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DANCES WITH SAUSAGES: EXPLORING MUSICALITY IN COMEDY THROUGH AN ANALYSIS OF *THE MORECAMBE AND WISE SHOW*

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A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts by Research

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Copyright statement

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Abstract

This thesis uses established theoretical work on musicality in theatre in order to develop an understanding of the use of musicality in comedy, through an analysis of *The Morecambe and Wise Show*. David Roesner's work on musicality in theatre is of particular interest, as it focuses on musicality as the influence of music on work that is not necessarily musical. This allows musicality to be considered within a performance form that can include the use of music, but is not reliant on music to create comedy. Theoretical work on comedy performance from authors such as Oliver Double also provides support for the analysis; although this theoretical work does not directly address musicality in comedy, it discusses elements of comedy performance that can be analysed within the framework of musicality. This theoretical base is used to analyse a wide range of material from the BBC episodes of *The Morecambe and Wise Show*, including material such as the 'Breakfast' routine, the 'Singin' in the Rain' routine, and the 'Grieg Piano Concerto' sketch. The analysis of musicality in this material aims to develop an overview of the use of musicality in the show. As such, it covers a number of different ways in which musicality can be seen within the material. The ability of music to create humour is considered through the use of intermusicality and David Huron's devices for creating musical humour. The role of rhythm within the use of musicality in comedy is also considered, and this is then developed through discussions of the use of sonic punctuation, the musicality of movement, and the musicality of speech.

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List of abbreviations

For ease of reading, in-text citations of *The Morecambe and Wise Show* have been abbreviated. All citations of *The Morecambe and Wise Show* cite the BBC Collection listed in the Bibliography. Citations will read as follows:

(TM&WS, 2010: s1e1) indicates that the material cited comes from Series 1, Episode 1.

(TM&WS, 2010: cs1969) indicates that the material cited comes from the Christmas Special from 1969.

(TM&WS, 2010: me1970) indicates that the material cited comes from the Golden Rose of Montreux Entry Programme from 1970.

Where the citation follows a transcript, this has been transcribed by myself from the BBC DVDs.

Introduction

Introduction to Musicality

The concept of musicality in a theatre or performance context goes beyond the use of incidental music or songs. It might be obvious, perhaps, to talk about musicality within musical theatre, with its all-singing, all-dancing spectacles. However, there is a growing amount of scholarship that uses musicality to explore relationships between music and theatre beyond this 'exterior' level of song and dance, "venturing beyond the territories of music as an audible phenomenon or as a metaphor for other practices and address[ing], instead, musicality in terms of dramaturgical and embodied processes" (Frendo, 2014: 226). This exploration of musicality as a part of the theatre-making process allows it to be applied across a wide breadth of theatre practices, perhaps confirming David Roesner's view that "the notion of a musicality in theatre, as an art form and as the theatrical event itself, would refer to the intrinsic affinity of the stage to music, with which it was, so to speak, issued at birth" (2010: 294). This idea of an "intrinsic affinity of the stage" suggests that all theatre or performance has the potential to be considered within the framework of musicality, rather than its use being limited to one specific performance type. This is reflected in scholarly interest in the role of musicality in theatre; musicality has been used to analyse the work of, amongst others, Appia, Artaud, and Meyerhold (Roesner, 2014), Beckett (Kulezic-Wilson, 2011; Roesner, 2014), Stanislavsky (Frendo, 2014), and Staniewski and the Gardzienice Centre for Theatre Practices (Spatz, 2013).

