions of freedom and responsibility, individuality and collectivity, collaboration and resistance for themselves, and this is one of improvised music's most complex and rewarding challenges; in conversation with Richard Scott, Evan Parker proposes that

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<sup>4</sup> Of course, exactly this process might occur during the selection and presentation of recorded improvisations for publication, but in the age of mechanical reproduction a recorded improvisation inevitably becomes a poietic 'work'.

<sup>5</sup> This embrace of impermanence is not *exclusive* to improvisation, but I would suggest that of all musics Free Improvisation is best suited to celebrating non-fixity. It could however be argued that the dominance of the work-concept posited by Goehr (2007) is not applicable to all musics within the so-called 'classical' canon. In addition to Goehr's putative starting point (and various historical exceptions thereafter), the work-concept may also prove to have an end-point – possibly to be located by future musical theorists as somewhere between 1950 and the present day.

power inside an improvising group is not determined by the law in that sense because there are no laws. Authority inside a group is determined by the appropriateness of an action (Parker, quoted in Scott, 1991 p. 264).

To abandon this hard-won and dignifying freedom and abdicate the appropriateness of action to another may seem a noticeably retrograde step to the experienced improviser. Describing his participation in a performance of Ichiyanagi's *Distance* (1961), Parker remembers that 'the only real mistake you could make was to play an audible glissando while changing frequencies. I made that mistake' (Parker, in Schroder, 2014 p. 4). Although it may seem strange that Evan's primary memory of playing *Distance* – a piece which (memorably) requires the performers to be at least three metres away from their instrument – is the making of an error, this kind of response is typical of the perceptive distortions introduced by the overweening presence of poietic predetermination<sup>6</sup>. When Christopher Small writes that 'the tension and the possibility of failure which are part of an improvised performance have no place in modern concert life' (1987 p. 284) he presumably means that the uncertainty of outcome inherent in improvisation has no place in the poietic focus on reliable outcome that dominates 'modern concert life'; however the idea of 'failure' as outlined above is one which is in fact explicitly reserved for the notation paradigm.

Responding to an earlier draft of the previous paragraph, Philip Thomas observed that 'in the improvised moment, we are still making decisions and intentions, which we may (technically) fail to deliver on' (P. Thomas, note to the author, September 2016). This is of course true, at least for most improvisers (although there are some who claim to act without the intervention of recognised intentions). However, there is a difference between what might be termed a 'private' mistake – one which represents a gap between (internal) intention and its realisation – and a 'public' mistake – one where there is an objective or predetermined (external) prescription which one can be judged to have failed to realise. Improvisation, like life itself, is full of private mistakes (and often from these come the music's most interesting twists and turns); however it really has no mechanism to enable the designation of public mistakes. (I speak here of the aspirational or theoretical state of 'non-idiomatic' improvisation; as soon as idiomatic elements are established they can of course be inadvertently contravened in a conspicuous fashion. But even then, the listener has no 'external' method of establishing that the transgression was not intentional, unless the performer wishes to make this explicit.)

Some improvisers have strategies to try and minimise what I have describing as the framing effect; Derek Bailey was fond of blurring the beginnings and ends of pieces (particularly the beginnings) by developing the music from the 'non-music' minutiae of performance<sup>7</sup>. For Bailey, tuning up was not only an essential part of his preparation for playing (as Dominic Lash has observed, in order to manipulate pitch in the way he did, 'Bailey had to pay great attention to getting his guitar as in tune with itself as possible' (Lash, 2010 p. 70)<sup>8</sup>), but it was also a transitional condition between designated pre-performance and performance states. His affection for

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<sup>6</sup> It is possible that the piece in question was not *Distance*, and that Parker mis-remembered. However, the persistent memory of 'the error' remains significant.

<sup>7</sup> This practice is also a notable feature of the performances of Bailey associate Mick Beck.

<sup>8</sup> Note that Callingham (2007 p. 155) describes Barry Guy's tuning up before a performance of improvised music as an 'unexpectedly traditional act of preparation', but this seems simply to confirm his lack of understanding of the type of instrumental virtuosity and control that such players exercise.

gradually morphing the mechanics of tuning up into the official condition of creative performance not only allows the emphasis of the improvising continuum that I have referred to above, but also makes an explicit link to one of the great traditions of idiomatic improvisation, North Indian classical music. Bailey's tendency to drift casually into an improvisation resembles the indefinable transition from the mundane to the beatific undertaken as performers of Hindustani music draw together the threads of the *alap* from miscellaneous preparatory soundings<sup>9</sup>.

However, even among praxis-orientated improvisers themselves, the ubiquity of recording has subjected many musicians to a poiesis-by-proxy that can cause them to sometimes misrepresent the nature of their art. As a result of my occasional activities as a publisher, musicians often send me recordings of free improvisation; sometimes these recordings are quite clearly an assemblage or selection of the 'best bits'. The more experience I have of free improvisation, and the more I think about what it means and involves, the less stimulating I find such an approach. Listening simply to the 'best bits' tells me no more about the nature, vitality and tenaciousness of the improvisers and improvisation that produced them than simply being told the final score would give a football devotee insight into the exhilaration or tedium involved in a given match. For the 'best bits' approach to work, the bits in question are put in a position where they are inevitably heard as if they were short or even miniature quasi-compositions. Perhaps unsurprisingly, 'best bits' of improvisations are frequently not as successful *qua* compositions as compositions themselves are; these 'best bits' actually need a contextual depth, an understanding of the improvised journey, to explain what it is that made them so good in the first place<sup>10</sup>.

There are other contexts in which this 'framing' which is offered by recording, and by which poiesis can be emulated, can also distort the improvisation process. If improvisation in its most praxis-orientated form thrives on regular playing opportunities with a wide-ranging and ever-changing pool of possible partners, in intimate and low-pressure performing situations, a different approach to the music can emerge when it is drawn into the high-profile limited-time-slot world of the international music festival. Evan Parker has spoken of a phenomenon that arises when free improvisation is shoehorned into the come-up-with-the-goods nature of the short festival set, particularly that of the self-identified Jazz festival

The music that works best in festival situations is music that doesn't question itself, music that has no questions, it just has answers and blats them straight forward at the audience. I mean I respond to that by having a version of the music ready which more or less has no questions too. A way of improvising freely which communicates in a very direct way. I can do it with certain people who I've worked with a long time because they know what the ideas are about (Parker, quoted in Scott, 1991 p. 265).

What Parker is talking about here is of course improvised music as repertoire music; even though the details

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<sup>9</sup> This idea is not original, but thus far I remain unable to identify where or when I first came across the insight. I extend my grateful apologies to the as-yet-unidentified author.

<sup>10</sup> In studio situations (rather than live performance recordings) Derek Bailey habitually emasculated the best bits approach by only recording as much music as was actually required, no more. For an absurd extension of the best bits approach, see Amaro de Menezes (2010), where the author identifies and scientifically analyses the 'best moments' of a 34-minute trio improvisation. The author's method leads him to analyse sections as short as (literally) 5 and 10 seconds, with no reference to the surrounding context.

remain to be worked out during the process of playing, everyone on board knows what they need to do, and what the best way is to do it within the time available. Unfortunately one outcome of such an approach can be a certain putative predictability, especially for established groups; in Bailey's terms, the musicians have now worked out what the music is, and can concentrate on playing it. They no longer need to improvise. Of course, Parker himself is well aware of such dangers:

it's not the ideal performance situation, even a jazz club may not be the ideal situation. In fact, for me the ideal situation turns out to be somewhere like the London Musicians Collective, which is a very rare species of place, which is dying out, not very popular with audiences. Or you can find other equivalent places; back rooms in pubs which are run by musicians are just as good places as the LMC, they amount to the same thing. What's important is that the musicians should be in control, at least some part of the scene should be directly under the control of musicians, and nothing to do with whether audiences come or whether audiences like what's happening. It's like having a... not exactly a laboratory situation... but a completely unpressured situation where the music can be whatever it wants to be. That sounds a bit mystical... where the music can be whatever the musicians want it to be (Parker, quoted in Scott, 1991 p. 265)<sup>11</sup>.

If, as suggested above (page 99), the state of freedom (or at least a musician's perception of it) is so fragile that the even the slightest whiff of predetermination is enough to cause it to mutate or metamorphose, is it even realistic to imagine or essay a form of composition which allows musicians to play 'freely'? Is it remotely realistic to expect those with an interest in architecture, form and 'big ideas' (even the smaller-scale ones) to find any satisfaction in exploring these areas in collaboration with musicians who do not necessarily acknowledge the importance of any of these elements to their practice? Is it credible to expect those who have experienced the transcendental aesthetic and somatic ecstasies of the 'experimental public struggle with the limits of the self' (Toop, 2016 p. 17) to abandon these heady experiences in favour of someone else telling them what to do?

But such binary formulations can be treacherous. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Derek Bailey was no longer sure that the terminology of opposing composition and improvisation was still appropriate. Writing to John Corbett in 1999<sup>12</sup> about supposed changes in his relationship to composition, he observed that

There has been a change, but its [sic] not between improvisors and composition/fixed material, its [sic] between improvisors and improvisors and it started happening a long time ago ... the exploratory element in 'Improvised Music' has now virtually disappeared. There are groups and individuals now playing a music whose original purpose no longer exists. What's left are standardised recitals of personal, idiosyncratic musics. Some good, some not so good but a music, like other musics, which is gig driven (D. Bailey, 1999c).

Bailey was clearly irked that these standardised recitals of 'personal, idiosyncratic musics' were still identified as

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<sup>11</sup> Note that Parker was speaking in 1987, and 30 years later the scene he describes has all but evaporated. In London terms, the Oto generation has displaced the LMC/Red Rose generation.

<sup>12</sup> The letter is prompted by Corbett's booklet notes for the 1999 CD *Unanswered Questions* by Intermission (BV Haast Records 9906)

'improvised music', while lacking what he saw as improvisation's key characteristics – unpredictability and spontaneity. He even went as far as to imply that working with pre-determined or composed material might supply elements now missing from much improvisation (*Unanswered Questions* had involved Bailey playing in compositions by Wilbert de Joode and Gilius Van Bergeijk):

your polarity — preparation/foreseen and instantaneous/unpredictable — doesn't work anymore. The instantaneous, in most cases, is both totally predictable and easily foreseen and is often not without a great deal of preparation. Personally, not being attracted by an improvised music which depends largely on repe[r]toire (an absurdity, it seems to me), I've found many of my playing satisfactions in recent times come from putting myself in completely, to me, unfamiliar situations with, often, unfamiliar music. But, then, that has always been the case. Increasingly, this seems to come from music which can often supply less familiar music and situations than can playing with improvisors (ibid.; parentheses in original).

As part of the discussion, Bailey outlines his practice when it comes to working with pre-determined material:

Playing with compositions, I almost always work under two conditions: I do not have a written part and I do not rehearse. I play with what I hear, decided at the time. For recordings, its [sic] virtually always one take. None of this has to do with what you want to see as ideological reasons. I just prefer to work that way. For me, it works better. If I thought rehea[r]sing, or endless takes, improved things, I would do it. But, for me, they don't (ibid.)<sup>13</sup>.

This approach to working with composers and compositions circumvents the traditional inability of the composition to respond in a real-time dialogue, since if it is only ever heard once what may in fact be a lack of flexibility can be understood as inscrutability or obliquity rather than predictability. Whether this represents a real possibility of creating a valid interface between composition and improvisation is a moot question; it is in fact more reminiscent of Bailey's frequent habit of practicing/improvising with pirate London radio stations, and with extant (fixed) but unknown recordings. His work with groups such as The Ruins or the 'post-improvisation' recordings with Han Bennink explore related territory. But having explained his method, Bailey can't resist setting the record straight: 'And, now I think of it, I've never heard any improviser do his best playing in a composed setting' (ibid.)<sup>14</sup>. Such an opinion is almost inevitable from Bailey, but – as already extensively discussed above – free improvisation within a composed setting is not generally devised in order to enable the best possible free improvisation. Bailey knew this, which is why he maintained a tangential interest in investigating these possibilities. As he told John Corbett (with a characteristically waspish nod to the difference between Eurological and Afrological composers)

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<sup>13</sup> Writing about the recording of Paul Rutherford's *Sequence 73* in 1973, which features Bailey's guitar overdubbed on a prior recording of Rutherford's ensemble composition, Martin Davidson observes that 'no one can remember exactly why the guitar was recorded separately' (Davidson, 1997). However, perhaps this was one of the earliest manifestations of Bailey's strategy of treating compositional elements as fixed, completed objects with which he would improvise once, and only once; the rehearsal process involved in being part of the 'live' ensemble may have been exactly what he wished to avoid.

<sup>14</sup> Of course, we're not intended to think of the idiomatic improviser here (for example Johnny Hodges with Duke Ellington), although one may ask why not.

For 30 years or so, I've been periodically invited to play on/with somebody's compositions. Between, say, Tony Oxley's in 1968 and, say, Wilbert de Jude's [sic] in 1998, I must also have played on pieces by every improviser who also chances his arm as a composer. I've even worked with real composers (ibid.).

If, as discussed above, thinkers such as Berio bemoan improvisation's alleged inability to produce 'a coherent discourse that unfolds and develops simultaneously on different levels' (Berio, 1985 p. 83), this perhaps tells us more about such a composer's deterministic and prescriptive approach to colonising musical time than about the possible outcomes of improvisation. There are certainly some things it is very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve through improvisation, but musical thought and coherent discourse are not among them; however, improvisation's innate difficulty in producing *guaranteed* outcomes of any kind is sufficient to challenge the thinking processes of many composers, who generally prefer the piece of music in question to do roughly what it was supposed to do. As Evan Parker has observed 'the improviser always has the edge in situations where the performance concerns itself with what can be, rather than what ought to be' (Parker, in Schroder, 2014 p. 6).

#### **4c: revelatory partition & immersive sensitisation**

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*Once the repetitive world is left behind, we enter a realm of fantastic insecurity (Attali, 1985 p. 146).*

*You could make up a very good argument for improvisation being an essential lifeline for our species ... it isn't an argument I've got any time for, I have enough trouble just playing the guitar (Derek Bailey, quoted in Scott, 1991 p. 226).*

The tension between what ought to be and what could be may seem to be an abstract semantic negotiation, but in the twilight worlds of conduction or composing for improvisers it can cut like a razor, and leave permanent scars. I doubt I shall ever forget the occasion when, conducting the London Improvisers Orchestra, I became so obsessed by a particular musical idea that I had conceived that I publicly rejected the chance arrival of other ideas, or the contributions of the improvising musicians I was conducting. I rejected what they offered me because it wasn't what *I had decided to do* at that point... and the memory of that dysfunction still causes me intense distress. I had succumbed to the typical poetic determinism of the self-appointed composer, becoming (hopefully temporarily) the kind of demagogic figure in reaction to which the orchestra and its working methods had been conceived<sup>15</sup>. Some compositional part of my brain would like to make a countering observation about musicians who join an ensemble designed to explore directed improvisation, and then decline direction, but that would be to miss the point. For eight years I had watched Steve Beresford – perhaps the exemplary conductor of the LIO – generously accept all manner of misunderstandings, perversities and subversions (unintentional or otherwise) from the musicians of the orchestra, and with good will skilfully absorb them into the music he was in the process of fashioning; by contrast, I had effectively declined what the musicians were able or prepared to give, and had insisted on what I wanted.

Perhaps the difficulties that composition and improvisation generate when trying to occupy the same musical space/time is more than a question of the obvious contradictions in their respective praxes. Composition and

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<sup>15</sup> I conducted the LIO in approximately 40 performances between 1998 and 2005, and this particular occasion was toward the end of that period.

improvisation may be examples of two different types of artistic practice, which actually incline to negate each other when brought into contact. One type of artistic experience gives us glimpses of a perfection, or an intensity of realisation, that seems to lie beyond our everyday experience. This *exemplary art* exposes us to transcendental experiences which lie beyond what almost all of us are capable of, but towards the grace, elegance or passion of which we can aspire. In order for this art to be able to give us glimpses of *the beyond*, the works of this art need to be clearly operating in an ecstatic realm beyond what might be considered the normal limits of human agency. In other words, this art needs *masterpieces* created by *geniuses*, which can console, inspire and reinvigorate mere mortals in their struggle with absurd quotidian mundaneness. Clearly these masterpieces need to be reliable, as their transcendental status has to be unquestionable – therefore this art tends toward fixity, refinement and permanent currency. The act of composition has its roots in this kind of revelatory partition.

While this *exemplary art* has obvious parallels with the heavenly revelations of next-world-orientated religious faiths, a second type of artistic experience might seem to embrace the absurdity of post-faith existence, serving to provide possible meaning by investing existence in *this world* with intensity and significance. This *transfigurative art* does not rely on divinely (or otherwise) gifted geniuses, but allows all humans the possibility to perceive their own actions in relation to a creative art that is part of the mundane, and co-exists with it, but which allows for the possibility of meaning even within meaninglessness. This art needs neither geniuses nor masterpieces, but simply freedom of access and awareness of potential; it does not need to produce reliable results, but only reliably provide the potential for results. Improvisation has its roots in this kind of immersive sensitisation.

Lest I should give the impression that I am drifting towards a tidy conclusion, I'll reiterate the fact that the convenient equivalences of *composition = eurological, poietic, exemplary* and *improvisation = afrological, practical, transfigurative* are unstable, unreliable and unrealistic<sup>16</sup>. For many people, only a moment's consideration will be required to identify examples which directly contradict or subtly undermine these purely theoretical correspondences. But I would argue that these terms themselves and the undeniable elements of tension within creative activity to which they relate are due to the dual (and in many ways contradictory) impulses which lie behind much artistic practice (and poiesis).

Viewed in these terms, it is perhaps unsurprising that composition/improvisation experiments have historically tended to be high risk affairs. According to CERN<sup>17</sup> 'when matter and antimatter come into contact, they annihilate – disappearing in a flash of energy' (Antimatter, 2014); unfortunately such musical experiments are not always guaranteed even a flash of energy, frequently summoning up only the soggy fizzle of the damp squib. But the continuing thirst of creative musicians for exploring both exemplary and transfigurative practice, along with experimental fusions thereof (sometimes subsequently accompanied by spectacular fission – in nuclear terms, a much dirtier process) is explained by the sheer enormity of the stakes involved. These attempts to elaborate a

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<sup>16</sup> Veryan Weston has also introduced the idea of Apollonian/Eurological and Dionysian/Afrological correspondences (Watts & Weston, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> 'The name CERN is derived from the acronym for the French "Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire", or European Council for Nuclear Research, a provisional body founded in 1952 with the mandate of establishing a world-class fundamental physics research organization in Europe' (About CERN, 2012.).

transfigurational exemplitude represent nothing less than giving transcendental meaning to our absurd existence, in Beckettian terms the flash of light that fleetingly illuminates as we slide from the womb into the grave; the probable impossibility nevertheless holding out the tantalising possibility of 'failing better' (Beckett, 1983). Thus, if the failure of the British experimentalists and improvisers of the late 1960s to live together happily ever after seems to suggest a definitive lack of cohabitability between the impulses toward determination and exploration, the evidence of their mutual fascination, temporary common cause, and the resulting undermining of institutionally ingrained ideological prejudices makes such a failure an invaluable and exemplary one.



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## appendices

### 1: compositions, sketches and music arrangements found in the Derek Bailey archive

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[valid at April 2017]

#### numbered compositions [all undated]

composition no.	title	instrumentation	comments
1	[untitled]	[unspecified]	short jazz 'head' with chords (16 bars, 4/4, Cmaj), plus some modal notes for improvisation
2	[untitled]	[unspecified]	short jazz 'head' [unfinished?] with some chords (9 bars, 4/4 & 6/8, F/Dm key signature)
3	[untitled]	[prob.] guitar & d. bass	rubato introduction (8 bars), 28 bars thematic material ('fast'), plus held chord for improvising (4/4, Fm)
4	[untitled]	guitar, d. bass, drums	'short score' of 32 bars for trio (4/4)
5	[untitled]	sextet [prob. tpt, flugelhorn, tenor sax, tbn, bass, perc.]	47 notated bars for sextet, followed by improvisation section (each musician improvises independently on a different chord)
6	[untitled]	[unspecified]	a tone row of six pitches [prob. unfinished]
7	[untitled]	[unspecified]	14-bar 'head' on jazz standard-style chord progression in Am
8	[untitled]	quartet: t [prob. tpt or ten. sax.], gtr, bass & drs.	The first of Bailey's pieces to explore multi-part extended composition <sup>18</sup> . 80 bars of notated material, with improvisations: guitar solo with modal accompt., collective improvisation on (different) tone rows, trumpet solo on jazz chords with 'normal' [sic] accompaniment, perc. solo with notated accompaniment. Notated material includes swing and 'straight' passages in 3/4 and 4/4, plus some more abstract chamber music elements.
9	[untitled]	[prob.] gtr, d. bass & drums	Probably Bailey's first serial piece (a 12-note row, its retrograde and inversion are noted). 19 bars, varying time signatures; 'medium' opening, improvised drum solo, 'quick' and 'slow' interjection, then DS al fine.
10	[five pieces for guitar]	solo electric guitar	Piece 1 is <i>G.E.B. [in memory of my father George Edward Bailey]</i> , Piece 2 is <i>Haught</i> . See appendix 2 (page 163) for the reconstructed score realised in 2015.
11	Saints	[prob.] gtr, d. bass & drums	Polytonal/atonal arrangement of <i>When the Saints Go Marching In</i> , with chord-based and free improvisations (41 bars).
12	[untitled]	gtr, d. bass & drums	29 bars (plus two unbarred sections), no speed indicated. 4/4 then 3/4. Includes free improvisation, and improvisation upon 'free time'.
13	[untitled]	quartet: E [?], gtr & 2 d. basses	4 bars, slow. 2/2, no improvisation indicated. 'E' may indicate Evan Parker, which may date this piece from Bailey's return to London in 1966; from this point on, Bailey begins to write more frequently for larger ensembles.
14	[untitled]	[prob.] flugelhorn, tbn, alto & tenor saxes, gtr, 2 d. basses & drums	Section 1 has 21 bars of solo instrument (X), plus 2 bass lines superimposed in various ways, using augmentation, diminution, etc. The solo line uses pairs of written notes 'in any form'. Second section uses free combinations of 4 whole tone scales in different tonalities for X, gtr and basses. Improvising soloists ('not whole tone') then play over the bass lines from section 1, followed by collective improvisation. The opening 6 bars are played again, after which the entire ensemble plays groups of three notes freely as before (when indicated), over a continuing repeat of the bass lines from section 1.