This wide ranging application of musicality is made possible because the concept of musicality has a certain amount of flexibility. As Roesner explains, his "notion of musicality in theatre […] does not […] consist of a normative set of criteria, but functions as an

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umbrella term which covers a range of aspirations of one art form (theatre) towards another (music), which is contingent on changing historical contexts, aesthetic discourses and artistic aims and purposes" (2014: 9). This dependence on changing contexts, discourses, and aims allows individuals to develop their own methods of using musicality based on the circumstances they are working in, their prior training (if any), and their performance or production history; this can mean that two practitioners can use the same elements of musicality, and yet create two entirely different methods of working or performance aesthetics that are still recognisable as a product of a focus on musicality. Roesner suggests that "While Appia and Meyerhold use musicality not least to discipline actors, Chaikin, for example, employs it to liberate them" (2014: 257), which shows that whilst some practitioners use musicality in one way, another practitioner can use it to achieve an entirely opposite effect.

The flexibility of concept that musicality offers is also visible in the increasing number of publications that use musicality as a topic of discussion and study across a wide range of fields, particularly in the last twenty years. The majority of publications on musicality focus on human musicality, although there have been some investigations into the possibility of animal musicality. Birdsong in particular is often used as an example to explore animal musicality because of its structural similarities to human music and its use as a form of communication between birds (Rothenburg et al, 2014; Yan, 2013). There have also been forays into developing technological musicality. Through a combination of computer science and musicology, musicality has been approached as a kind of grammar which could be developed and used in computer programs to write music and create sound (Laske, 1993).

Despite these examples of investigation into animal and technological musicality, the viewpoint that "the noun 'musicality' is almost exclusively used to describe a human talent, usually associated with a sense of appreciation and competitive comparison" (Roesner,

2010: 293) is reinforced by the large amount of publications that discuss aspects of human musicality. The concept of communicative musicality, which suggests that our ability to communicate with one another is built upon our innate musical ability (Malloch and Trevarthen, 2009), crosses a wide variety of fields that include music therapy and developmental, educational, and music psychology (Oxford University Press, 2014). Work on communicative musicality often focuses on the role of musicality as a tool that plays a part in children's development. Studies cover a wide range of topics, for example, "examining how infants perceive organized sound patterns, the study of links between early language acquisition and musicality, and consideration of how young children's musical activities reflect or correspond to locally contextualized situated meanings" (Forrester and Borthwick-Hunter, 2015: 93). The relationship between language and musicality has also been discussed in relation to foreign language acquisition, where it has been suggested that "the musicality of speech […] has an effect […] on [students'] entire language acquisition process" (Mora, 2000: 146).

Musicality is also used as a method of discussing the influences that the arts have on each other. As discussed above, musicality has been used in a theatre performance context to consider the influence of music on performance processes. In literature studies, musicality has been applied to both poetry and prose writing, examining literary characteristics such as rhyme or alliteration. However, there have also been suggestions that musicality is bound to a philosophical understanding of what music is (Wood, 1996), and that musicality as a term is constantly in flux because it is tied to contexts of production and reception which will differ between author and critic, and between critic and critic (Crapoulet, 2009). These suggestions support Roesner's view that musicality is dependent on changing contexts, discourses, and aims (2014: 9), again emphasising the flexible nature of musicality.

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This flexible nature is important for developing theories of musicality across various disciplines, but is also somewhat problematic. Musicality's increasing use as a topic of interest across so many fields provides excellent opportunities for interdisciplinary studies. However, this means that attempting to pin down a specific definition of what musicality is proves difficult, as each field, and potentially each scholar within a field, can have a slightly different definition that suits the need of that particular field. Baroni, who writes from a musicology standpoint, suggests that musicality "is one of those concepts that typically lacks precise boundaries and that is difficult to define in scientific terms" (2008: 212). In cognitive science, Marcus believes that "it must be acknowledged that musicality itself is multifaceted. Musicality clearly consists of many different components, ranging from perceptual capacities for detecting pitch and rhythm, as well as motor capacities, to emotional/theory of mind capacities for anticipating an audience's reaction" (2012: 501). Although the lack of a precise definition can be problematic in a scientific capacity, it is musicality's lack of precise boundaries and multifaceted construction that allows it to be investigated in so many different ways. In Malloch and Trevarthen's work on communicative musicality, they use musicality to mean "the innate human abilities that make music production and appreciation possible" (2009: 4). Perret, whose work builds on communicative musicality in a music therapy setting, considers musicality "to be the ability to handle the qualitative aspects of musical communication" (2005: 20). Cross, exploring the link between musicality's biological and cultural roles, suggests that musicality as "a generic capacity for music […] is related to the capacity for culture, helping to support and sustain it" (2008: 149).