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<sup>18</sup> This assumes that the pieces were composed in number order; although seems highly likely, there is no direct evidence of dates for the compositions, with the exception of Nos. 18-20.

15	[untitled]	tpt, tbn, alto & tenor saxes, gtr, d. bass & perc.	5 interludes (plus extra 'part') for ensemble. Each interlude is preceded by free improvisation and a drum roll or rolls. The interjections range from 1 to 10 bars in 2/4 and 3/4. The relationship of the extra section (marked 'part 15') to the main text is unclear. In it three bars are played twice; the first time with the instrumentation already noted (except the trumpet is now marked F[lugelhorn?]). For the second time the tenor sax player switches to soprano, the alto sax switches to oboe and the percussionist plays glockenspiel (with the bass playing arco). [A possible title, 'Interjections', has been crossed out]
16	[untitled]	[prob.] alto sax, tbn, d. bass	9 bars to precede improvisation. Surviving sketches show a piece based on a 12-tone row divided into three four-note chords, Eb7, F7 & Bb, subsequently re-ordered. The sketches also explore 2 whole-tone scales sounding simultaneously.
17	[untitled]	[prob.] alto sax, tbn, d. bass	12 bars to precede improvisation. for much of the piece 2/4 (alto) and 3/4 (tbn & bass) times signatures are superimposed, with interjections of shared bars in both times signatures.
18-20	Three Pieces for Guitar	solo [electric] guitar	One of the few scores that exists in a completed fair copy. Three quasi-serial pieces for guitar (16 bars, 30 bars & 18 bars), with a total duration of approx. 3 minutes, plus improvisation if desired. See appendix 3 (page 171) for the score transcription realised in 2015. The programme for the 1972 Northampton concert (see page 61) dates these pieces as being from 1967.
21	[untitled]	sop. sax., tbn & gtr.	9 bars of 4/4, to be followed by two types of improvisation – firstly pitch-limited, then free. A coda of two very short bursts of improvisation, separated by silences. Almost certainly written for Evan Parker, Paul Rutherford and Bailey himself.
22	[Ping]	sop. sax., tbn, gtr & speaker	The most substantial composition by Bailey yet identified. 320 bars (varying times signatures and tempi) to run parallel with Samuel Beckett's 1967 text <i>Ping</i> ; duration 20 mins. approx., plus improvisation if desired. See appendix 4 (page 175) for the reconstructed score realised in 2014. [n.b. Bailey's original score and parts do not have a title indicated, but in subsequent writings he refers to the score as 'Ping'.]
23	[untitled]	choir (soprano & tenor voices only), gtr, timpani, 6 glockenspiels & 'S.P.'	The composition sketches and a fragment of score survive. The piece is unbarred, with a variable duration, but is relatively substantial. There is a mix of specified pitches and graphic notation, especially for the choir (the work arguably shows some sonic influence of the choral writing of Ligeti and Penderecki). It is possible that the glockenspiels are to be played by the singers; the 'S.P.' provides rhythmic pulsation, but its identity is unknown.
23 [sic]	[Bits]	solo electric guitar	A solo piece (or perhaps range of modules for improvisation), using a mix of barred and unbarred notation. Duration approx. 2 mins., plus improvisation if desired. The score makes integral use of amplification, volume pedal and overdrive effects, and in performance resembles Bailey's mature style in a way his other compositions do not. [The score is not titled, but the title <i>Bits</i> was used when Bailey's own recording of the piece was released on CD.] See appendix 5 (page 201) for the score transcription realised in 2015.

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#### unnumbered compositions [all undated]

<i>title</i>	<i>instrumentation</i>	<i>comments</i>
Ampstead	gtr., piano & tape	A rough sketch score for guitar and other sonic events, including tape and piano; the pianist is marked as 'Gavin' [Bryars].
Bits	gtr., d. bass & drums	A series of sonic events ('sound images') to be used as markers during improvisation, either singly, in pairs or all musicians together (but unsynchronised).
Exercise for Improvisors Orch.		A text score outlining a possible method for organising a performance by an orchestra of improvisors, based on a series of 'rôles': accompanying, solo, peripheral, disruptive, 'free' group imp. & 'free' individual imp. The extant text is marked 'Stage I', but no other stages have been found.
For Evan	[sop. sax.]	A long sequence of pitches to be played 'as fast as possible'. This sequence to be immediately preceded or followed by a free choice of pitches (of approximately the same length) to be also played as fast as possible.

From Webern Op. 5	F., tbn, sop. & alto sax, gtr, bass & perc.	7 bars to precede and succeed improvisation; the relationship to the Webern pieces is as yet undetermined. The score/sketch also includes an exploration of all possible combinations of three notes (A#, B & C); '1 against 2 / close / separate'.
G.E.B. Suite for Trio	gtr, bass, drums	Two verbal descriptions (or text sketches) of relatively complex pieces for trio (e.g. '4 bars 6/8, 1 bar 7/4, 1 bar 2/4, 2 bars 6/8, 1 bar 7/4'.)
In Square	solo el. gtr [w. 2-channel amplification], or poss. gtr duo	A fragment of a composition for guitar with two-channel amplification and effects. A second guitar system may indicate a second guitar part, or may be a continuation of the first.
Match	11 instrumentalists, plus clown (or dancer) and pre-recorded materials.	Short text sketch for musicians. Recorded military band music opens the piece. The clown blows a whistle, and the musicians play short solo sections, 'musician to musician'. The piece is stopped by the clown's whistle.
Piece for B's B.B.	big band, with solo banjo	Probably written with the London Jazz Composers' Orchestra in mind [see page 125].
Plus-Minus	two guitarists [4 electric guitars, each with separate amplification]	A realisation of Stockhausen's <i>Plus-Minus</i> [for details, see page 114]. See appendix 6 (page 205) for the reconstructed score realised in 2015.
Selection from Kontakte I & II	gtr. & tape	This appears to be a piece for guitar and tape, drawn from Stockhausen's composition of 1958-60. There are two pages of graphic score for tape (or graphic transcriptions thereof), and 1 page of instructions regarding tape manipulation, with occasional references to the material's relationship to the guitar (tape counter numbers, playback speed and volume changes, fading in and out of material etc.).
Sümsinønsombael	alto & tenor saxes, gtr, bass, lighting, theatrical elements	A portfolio piece (or possibly a set-list) consisting of the following elements: Piece In Our Time, Paper Piece, Colour Passage, 6 Chords, 2 mins. Essentials, Free Imp., Round, Cage, Conversation, Prayer. 'Colour Passage' appears to involve a tenor sax and guitar being directed to action by the presence or absence of light, and its colour (cf Beckett's <i>Play</i> ) – red, blue or white. 'Prayer' appears to be the old jazz musicians' spoof of The Lord's Prayer ('Art Farmer, by Fletcher Henderson, Howard McGhee Coltrane' etc.)
2 Pieces	solo el. gtr [w. 2-channel amplification]	A text sketch for two pieces for solo guitar: 'nail click, scrape, étouffé sounds, B[ehind] B[ridge]' etc. Second piece consists of 'note phrase to broken sound phrase'.
With Apologies to G. Brecht	for 4 players	A text piece, with actions directed by numbered cards; the score stipulates a 'box with cards' with players taking '1, 2 or 3 cards each'. The actions described are all domestic tasks 'wash dishes / clean windows / put out milk bottles' etc., with exception of one instruction: 'whistle'. The relationship of the cards to the numbers given for each task (1648, 1424, 1928 etc.) is not clear. [The numbers range between 1204 and 1968 – could they be dates? In which case 1968 may be a clue to the year of composition.]
[untitled]	solo gtr., guitar duo	There are several pieces for guitar (or two guitars) which are unfinished or exist in sketch form only. It is not clear which of these might be stand-alone pieces, and which might be jottings or offcuts from other pieces, numbered or otherwise.
[untitled]	tpt, tbn, alto & ten. saxes, gtr, bass & perc	A text score: 'militaristic' drum rolls separated by interjections from other instruments. [May be related to composition no. 15]

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### miscellaneous arrangements [all undated]

title	instrumentation	comments
Et la Lune descend sur le temple qui fut	solo gtr.	An unfinished arrangement of Debussy's 1907 <i>Image</i> (originally for piano).
Hommage à Rameau	solo gtr.	An arrangement of Debussy's 1901-1905 <i>Image</i> (originally for piano).

I Could Write A Book	ten. sax., gtr., pno., bass & drs.	A backing arrangement for a vocal version of the jazz standard (by Richard Rodgers & Lorenz Hart).
I'm Beginning to See the Light	medium jazz ensemble (3 tpts, 5 saxes, piano, bass & drums	An arrangement of the jazz standard (by Duke Ellington, Don George, Johnny Hodges & Harry James).
La fille aux cheveux de lin	solo gtr.	An arrangement of Debussy's 1910 piano <i>Prélude</i> .
La fille aux cheveux de lin	saxophone quartet (SATBari)	An arrangement of Debussy's 1910 piano <i>Prélude</i> .
L'après	solo gtr.	An unfinished arrangement of Debussy's 1894 symphonic poem <i>Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune</i>
Voodoo	vibes, gtr. & bass	Theme (or riff, or intro) for unidentified (possibly original) composition.
Whisper Not	ten. sax., gtr., bass & drs.	An arrangement of the jazz standard (by Benny Golson).

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### other scores of interest

<i>composer</i>	<i>title</i>	<i>comments</i>
Gavin Bryars	Catalogue (to Sue [Billam])	1965-6; arrangement for guitar, piano and pre-recorded tape. Performed in Northampton, 1972 (see page 61).
Keith Rowe	Pollock #82	dedicated to Derek Bailey (1990).
Karlheinz Stockhausen	Nr. 9 Zyklus	full-size Universal Edition performing score (incomplete); at least one page appears to have been cut out and removed [possibly for <i>Quarter of Zyklus</i> – see page 58].

# Derek BAILEY

## #10 [five pieces for guitar]

[prob.] 1966

for solo guitar

duration 7 mins. approx  
(plus improvisation if desired)

10a: G.E.B. [in memory of my father George Edward Bailey]  
1m45s

10b: Haught  
0m45s

10c: [untitled]  
2m45s

10d: [untitled]  
0m30s

10e: [untitled]  
1m30s

notes:

The archive of the late Derek Bailey contains a series of numbered compositions (the highest number currently found being 23), of which several are for solo guitar.

As with all the music in the Bailey archive, there is no way of accurately dating these pieces, or assessing their relative chronology - beyond the general assertion that they all appear to have been written between approximately 1965 and 1972. Certainly these pieces bear the clear influence of dodecaphonic writing, and Webern in particular, which it is known that Bailey was studying during the mid 1960s.

**#10** dates from 1966 or earlier, since **G.E.B.** and **Haught** were recorded by Bailey in that year (the recordings which appear on the Tzadik CD *Pieces For Guitar*). On the recording of *G.E.B.* Bailey plays the written music through, then improvises upon the material presented, before playing bars 18-39 once more. The first time through, he also prefaces bar 18 with several free repetitions of the octave G figure to come.

For the recorded version of *Haught* Bailey plays bars 1-9 twice, and then improvises upon a mix of the material already played and the material to come. He then plays from bar 1 to the end of the piece (without repeat).

Bailey's own method during this period was to increasingly use his notated pieces as starting points for improvisation; but such of his scores as are in fair copy suggest that he did not initially consider the improvisation obligatory, and that the pieces could have been performed without it. A contemporary performer could choose to either (a) play the material as written, without improvised sections, (b) follow the schematic structure of Bailey's own performance, described above, including improvisations as part of the other pieces if desired, or (c) devise an alternative structure including improvisation which respects Bailey's aesthetic. I realise that in view of Bailey's subsequent 40-year commitment to free improvisation, option (a) might seem controversial, but I would point out that the very existence of these pieces, and any prospect of playing them again 50 years later is inherently paradoxical; also, it is clear that the Bailey of the late 1960s had not yet discarded an active interest in notational predetermination. (One option which I think would be difficult to justify philosophically would be to transcribe Bailey's own improvised sections, thus fixing them, and add them to the written score; I have made no attempt to do that.)

It is not clear from the score what should happen for the long held note at bar 11 in **10c**. In the original score this note is tied from bar 11 through to bar 31 without reiteration - this may suggest some sustaining use of feedback or electronics, but if this is not desired (or for classical guitar performance) I have suggested places where the F might be re-articulated. (In doing so I've tried to avoid a resultant regular periodicity.) Equally it is unclear whether the glissandi indicated in bars 10 and 31 might indicate that the low E-string is tuned upward/downward while resonating, thus giving an open F-string for bars 11 to 31. I would suggest that the interested performer devise their own response to these uncertainties.

Items in blue are not in the original score, but are suggested by Bailey's own performance. (It should be noted that Bailey's performance is rhythmically very free throughout.) Items in red represent editorial suggestions about possible performance approaches; either of these sets of information may be disregarded or contradicted by sympathetic performers who may have a different interpretation to offer. In general, I have tried to introduce as few editorial interventions as I felt would suffice to gently guide the performer where this might be helpful. Any indications in black are found in the original text.

After much consideration I have resisted adding extensive editorial dynamic markings throughout. Many of the pieces are notated with very sparse dynamics, although Bailey would sometimes add further dynamics when making his fair copy. But clearly this does not suggest that the pieces should be played without dynamic inflection. In the first instance Bailey was writing these pieces for himself, so he would not necessarily have felt the need to document the dynamic gradations on paper at this stage. But also, within the jazz and popular music traditions from which Bailey drew his training and cultural heritage, dynamic notation is often minimal or absent, simply because it is assumed that a sensitive and committed performer will realise empathetically an appropriate (although not exclusively definitive) dynamic schema for the material. Bailey's own recorded performance offers one possible dynamic interpretation, but this should not be regarded as binding.

Therefore I have left many of these choices in the hands of the performer, and believe that Bailey would have been happy to permit any dynamic shaping which shows itself to be sensitive to and in sympathy with the implications of the notated material.

My profoundest thanks are of course due to Karen Brookman-Bailey for generously allowing me free access to this material.

Simon H. Fell (2015)

# #10 [five pieces for guitar]

Derek BAILEY (1930-2005)

## 10a: G.E.B.

very freely [c. h = 50]

Guitar

*pp*

*pp*

Largo q = 50

2

*p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mp*

slowly

q = 120

8

*mf* *pp* *p*

q = 66

15

*f*

h = 140

QUICK

18

*mf*

25

*mf*

32 *sim.*

36

see editorial note

## 10b: Haught

*q = 54 heavily to start, then lightening* *q = 168*

Guitar

1 SLOW

8 *pp* *bliss.* *mf*

3 3 3 3

accel. - - - - -

4

see editorial note

CHEERFUL *q = 144*

10

8 *poco f*

14

*rit.* - - - - -

18

# 10c

q = 66

Guitar

11 QUICK

q = 132

18

26

31 SLOW

35 BRISK

q = 72

42

48 *h = q freely* *q = 72 accel.*

52

as previous 2/4 tempo

55

61 *q = h* *slower*

Presto *q = 144*

67

73 *q = 72*

# 10d

Guitar *1*  $q = 88$

4

*'* freely a tempo SLOW heavily

# 10e

Guitar *1*  $q = 84$

6

$q. = q$

12

SLOWER a tempo

21

SLOWER

with pick, up stroke arps.

28



# **Derek BAILEY**

## **#18-20: Three Pieces for Guitar**

[prob.] 1966-67

for solo guitar

duration 3 mins. approx  
(plus improvisation if desired)

notes:

The archive of the late Derek Bailey contains a series of numbered compositions (the highest number currently found being 23), of which several are for solo guitar.

As with all the music in the Bailey archive, there is no way of accurately dating these pieces, or assessing their relative chronology - beyond the general assertion that they all appear to have been written between approximately 1965 and 1972. Certainly these pieces bear the clear influence of dodecaphonic writing, and Webern in particular, which it is known that Bailey was studying during the mid 1960s.

**#18-20: Three Pieces for Guitar** dates from 1967 or earlier, since they were recorded by Bailey in that year (the recording which appears on the Tzadik CD *Pieces For Guitar*). On this recording the written music is played in its entirety, with separate improvisations on the material of Pieces 1 and 2 also being documented.

Bailey's own method during this period was to increasingly use his notated pieces as starting points for improvisation; but the fair copy of this score seems to confirm that he did not consider the improvisation obligatory, and that the pieces could be performed without it. A contemporary performer could choose to either (a) play the material as written, without improvisations, (b) follow the schematic structure of Bailey's own performance, including separate improvised responses, or (c) devise an alternative structure including improvisation which respects Bailey's aesthetic. I realise that in view of Bailey's subsequent 40-year commitment to free improvisation, option (a) might seem controversial, but I would point out that the very existence of these pieces, and any prospect of playing them again 50 years later, is inherently paradoxical. Also, it is clear that the Bailey of the late 1960s had not yet discarded an active interest in notational predetermination; the score of these pieces give every indication of having being prepared for 'repertoire' performance (for example, there are many more dynamics notated than was Bailey's practice when writing for himself). One option which I think would be difficult to justify philosophically would be to transcribe Bailey's own improvised sections, thus fixing them, and add them to the written score; I have made no attempt to do this.

Unlike many pieces in the Bailey archive, this score is clearly 'finished' and in fair copy. Therefore, although we have a document of Bailey's own performance, I have not used this as the basis for changes to the written score, although of course it is a useful resource for prospective performers. Bailey's own version takes a very free approach to rhythm, and adds several inflections and grace notes not notated in the score. The only major discrepancy occurs at bar 20 in Piece 2; Bailey plays this material at  $q. = 70$  as previously, rather than the  $q. = 52$  indicated in the score. It seems quite possible there is a mistake in the score here, but the slower tempo is an interesting possibility, and performers may wish to observe it.

My profoundest thanks are of course due to Karen Brookman-Bailey for generously allowing me free access to this material.

Simon H. Fell (2015)

# #18-20: Three Pieces for Guitar

Derek BAILEY (1930-2005)

## #18: No. 1

Guitar

q = 120

*p*

6

*mf > pp*

11

## #19: No. 2

q. = 70

1

*p*

9

q. = q

*mf*

15

q. = 52 [see editorial note]

Musical score for measures 20-25. The score is written in treble clef with a 3/8 time signature. Measure 20 starts with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The music features complex rhythmic patterns with many beamed notes and rests. Measure 25 ends with a pianissimo (*ppp*) dynamic. There are various articulation marks such as accents and slurs throughout the passage.

### #20: No. 3

Musical score for measures 1-16. The score is written in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. Measure 1 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a tempo marking of *q = 40*. It includes a "pulled gliss." instruction. Measure 4 has a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. Measure 8 has a piano (*p*) dynamic and a tempo marking of *q = 120*. Measure 12 has a piano (*p*) dynamic and a tempo marking of *q = 40*. Measure 16 ends with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The score contains various rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes, and includes articulation marks like slurs and accents.

# 22 [Ping]

Derek Bailey

text by **Samuel Beckett**  
(from *Ping*, 1967)

**notes:**

This performing version has been prepared from a full instrumental score (without voice), an incomplete set of voice and instrumental parts, and numerous pages of accompanying notes found in the personal archive of Derek Bailey.

There have been very few editorial interventions in the instrumental parts, but the relationship of the text to the notated music has been reconstructed based on the surviving notes; of necessity this has involved a certain amount of editorial conjecture, since (a) the extant voice part gives very few clues as to how (or if) the voice should synchronise with the music within individual bars, and (b) the archive gives clear evidence of several changes in Bailey's thinking during the compositional process about how this might be done.

The material in the Bailey archive is almost all without date, but various indications tended to suggest that this music dated from the period between 1968 and 1972. Evan Parker was able to confirm that this piece had been written for himself, Bailey and Paul Rutherford, and that it was rehearsed once (by Bailey, Parker and Derek Wadsworth, Rutherford being unavailable) at Evan's London flat in approximately 1969. Evan is not aware of any further rehearsal work on the score, or any subsequent performance.