In discussing the "common confusion between 'musicality', the concept, and music, the art form", Crapoulet suggests that musicality "leads us to question the essence of music" (2009: 81). It is perhaps this idea of questioning that allows musicality to be so widely used

across so many subject areas. Rather than relying on a specific set of criteria that are held as absolute indicators of musicality, traces and influences of music that are not specific to one moment of music history can be looked for and found in a wide variety of settings, from the sciences to the arts. The arts in particular demonstrate a strong tendency to be influenced by other disciplines, highlighted by Walter Pater's idea that "All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music" (Pater, 2010: 129). This has been particularly noted by theatre practitioners, some of whom have sought to use music to change the way that theatre is created and received, and thus have brought musicality into theatre. Even within the discipline of theatre, however, musicality still refuses to be confined to one specific definition. While concluding his exploration of musicality in theatre, Roesner suggests using musicality "as a term to shed light on what may be considered key qualities of 'music' in a given context, and also on how some of these qualities (of perception, of cognition, of composition, of creation, etc.) may apply to 'non-musical' scenarios" (2014: 259). The emphasis on the "given context" takes into account the flexible nature of musicality, and allows each practitioner to make their own decisions about what the key qualities of musicality are in their work. I believe that this focus on musicality in a given context is key to applying musicality to other performance types that have not yet been fully explored in terms of their musicality, such as comedy.

Why Musicality in Comedy?

In his 2006 book *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation*, David Huron examines how music can be used create laughter. He comments that musical comedies such as *opera buffa* and Gilbert-and-Sullivan-like operetta use the plot and spoken text as a source of comedy, but there are also examples of humour being created in instrumental

works, such as Haydn's 'Joke Quartet' and Mozart's *Ein musikalischer Spass* (A musical joke) (Huron, 2006: 283-4). Huron outlines nine devices for creating musical humour that are based on his analysis of the work of composer Peter Schickele: incongruous sounds, mixed genres, drifting tonality, metric disruptions, implausible delays, excessive repetition, incompetence cues, incongruous quotation, and misquotation (284-7). All of these devices function by violating listener expectation in a variety of ways, such as making changes to a familiar piece of music, delaying an expected resolution, or suddenly changing the style of a piece of music (287). Whilst Huron developed these devices through consideration of the work of a composer of instrumental music, this concept of creating laughter through musical devices can also be seen in the work of comedians, most notably in the work of Bill Bailey. Bailey often incorporates musically inspired material into his shows, such as cockney influences on classical composers (*Is it Bill Bailey?*, 1998) and his experiments with playing television themes in different musical styles (*The Royal Variety Performance*, 2012). This strong musical basis in his work even lead to a tour entitled *Bill Bailey's Remarkable Guide to the Orchestra*, which was performed at venues such as The Sage Gateshead and The Royal Albert Hall that are both also known for hosting classical music concerts.

Huron's work establishes a theoretical basis for analysing music's ability to create laughter, but is firmly established as an analysis of music, rather than musicality. Whilst the use of music is considered a part of musicality, musicality's main focus is on music's ability to interact with and inform "'non-musical' scenarios" (Roesner, 2014: 259); this could mean that the performance "might not even [contain] a single musical note" (Roesner, 2010: 298). Huron's emphasis that his devices create humour through the use of broken expectations develops a theory of humour that could be transferred to non-musical material. His discussion of the creation and violation of expectations bears similarities to the incongruity theory of humour, which is built around the principle that "all jokes involve

some kind of mismatch of ideas or a confusion of meaning about words" (Double, 1997: 89). Huron's devices create an incongruity that violates expectations, leading to laughter. It is possible that examining musicality in comedy may show that broken expectations are not just limited to word play or musical play, but is also present in other parts of the performance process.