It should be noted that graphic markings incorporated (as in the guitar part at bars 2 and 13 for example) have been extracted and reproduced from Bailey's own hand-written score. My profoundest thanks are of course due to Karen Brookman-Bailey for generously allowing me free access to this material.

**Simon H. Fell (2014)**

# 22 [Ping]

Derek BAILEY

**1**

**4/4** ♩ = 70

S. Sax. *mf* *pp* *f* STOP DURING GLISS. *f* = 60

Tbn. *mf* *pp* *f* growl STOP DURING GLISS. rasp

E. Gtr. *mf* finger gliss.

Voice **All known all white bare white body fixed**

4

S. Sax. *p* *mf* *f* *p* slower

Tbn. *p* *mf* *f* *p*

E. Gtr.

Voice **one yard legs joined like sewn. Light heat**

8

S. Sax. *f* *p* *f*

Tbn. growl *p* *f*

E. Gtr. *f* *p* *f*

Voice **white floor one square yard never seen. White walls one yard by two**

11

S. Sax. *mf* *p* *f*

Tbn. *p* *f* rasp

E. Gtr. *f* *mf*

Voice **white ceiling one square yard never seen. Bare white**

**4/2**

14  $\frac{4}{2}$   $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$

S. Sax. *mf*  $\leftarrow$  *ff*

Tbn. *pp*

E. Gtr. *p*

Voice **body fixed only the eyes only just.**

17  $\frac{2}{4}$  ♩ = 60

S. Sax. *mf* *mp* *mf*

Tbn. *wow* *growl*

E. Gtr. *mf* *étouffé* *mp* *mf*

Voice **Traces blurs light grey almost white on white.**

20  $\frac{3}{4}$

S. Sax. *f* *p*

Tbn. *f* *p*

E. Gtr. *f* *p* string over edge

Voice **Hands hanging palms front white feet heels together right angle.**

24  $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{3}{8}$   $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *mf* *p* rasp stopped by PING

Tbn. *p*  $\leftarrow$  *mf*  $\leftarrow$  *pp* *mf*  $\leftarrow$  *f* *mf* stopped by PING

E. Gtr. *mf*  $\leftarrow$  *p* stopped by PING

Voice **Light heat white planes shining white bare white body fixed ping**

△ (optional bell sound)

2

5

28  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *mf* wow

Tbn. rasp *mf*

E. Gtr. *mf* étouffé 5

Voice **fixed elsewhere. Traces blurs signs no meaning**

31  $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *mf*

Tbn. *mf*

E. Gtr. *mf*

Voice **light grey almost white. Bare white body fixed white on white invisible.**

33  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{6}{4}$

S. Sax. *mf* *ff* *mp* *slow gliss.*

Tbn. *pp*

E. Gtr. *p*

Voice **Only the eyes only just light blue almost white. Head**

36  $\frac{6}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{6}{4}$

S. Sax. *p*

Tbn. *p*

E. Gtr. *f*

Voice **haught eyes light blue almost white silence within.**

38  $\frac{6}{4}$  *accel.*  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\text{♩} = 60$   $\frac{2}{4}$

S. Sax. *p* *f* *mf* *pp*

Tbn. *p* *f* *mf* *pp*

E. Gtr. *p* *mf* *pp*

Voice **Brief murmurs only just almost never all known.**

42  $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$   $\text{♩} = 60$   $\frac{7}{4}$   $\text{♩} = 60$   $\frac{2}{4}$

S. Sax. *p* *mf*

Tbn. *mf* wow wow *f* *mf*

E. Gtr. *étouffé* 5 *pp* *f* *f* *mf*

Voice **Traces blurs signs no meaning light grey almost white. Legs joined like sewn**

46  $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{3}{4}$  growl straight  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{3}{4}$

S. Sax. *f* *p* *ff*

Tbn. wow *ff* growl

E. Gtr. string over edge *ff* *ff*

Voice **heels together right angle. Traces alone uncover given black light grey almost white on white.**

50  $\frac{3}{4}$  slower  $\text{♩} = 60$

S. Sax. *p* *f*

Tbn. *p* *mf* *pp* *p* *f* growl rasp

E. Gtr. *p*

Voice **Light heat white walls shining white one yard by two. Bare white body fixed**

54  $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. 5

Tbn. *p* continue crotchets until stopped by PING

E. Gtr. stopped by PING

Voice **one yard ping**

(optional bell sound)

3

56  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. rasp

Tbn. WOW WOW

E. Gtr. étouffé 5 pp f

Voice **fixed elsewhere. Traces blurs signs no meaning**

59

S. Sax. mf

Tbn. f

E. Gtr. mf string over edge

Voice **light grey almost white. White feet toes joined like sewn heels together right angle invisible.**

61 growl

S. Sax. f p

Tbn. p

E. Gtr. pp mf

Voice **Eyes alone uncover given blue light blue almost white. Murmur**

64  $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. <ff p ff

Tbn. pp 3 pp

E. Gtr. p f

Voice **only just almost never one second perhaps not alone. Given rose only just**

67

S. Sax. *rasp* *p* *f* *mf* *pp*  $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

Tbn. *p* *f* *mf*

E. Gtr. *mf*

Voice **bare white body fixed one yard white on white invisible. All white all known murmurs**

72

S. Sax. *ff* *mf* *pp*  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{3}{4}$

Tbn. *pp* *mf* *pp*

E. Gtr. *p* [unis] *pp*

Voice **only just almost never always the same all known.**

75 *slower*  $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$  ♩ = 60

S. Sax. *p* *mf* *pp* *mf*

Tbn. *p* *mf* *pp*

E. Gtr. *mf*

Voice **Light heat hands hanging palms front**

78  $\frac{7}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *pp*

Tbn. *pp* *rasp* *pp* continue crotchets until stopped by PING

E. Gtr. stopped by PING

Voice **white on white invisible bare white body fixed ping**

(optional bell sound)

**4**

80  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{3}{4}$

S. Sax. *f* *ff*

Tbn. rasp *pp*

E. Gtr. *p*

Voice **fixed elsewhere. Only the eyes only just**

**5**

83  $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{5}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *mf* rasp *mp f ff*

Tbn. *mf* *p* *mp pp*

E. Gtr. *mf*

Voice **light blue almost white fixed front. Ping murmur only just**

$\Delta$  (optional bell sound)

88  $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *mf* *slow gliss.*

Tbn. *f*

E. Gtr. *f*

Voice **almost never one second perhaps a way out. Head haught eyes**

94

S. Sax. *p* rasp

Tbn. *p* *mf*

E. Gtr. *p* hold until PING

Voice **light blue almost white fixed front ping**

$\Delta$  (optional bell sound)

**6** **7**

96

S. Sax.

Tbn.

E. Gtr. *fff* [wait until harmonic is inaudible before continuing]

Voice **murmur ping silence.**

$\Delta$  (optional bell sound)

98  $\text{♩} = 80$  **3**  
**4**

S. Sax. *mf* 3

Tbn. *mf* 3

E. Gtr. *mf* 3

Voice **Eyes holes light blue almost white mouth white seam like sewn invisible. Ping**  
△ (optional bell sound)

**8**

101  $\frac{3}{4}$   $\text{♩} = 60$

S. Sax.

Tbn.

E. Gtr.

Voice **murmur perhaps a nature one second almost never that much memory**

105  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\text{♩} = 60$  **3**  
**4**

S. Sax. *pp* *ppp* *f* *p*

Tbn. *ppp* *p*

E. Gtr. *ppp* *p*

Voice **almost never. White walls each its trace grey blur signs no meaning light grey almost white.**

109  $\frac{3}{4}$  **2**  
**4**

S. Sax. *sub. con sord.* *mf* *pp* *ff*

Tbn. *p* *mf* *pp* *growl* *pp* *ff*

E. Gtr. *mf* *hold until PING*

Voice **Light heat all known all white planes meeting invisible. Ping**  
△ (optional bell sound)

9

113  $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *p* *ff* *p*

Tbn. open *mf* *pp* *f* 6

E. Gtr. 8 *p*

Voice **murmur** **only just almost never one second perhaps a meaning that much memory almost never.**

116  $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$

S. Sax.

Tbn.

E. Gtr. hold until PING string over edge

Voice **White feet toes joined like sewn heels together right angle ping**

(optional bell sound)

10

119  $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{7}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. rattle keys  $\text{♩} = 80$   $\text{♩} = 60$

Tbn. strike mouthpiece with palm *p*

E. Gtr. scrape string *mf* *p*

Voice **elsewhere no sound. Hands hanging palms front legs joined like sewn.**

124  $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *mp* *f* 3 rasp

Tbn. *mp* *f* rasp

E. Gtr. 8

Voice **Head haught eyes holes light blue almost white fixed**

11

129  $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *pp*

Tbn. *pp* *f* *pp*

E. Gtr. 8 *pp*

Voice **front silence within. Ping elsewhere always there but that known not.**

(optional bell sound)

12

134  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\text{♩} = 80$

S. Sax. *mf* 3  $\text{>}$  *p* *f* growl *p* straight  $\frac{3}{4}$  *p* *f* *p*

Tbn. *mf* *p*

E. Gtr.  $\frac{8}{8}$   $\sharp$  *f* *p*

Voice **Eyes holes light blue alone uncover given blue light blue almost white only colour**

139  $\frac{5}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$

S. Sax. *p* rasp *f* *mf* *pp* *f*

Tbn. *p* *f* *mf* *pp* *f*

E. Gtr. *f* *mf* *f* hold until PING

Voice **fixed front. All white all known white planes shining white ping**

(optional bell sound)

12

143  $\frac{2}{4}$   $\text{♩} = 60$   $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$

S. Sax. *mf* *mf* *ff* *mp*

Tbn. *mf* *pp*

E. Gtr.

Voice **murmur only just almost never one second**

146  $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{3}{4}$

S. Sax. *f*

Tbn. *p*

E. Gtr. *p* *pp*

Voice **light time that much memory almost never. Bare white body**



164

S. Sax.  $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{3}{4}$

Tbn. *mf* *mf*

E. Gtr.

Voice **that known not. Nose ears white holes mouth white seam like sewn invisible. Ping**

(optional bell sound)

14

168

S. Sax.  $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

Tbn.

E. Gtr. *p* [unis]

Voice **murmurs only just almost never one second always the same**

172

S. Sax.  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

Tbn. *mf* *pp* *pp* rasp *p*

E. Gtr. *p*

Voice **all known. Given rose only just bare white body fixed**

176

S. Sax.  $\frac{3}{4}$

Tbn. *mf* *pp*

E. Gtr. *mf* *pp* repeat until stopped by PING

Voice **one yard invisible all known without within. Ping**

(optional bell sound)

15

179  $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *p*

Tbn. *f* *p*

E. Gtr. *p*

Voice perhaps a nature one second with image same time

182  $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *p* *mf* *p* *f* *p* *f* stopped by PING

Tbn. *p* *f* growl *p* *f* stopped by PING

E. Gtr. *mf* stopped by PING

Voice a little less blue and white in the wind. White ceiling shining white one square yard never seen ping.

(optional bell sound)

16

186  $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *p*

Tbn. *p*

E. Gtr. *p*

Voice perhaps a way out there one second ping

(optional bell sound)

17

188  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{5}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. rattle keys once growl straight wow *f* *p* wow

Tbn. tap mouthpiece once

E. Gtr. scrape string once

Voice silence. Traces alone uncover given black grey blurs signs no meaning

18

191  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{5}{4}$

S. Sax. *f* *pp*

Tbn. *f* *f* slur<sup>3</sup>

E. Gtr. *f* *mf* *f*

Voice **light grey almost white always the same. Ping perhaps not alone one second with image**

(optional bell sound)

193  $\frac{5}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *p* *p* *ff* hold until PING

Tbn. *p* *p* *ff* hold until PING

E. Gtr. *p* *p* *ff* F.S.

Voice **always the same same time a little less that much memory almost never ping**

(optional bell sound)

19

196  $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. **rattle keys once** *mf* *ff* *mf*

Tbn. **tap mouthpiece once** *pp* *mf*

E. Gtr. **scrape string once** *p*

Voice **silence. Given rose only just nails fallen**

199  $\frac{3}{4}$

S. Sax. *f* *f* *p* *p* *f* *mf*

Tbn. *f* *p* *f* *mf*

E. Gtr. *f* *mf*

Voice **white over. Long hair fallen white invisible over. White scars invisible**

203  $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$  17

S. Sax. *f* *mf* *ff* hold until PING

Tbn. *f* *p* mute *pp* hold until PING

E. Gtr. rasgueado behind bridge *p* hold until PING

Voice same white as flesh torn of old given rose only just. Ping  
 (optional bell sound)

20  $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{3}{4}$

S. Sax. *p* open *mf* *ff* *mf*

Tbn. *pp*

E. Gtr.

Voice image only just almost never one second

210  $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$

S. Sax. *p* *f* *p* *mp* *mf*

Tbn. *p* *f* *p* *mp* slow gliss. *mf*

E. Gtr. *p* F.S. *mf*

Voice light time blue and white in the wind. Head haught nose ears

215  $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *ff* *p* *f* rasp

Tbn. *p* *f* *ff* *p*

E. Gtr. *ff* *p* *f* *pp*

Voice white holes mouth white seam like sewn invisible over. Only the eyes given blue fixed

221

S. Sax. *f f p f* growl straight  $\frac{3}{4}$

Tbn. *f p f pp* mute

E. Gtr. *f p*

Voice **front light blue almost white only colour alone uncover. Light heat**

225

S. Sax. *mf f*

Tbn. *mf f*

E. Gtr. *f p* F.S. hold until PING

Voice **white planes shining white one only shining white infinite but that known not. Ping**

(optional bell sound)

**21**

228

S. Sax. *mf ff mf p p*

Tbn. *mf pp p* open

E. Gtr. *p* F.S.

Voice **a nature only just almost never one second with image same time**

232

S. Sax. *mf p* slow gliss. wow

Tbn. *mf p* slow gliss.

E. Gtr. *mf p*

Voice **a little less blue and white in the wind. Traces blurs light grey eyes holes light blue almost white**

235

S. Sax.

Tbn. rasp

E. Gtr.

Voice

fixed front ping

continue crotchets until stopped by PING

hold until PING

(optional bell sound)

22

237

S. Sax.

Tbn.

E. Gtr.

Voice

a meaning only just almost never ping

*mf* *ff*

*f* *pp*

*p*

hold until PING

hold until PING

(optional bell sound)

23

240

S. Sax.

Tbn.

E. Gtr.

Voice

silence. Bare white one yard fixed ping

rattle keys once

tap mouthpiece once

scrape string once

*p*

*f*

rasp

(optional bell sound)

24

243

S. Sax.

Tbn.

E. Gtr.

Voice

fixed elsewhere no sound legs joined like sewn

rattle keys once

rasp

tap mouthpiece once

scrape string once

*f*

*p*

*p*

246  $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax.

Tbn.

E. Gtr.   
string over edge *mf*

Voice **heels together right angle hands hanging palms front.**

249  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax.   
*mp* *mf* *p* hold until PING

Tbn.   
*mp* *mf* *p* rasp hold until PING

E. Gtr.   
*mf* *p* hold until PING

Voice **Head haught eyes holes light blue almost white fixed front silence within. Ping**

(optional bell sound)

**25**  $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{5}{4}$

S. Sax.

Tbn.   
*mf*

E. Gtr.   
*f* hold until PING

Voice **elsewhere always there but that known not. Ping**

(optional bell sound)

**26**  $\frac{5}{4}$   $\frac{3}{4}$

S. Sax.   
*p* *mf*

Tbn.   
*p* *mf*

E. Gtr.   
*f* *p* F.S. *p* *mf*

Voice **perhaps not alone one second with image same time a little less dim**

260

S. Sax. *f* *mf* *p*

Tbn. *f* *mf* *f*

E. Gtr. *f* *mf*

Voice **eye black and white half closed long lashes imploring that much memory almost never.**

2/4 4/4

263

S. Sax. *p* *f* *pp* *p* *f* *p* hold until PING

Tbn. *p* *f* *pp* *p* *f* *p* mute hold until PING

E. Gtr. 11:8 [timing uneven, approximate] *p* hold until PING rasgueado behind bridge

Voice **Afar flash of time all white all over all of old ping**

hold until PING

(optional bell sound)

27

267

S. Sax. *mf* *p* *f* *mf*

Tbn. open *mf* *f* *mf*

E. Gtr. *mf* *p* behind bridge *mf* (sul B) ② hold until PING

Voice **flash white walls shining white no trace eyes holes light blue almost white last colour ping**

3

(optional bell sound)

28 29

270

S. Sax. *f*

Tbn. *f* *mf*

E. Gtr. *f* *mf*

Voice **white over. Ping fixed last elsewhere**

2/4 4/4 7/4

(optional bell sound)

22

273  $\frac{7}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$

S. Sax. *p*  $\sharp$   $\flat$

Tbn. *p*  $\flat$   $\flat$

E. Gtr.  $\frac{8}{8}$  *p* string over edge *mf*

Voice || legs joined like sewn heels together right angle hands hanging palms front

277  $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *mp* *f* rasp

Tbn. *mp* *f* *p*

E. Gtr. *mp*

Voice || head haught eyes white invisible fixed front over.

284  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *mf* *ff* *mf* 5

Tbn. *pp* *p* *f*

E. Gtr. *p* *f*

Voice || Given rose only just one yard invisible bare white

287  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *mf* *pp* *f* *p* *f* hold until PING

Tbn. *mf* *pp* *p* *f* hold until PING

E. Gtr. *mf* *mf* *p* *f* hold until PING

Voice || all known without within over. White ceiling never seen ping

(optional bell sound)

30

23

291  $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *mf* *mf*  $\leftarrow$  *ff* *pp*

Tbn. *p* *pp*

E. Gtr. *p* *mf*

8 rasgueado behind bridge

Voice of old only just almost never one second

mute open

294  $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *p* *p*  $\leftarrow$  *f*

Tbn. *p* *pp* *p*  $\leftarrow$  *f*

E. Gtr. *p* *pp*

Voice light time white floor never seen ping

hold until PING

hold until PING

hold until PING

(optional bell sound)

31

296

S. Sax. *mf* *mf*  $\leftarrow$  *ff*

Tbn. *p*

E. Gtr. *p* *pp*

15 rasgueado behind bridge

Voice of old perhaps there. Ping

rit. repeat pitches (continuing dim. & rit.) until PING

hold until PING

(optional bell sound)

32

$\text{♩} = 60$

298  $\frac{3}{4}$

S. Sax. *mf* *mf*  $\leftarrow$  *ff*

Tbn. [mute] *p* *pp* *mf*

E. Gtr. *p* *mf*

8 rasgueado behind bridge

Voice of old only just perhaps a meaning

301

S. Sax.  $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$  *p* *ppp*

Tbn. *f* *p* *ppp*

E. Gtr. *p* F.S.

Voice **a nature one second almost never blue and white in the wind that much memory**

304

S. Sax. *f* *pp* *f* *pp*  $\frac{3}{4}$

Tbn. *f* *pp* *p* *f* *pp*

E. Gtr. *f* *f* F.S.

Voice **henceforth never. White planes no trace shining white one only shining white infinite but that known not.**

307 *rall.*  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\text{♩} = 60$   $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{4}{4}$

S. Sax. *mf* *pp* *f* *growl*

Tbn. *p* *mf* *pp* *mf* *pp* *f*

E. Gtr. *mf* *f*

Voice **Light heat all known all white**

310  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$

S. Sax. *mp* *mf* *p* **hold until PING**

Tbn. *mp* *mf* *p* *p* **rasp** **repeat until PING**

E. Gtr. *p* *mf* **scrape** **hold until PING** **rasgueado behind bridge**

Voice **heart breath no sound. Head haught eyes white fixed front old ping**

 (optional bell sound)

33

314  $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{2}{4}$

S. Sax. *p* *f* *p*

Tbn. *p* *f* *p*

E. Gtr. *p* *f* *p*

Voice **last murmur one second perhaps not alone eye unglorious black and white half closed long lashes imploring**

34

35

317

S. Sax. rattle keys

Tbn. tap m.p.

E. Gtr. scrape string *p*

Voice **ping** **silence** **ping** **over.**



# Derek BAILEY

## #23: Bits

[prob.] 1966-67

for solo guitar

duration 2 mins. approx  
(plus improvisation if desired)

notes:

The archive of the late Derek Bailey contains a series of numbered compositions (the highest number currently found being 23), of which several are for solo guitar.

As with all the music in the Bailey archive, there is no way of accurately dating these pieces, or assessing their relative chronology - beyond the general assertion that they all appear to have been written between approximately 1965 and 1972. Certainly these pieces bear the clear influence of dodecaphonic writing, and Webern in particular, which it is known that Bailey was studying during the mid 1960s.

**#23: Bits** dates from 1967 or earlier, since it was recorded by Bailey in that year (the recording which appears on the Tzadik CD *Pieces For Guitar*). On this recording Bailey plays the written music once through (very freely), then improvises upon the material. He does not subsequently return to the notated material without free manipulation.

Bailey's own method during this period was to increasingly use his notated pieces as starting points for improvisation; but such of his scores as are in fair copy suggest that he did not (at least initially) consider the improvisation obligatory, and that the pieces could have been performed without it. A contemporary performer could choose to either (a) play the material as written, without improvisation added, (b) follow the schematic structure of Bailey's own performance, described above, including improvisation, or (c) devise an alternative structure including improvisation which respects Bailey's aesthetic. I realise that in view of Bailey's subsequent 40-year commitment to free improvisation, option (a) might seem controversial, but I would point out that the very existence of these pieces, and any prospect of playing them again 50 years later is inherently paradoxical; also, it is clear that the Bailey of the late 1960s had not yet discarded an active interest in notational predetermination. (One option which I think would be difficult to justify philosophically would be to transcribe Bailey's own improvised sections, thus fixing them, and add them to the written score; I have made no attempt to do that.)

Items in blue are not in the original score, but are suggested by Bailey's own performance. (As mentioned, Bailey's own performance of this material is very free throughout.) This information may be disregarded or contradicted by sympathetic performers who may have a different interpretation to offer. Any indications in black are found in the original text. The marking **F** which appears several times in this piece does not indicate *forte*, but probably stands for 'footpedal' or 'footswitch'. On Bailey's own recording there seem to be two types of pedal in play, a volume pedal which is used as indicated by the editorial markings, and an overdrive or boost switch which produces a variable range of effects. At the end of bar 2, the **F** symbol seems to trigger what sounds like a change of pickups.

The **X** marking which Bailey adds to several note stems indicates a damped or muffled note, at least in his own interpretation. The exact amount of the effect varies from very subtle to rather aggressive. He plays a tremolo on the damped note in bar 12, and in the final bar omits the low Ab and plays the final note staccato, rather than as indicated.

After much consideration I have resisted adding extensive editorial dynamic markings. Many of the pieces are notated with very sparse dynamics, although Bailey would sometimes add further dynamics when making his fair copy. But clearly this does not suggest that the pieces should be played without dynamic inflection. In the first instance Bailey was writing these pieces for himself, so he would not necessarily have felt the need to document the dynamic gradations on paper at this stage. But also, within the jazz and popular music traditions from which Bailey drew his training and cultural heritage, dynamic notation is often minimal or absent, simply because it is assumed that a sensitive and committed performer will realise empathetically an appropriate (although not exclusively definitive) dynamic schema for the material. Bailey's own recorded performance offers one possible dynamic interpretation, but this should not be regarded as binding.

Therefore I have left many of these choices in the hands of the performer, and believe that Bailey would have been happy to permit any dynamic shaping which shows itself to be sensitive to and in sympathy with the implications of the notated material.

My profoundest thanks are of course due to Karen Brookman-Bailey for generously allowing me free access to this material.

Simon H. Fell (2015)

# #23: Bits

Derek BAILEY (1930-2005)

Guitar

very free

no attack (vol. ped.)

q = c. 98

no attack (vol. ped.)

pick-up change(?)

q = c. 82

rall..

mp

3

F

p

pp

ff

F

very slowly x = 66, accel.

slowly

q = c. 66

trem.

quickly

14

F

F

freely

mp

3

F

staccato

F



**Karlheinz STOCKHAUSEN**  
**Derek BAILEY**

**Plus-Minus**

score for realisation by **Karlheinz Stockhausen** (1963)  
realisation by **Derek Bailey** (1966-67)  
performing version by Simon H. Fell (2015)

for guitar duo  
(on four electric guitars)

duration 20 mins.

# Plus-Minus

score for realisation by **Karlheinz Stockhausen** (1963)

realisation by **Derek Bailey** (prob. 1966-67)

performing version by Simon H. Fell (2015)

## first player

1st guitar with  
switchable fuzz unit (variable settings), distortion/overdrive pedal & optional volume pedal (see below)

2nd guitar with  
scordatura tuning (1st up to F#, 2nd down to A, 3rd G, 4th up to F, 5th down to Gb, 6th E), switchable fuzz unit & volume pedal

## second player

1st guitar with  
switchable fuzz unit (variable settings), distortion/overdrive pedal & optional volume pedal (see below)

2nd guitar with  
scordatura tuning (1st up to F#, 2nd down to A, 3rd G, 4th up to F, 5th down to Gb, 6th E; top 3 strings damped), switchable fuzz unit & volume pedal

The effects listed above are the minimum option suggested for realising the notation; additional pedals and effects may of course be added.

The 2nd guitar:

It seems likely this should be on a stand, as it needs to be playable whilst the player is still holding the 1st guitar. Similarly, a second position (or stand) might be required for those sections where the 2nd guitar needs to be moved to the amp for feedback. I would suggest that the 'remote' volume control of the 2nd guitar would definitely imply the use of a volume pedal. The use of a further volume pedal for the first guitar may also be helpful, and would certainly reflect Bailey's own practice at this time.

Amplification: it will be clear from the score each guitarist needs to be able to amplify both their guitars simultaneously - therefore amplifiers with two input channels for each player will be required. Bailey's own practice during the period when he was performing with two simultaneous guitars was to use two amplifiers - this would probably facilitate the sections of simultaneous feedback on both guitars.

Feedback: players should bear in mind that Bailey's own instruments were semi-acoustic 'jazz' guitars (rather than rock instruments). Therefore players should perhaps aim to generate a rich and interesting (and modulable) feedback tone, rather than a standard 'electric' guitar feedback sound... perhaps.

notes:

The archive of the late Derek Bailey contains a series of numbered compositions (the highest number currently found being 23), of which several are for solo guitar.

As with much of the material in the Bailey archive, there is no way of accurately dating these pieces, or assessing their relative chronology - beyond the general assertion that they all appear to have been written between approximately 1965 and 1972. Certainly of these pieces bear the clear influence of dodecaphonic writing, and Webern in particular, which it is known that Bailey was studying during the mid 1960s. Bailey's (un-numbered) version of **Karlheinz Stockhausen's** 1963 score for realisation *Plus-Minus* probably dates from 1966 or 1967, but there is as yet no precise information regarding its dating.

Bailey has prepared a final version of 2x1 pages (53 moments) of the 2x7 pages notated by Stockhausen; according to Stockhausen's instructions this would be sufficient to represent a realisation of the piece, but it is clear from Bailey's notes that he anticipated realising at least one other page to provide a second 'layer'. Unfortunately, very little (if any) material for Bailey's second page is still extant, so I have had to use considerable creative leeway to construct a performable two-layer version of the Bailey realisation. The details of this process are outlined below, but it is important to point out that this puts the present text in a different category to other scores from the Bailey archive I have edited; in general, these have been 'fair copy' performing versions of extant texts, but here my work has involved 'completing' a version of an unfinished project using Bailey's raw material. The elements I have added have involved a certain amount of conjecture and creative choice, and therefore remain provisional and represent simply one possible version, rather than a definitive text.

Having said which, all material used in this version is from Derek Bailey's own hand. The first guitar part is exactly as he prepared it; the second guitar part has been constructed from a mix of (probable) sketches for the second guitar part, and the initial 'translation' notes that Bailey made when working from Stockhausen's score.

The elements I have added to make this performing version are as follows. (These are personal decisions based on my own ideas about how a performing version might be prepared, and I claim no academic or editorial justification for them beyond my wish to work in sympathy with the existing Bailey material.)

1. The structure of the second guitar part is of my own devising. There were very few 'moments' from the second layer in Bailey's own hand; rather than realising my own version of the remainder, I decided to use only original material notated by Bailey. Among the materials I found were the original notes on the material used to make the first layer; I used these to complete the second guitar part. It seemed appropriate that the nature of these notes gave a more cryptic, sometimes contradictory and eventually much more improvisatory feel to the second guitar part, whilst the material itself remains clearly Baileyesque. In order to avoid too close a shadowing of the first guitar part, most of the second guitar part plays the moments in retrograde - with the exception of those moments where original material was available, or the logistics of the use of the player's second guitar made this impossible.

2. The time structure is of my own devising. Bailey's own text gives no indication of how the movement through the various moments should be structured in performance time (except for precisely notating many of the tacet pauses). This performing version was prepared for the 2015 Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, within which context a piece of approximately 20 minutes was judged to be ideal. However, I can see that the piece could be longer, with a more expansive approach to each moment - but I think to make it any shorter would put restrictive limits on some of the more open-ended sections.

Given the famously obscure nature of Stockhausen's original text, and the tendencies of much experimental music of the period, I have not attempted to clarify or 'correct' the many obscure or confusing text instructions in Bailey's notation. I would suggest that deciding how to react to some of this material is clearly part of performing the piece, in common with many other experimental texts. With very few exceptions, I have maintained Bailey's original formatting with regard to upper and lower case, and the use of dynamic notation in both English and Italian.

However, there are some abbreviations which run through all Bailey's guitar pieces which it might be worth explaining. 'F.S.' stands for footswitch, and seems to call for the overdrive/boost on/off switch which Bailey himself often used. The effect is a sudden increase in volume, often accompanied by an element of light distortion. Unsurprisingly, 'F.B.' indicates feedback.

Although this piece is scored for electric guitars, Bailey's own archtop-type semi-acoustic guitars allowed him to play behind the bridge, and he sometimes notates this in his scores. Players of guitars without this possibility will have to devise an acceptable alternative effect.

My profoundest thanks are of course due to Karen Brookman-Bailey for generously allowing me free access to material in the Derek Bailey archive.

**Simon H. Fell (2015)**

# Plus-Minus

Karlheinz STOCKHAUSEN (1928-2007)

realisation: Derek BAILEY (1930-2005)

2015 performing version: Simon H. FELL (b. 1959)

**1: 0m00s**

Guitar 1

L.H. only with little impact - soft

**53: 0m00s**

Guitar 2

mute  
med. long  
FAST  
noises soft  
pitch  
use pitches from other layer to end

**0m11s**  
**TACET**

---

**2: 0m21s**

F.S. but match dynamic level of other layer

**52: 0m16s**

sound soft  
pitches  
change common pitches  
short  
long

**0m30s**  
**TACET**

---

**3: 0m36s**

**0m32s**  
**TACET**

SOFT FAST

**51: 0m41s**

accents  
FAST  
long

---

**4: 0m54s**

FEED BACK

FUZZ VERY LOUD - HOLD THROUGH UNTIL NEXT REST

**50: 1m05s**

maj (b5)  
mi (b5)  
7th  
CL. (low)  
CL. (high)  
maj 3rd  
mi (b5)  
mi 2nd  
mi 3rd  
CL. (hi)  
mi 9th interval

accel.  
med. long  
sound-noises mixture  
with av. level

**0m59s**  
**TACET**

FEED BACK continues

5: 1m26s

FAST SOFT ANY ORDER

1m19s  
TACET

49: 1m26s

mute  
long  
noises soft  
pitch  
pitches from other layer

1m34s  
TACET

6: 1m44s

play 6-note F major  
étouffé twice  
soft

1m47s  
TACET

1m47s  
TACET

7: 1m49s

*mf*

+ pitches from other layer  
hold as long as possible [bring up volume on 2nd guitar]

48: 1m49s

fast  
noises hard  
dist. pitch  
short long  
change pitches if in other layer

2m07s  
TACET

8: 2m13s

1st gtr.

FAST

2nd gtr.  
resonance continues

2m30s  
TACET

PLUS NOTE from other layer

STRIKE 2ND GUITAR (scordatura tuning)

47: 2m13s

mi 2  
ma 2  
mi tr.  
ma tr.

move to pitches in other layer  
accents  
ritard  
noises soft  
pitch

2m33s  
TACET

9: 2m41s

[volume down on 2nd guitar]

15<sup>ma</sup>

tremolo behind bridge  
as long as poss.  
slightly increasing speed of trem.

9: 2m48s sign

gliss. gliss.

10: 2m35s

9: 2m48s

10: 3m05s

FAST  
match dyn.

8: 2m52s

7: 2m57s

45: 3m03s

pp

f

f

accents  
note from other event first  
long  
medium  
accel

maj 2  
mi 2  
mi tr  
maj tr

11: 3m23s

PITCHES FROM OTHER LAYER  
SOFT MUTED FUZZ

SOFT FUZZ

3m21s  
TACET

44: 3m23s

FAST  
av. level  
SHORT  
LONG  
MUTE  
sound-noises mixture

12: 3m56s

SOFT

SUSTAIN AS  
LONG AS POSSIBL

3m51s  
TACET

42: 3m56s  
FAST LOUD (with fuzz)  
étouffé clusters

4m24s  
TACET

41: 4m26s

**13: 4m33s**  
 5th & mi2 soft, pitches  
 fast noises (scrape with pitch)  
 mi-maj 7th

**4m46s**  
**TACET** **to 2nd guitar**  
 (scordatura tuning - see notes)

**4m35s**  
**TACET**

**40: 4m38s**  
 SOFT clusters  
 regular rhythm  
 with **ritard.**

**14: 4m57s**  
 on **2nd guitar**  
 soft sounds  
 étouffé - high

**15: 5m20s**  
 (add string around strings)  
 scrapes & étouffé

**5m38s**  
**TACET**  
 (damp top 3 strings)

**5m15s**  
**TACET**

**39: 5m20s**

**5m38s**  
**TACET**

**16: 5m43s**  
 SLOWLY FUZZ  
 lower bottom 3 strings  
 very loud  
 until all 3 completely indeterminate pitch

periodic

**38: 5m43s**

**12: 6m23s**

**13: 6m47s**

**14: 7m11s**  
 5 times

SOFT

**15: 6m36s**

**16: 8m00s**  
*8va* ----- **to 2nd guitar**  
 (scordatura tuning - see notes)  
 top 3 strings damped

**17: 8m24s**  
 on **2nd guitar**  
 SLOWLY FUZZ  
 lower bottom 3 strings  
 very loud  
 until all 3 completely indeterminate pitch

9m47s  
TACET

29: 9m57s  
play six 2 string combinations  
match levels

10m33s  
TACET

31: 10m44s  
sounds on loose strings ?

32: 11m07s  
including  on stretched lower string

11m19s  
TACET

damp top 3 strings, place 2nd guitar to amp

33: 11m30s  
controlled feedback on 2nd guitar  
varying volume  
if no effect release top three strings

12m29s  
TACET (to 1st guitar)

12m29s  
TACET

36: 12m39s  
try for F.B. and regain, if poss, F.B. in 2nd gtr; aim for 'beat' between F.B.s

2nd gtr. resonance/feedback continues

13m16s  
TACET

29: 12m39s  
play six 2 string combinations  
match levels

13m16s  
TACET

38: 13m27s      39: 13m31s

SOFT

31: 13m27s  
sounds on loose strings ?

13m49s  
TACET

32: 13m49s  
including on stretched lower string

40: 13m54s  
SOFT clusters  
regular rhythm  
with ritard.

14m05s  
TACET

14m15s  
place 2nd guitar to amp  
(top 3 strings still damped)

33: 14m15s  
controlled feedback on 2nd guitar  
varying volume

14m17s  
TACET

if no effect release top three strings

41: 14m28s

SOFT FUZZ

14m35s  
TACET

42: 14m37s  
FAST LOUD (with fuzz)  
étouffé clusters

14m58s  
TACET

43: 15m00s

CONTROLLED release of volume on 2nd guitar

SOFT étouffé bottom string

2nd gtr. resonance/feedback continues

15m13s  
TACET (to 1st guitar)

move 2nd guitar away from amp.

44: 15m23s

play 8 times

15m40s

TACET

FAST? balance with other layer

36: 15m23s

try for F.B. and regain, if poss, F.B. in 2nd gtr; aim for 'beat' between F.B.s

45: 15m45s

start with note from other layer repeated staccato

16m32s

TACET

43: 16m10s

CONTROLLED release of volume on 2nd guitar

16m00s

TACET

SOFT  
étouffé bottom string

46: 16m42s

RAS. BEHIND BRIDGE **GTR. 1**  
RAS. ON LOOSE STRINGS **GTR. 2**

17m03s

TACET

11: 16m35s

46: 16m50s

Ras. on loose strings **gtr. 2**  
+ ras. behind bridge **gtr. 1**

mute  
4 times louder  
or softer  
hard sounds  
pitch  
short  
long

47: 17m05s

note from other layer repeated staccato  
[45] chords: play uneven arp.  
étouffé - ritard.

17m18s

TACET

6: 17m16s

5: 17m25s

sign

48: 17m28s

Musical notation for 48: 17m28s. It features a treble clef with a *8va* dynamic marking. The notes are: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. There are accents (>) over the first four notes. The notation ends with a double bar line and a **TACET** box.

FUZZ NO FUZZ  
 FAST  
 CHANGE PITCHES IF SAME AS OTHER LAYER

49: 17m43s

Musical notation for 49: 17m43s. It features a treble clef with a *8va* dynamic marking. The notes are: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The notation ends with a double bar line and a **TACET** box.

17m48s  
**TACET**

F.S. to pitch from other layer

4: 17m28s

Musical notation for 4: 17m28s. It features a treble clef with a *8va* dynamic marking. The notes are: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. There is a *+1* marking above the notes. The notation ends with a double bar line.

3 times louder than previous event  
 long long  
 lasts as long as possible but stop at next rest  
 loud noises  
 - pitch - non-pitch

F.B.

50: 17m50s

Musical notation for 50: 17m50s. It features a treble clef with a *8va* dynamic marking. The notes are: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. There are various accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) and a *gradual accel.* marking. The notation ends with a double bar line.

F.S. FUZZ

gradual accel..

3: 17m55s

Musical notation for 3: 17m55s. It features a treble clef with a *8va* dynamic marking. The notes are: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. There is a *constant* marking above the notes. The notation ends with a double bar line.

constant  
 B - highest pitch  
 short short med. med. med. rest  
 fast as poss.  
 noises soft  
 distinct pitches

2: 18m20s

Musical notation for 2: 18m20s. It features a treble clef with a *8va* dynamic marking. The notes are: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. There is a *-1* marking above the notes. The notation ends with a double bar line.

match dynamic level of other layer  
 short long short  
 fast as poss.  
 sounds soft with precise pitches

18m33s  
**TACET**

51: 18m43s

Musical notation for 51: 18m43s. It features a treble clef with a *8va* dynamic marking. The notes are: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. There are accents (>) over the first two notes. The notation ends with a double bar line.

18m51s  
**TACET**

SUS. TILL GONE

1: 18m43s

Musical notation for 1: 18m43s. It features a treble clef with a *15ma* dynamic marking. The notes are: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The notation ends with a double bar line.

MUTED  
 MED. MED. LONG LONG  
 noises, soft with distinguishable pitches

18m30s  
**TACET**

52: 18m56s

F.S. pick - SOFT FUZZ

19m02s  
TACET

53: 19m13s

FOR A LONG TIME  
ADDING PITCHES FROM  
OTHER LAYER  
IF POSS.

SOFT

19m49s  
TACET

19m55s

TACET

20m00s

FINE

20m00s

FINE

## 7: 2015 hcmf// programme - Derek Bailey profile

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The author of probably the seminal text on musical improvisation, *Improvisation; its Nature and Practice in Music*, Derek Bailey (1930-2005) was a technically astonishing and unremittingly inventive guitarist, whose research into the technical possibilities of his instrument was relentless, uncompromising and inspiring. But if Bailey's influence on modern guitarists and the evolution of his instrument is significant, it is his 40-year involvement with the creation, evolution and documentation of what has become known as *Improvised Music* that is his most valuable legacy to the artistic world. In a period of astonishingly intense musical development in the second half of the 1960s, Bailey and other adventurous British musicians (including Tony Oxley, Evan Parker, Barry Guy, Paul Rutherford, John Stevens, Trevor Watts and AMM) developed a style of ensemble improvising that was revolutionary and widely influential, carefully extricating itself from the hierarchical associations of free jazz, the aleatoric/happening environments of Black Mountain experimentalism and the drone- or riff-based explorations of psychedelic rock.

Subsequently Derek Bailey conspicuously (and sometimes controversially) rejected all methods of organisation or determination of sounds in time, with the exception of "through the powers of improvisation". In single-mindedly so doing he acquired a reputation as an ascetic, a purist and an evangelising apostle of improvisation; but Bailey's rejection of the comfortable, the predictable and the gratifying was neither high-minded asceticism, nor a Yorkshireman's awkward bloody-mindedness. For him, the solution to the problem of developing a constantly renewing aesthetic for musical dialogue was the (almost) consistent rejection of habitual playing circumstances, familiar groupings, regular collaborators, mutually agreed principles and other accommodations to so-called 'successful' music-making.

In view all this, the amount of notated music Bailey composed in the late 60s may come as a surprise, although the existence of these pieces was not a secret. Bailey rarely discussed this material, but he never destroyed or publicly repudiated it, merely losing interest in it. The mature Bailey found the whole rigmarole of pre-determining music in advance of performance ridiculously time-consuming and hugely over-rated; the 'powers of improvisation' had rendered composition irrelevant. Doubtless, Bailey would have expressed wry incomprehension as to why anyone would be interested in these old scribblings, pitying the folly of those who are so attached to the past and its fetishistic totems. He may well have improvised an Appleyard rant about the matter - but I hope he would not have refused to let people hear this music. *Ping*, for example, is a genuinely intriguing composition, clearly costing Bailey a great deal of effort, and which deserves to be heard after almost 50 years in a small suitcase.

However, let's be very clear; playing these pieces does not represent an 'outing' of Derek Bailey as a closet composer, nor is it an attempt to re-balance the focus of Derek's life and work away from free improvisation by one iota. It is simply an opportunity to understand in a little more detail one tiny part of the career of an extraordinary musician, a vital musical philosopher and a man of rare principle.