Although academic work on contemporary comedy forms is expanding, there is currently a lack of scholarship directly addressing musicality in comedy. Works such as Oliver Double's *Getting the Joke: The Inner Workings of Stand-up Comedy* (2014) and John Wright's *Why is That So Funny? A Practical Exploration of Physical Comedy* (2006), which discuss performance processes in different styles of comedy, hint at elements of musicality in comedy performance through their discussion of rhythm and timing but do not directly acknowledge it. Whilst addressing possible areas that his work on musicality in theatre could be expanded into, Roesner acknowledges the presence of musicality in comedy performance; he suggests that musicality may be found in "popular/comedic performances from *commedia* to slapstick, from Dario Fo to Monty Python and their expertise in rhythm and timing" (Roesner 2014: 256), although he does not develop this further. This focus on the performance processes suggests that musicality could provide a theoretical framework for analysing comedy performance beyond its subject matter.

This thesis aims to address this underdeveloped area of scholarship by using Roesner's work on musicality in theatre as a theoretical basis for the analysis of comedy performance. Attempting to analyse the use of musicality in comedy generally would be a massive undertaking. Just as theatre practitioners can potentially have their own version of musicality within their work, each comedy actor or group could also have their own version of musicality. For example, Bill Bailey, whose act includes material based on musical examples, most likely uses musicality in a different way to Eddie Izzard, whose act is

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primarily based on spoken material. This is further complicated by the multitudes of styles of comedy, such as stand-up comedy, physical comedy, sketch comedy, and related performance types such as clowning and mime, which again may all have their own version of musicality. An initial narrowing of the field is necessary to establish musicality's potential as a tool for analysing comedy. I will be considering musicality in British comedy performance, specifically in the work of Morecambe and Wise.

Introduction to Morecambe and Wise

Morecambe and Wise were a British variety theatre double act who made a successful transition to television, although they continued to make stage appearances throughout their career. I will specifically be using material from their BBC television programme entitled *The Morecambe and Wise Show* (TM&WS, 2010). Working in a lengthy rehearsal process with director John Ammonds (who was later succeeded by Ernest Maxin) on scripts from a group of writers, the majority from main writer Eddie Braben, Morecambe and Wise developed a wide range of material that built on skills they had initially developed in the variety theatre. The large majority of their work is built around verbal humour, sometimes just as the double act, and sometimes with other supporting performers and guest star performers. Their work also featured visual, physical, and musical comedy, which could act as a support for another form of comedy, or act as the basis for a sketch independently of verbal humour. The material used on the show ranges from very short sketches less than a minute in length (also known as quickies) to extended sketches over twenty minutes long that were framed as plays written by Wise. There were also sketches that played on the premise of Morecambe and Wise living together, and were set in and around a flat that they shared, creating something similar to situation comedy. This broad array of forms and

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length of material allows for a varied exploration of how musicality functions in different types of comedy, and could act as a point of comparison between types of comedy.

Morecambe and Wise's background in live performance may also make the application of theoretical work on musicality in theatre an easier process, as some of the skills they acquired through their work on stage may be similar to skills discussed in work on musicality in theatre. Although *The Morecambe and Wise Show* was created to be broadcast on television, Morecambe and Wise brought elements of the variety theatre into the programme. The set design featured a raised wooden stage with tabs and curtains, which created the feel of a variety theatre in the studio, and the show was filmed in front of a live studio audience, with any pre-recorded segments being played in to allow the audience's reaction to be captured for broadcast. As well as performing on the full stage, Morecambe and Wise also often performed in front of the closed curtains; in the theatre, having comedians in front of the curtains allowed the stage to be changed for the next act without needing a break in the show, and Morecambe and Wise would have filled this role throughout their career. Performing in front of the curtains restricted performers to what set and props they could get on and off stage themselves in the short time allowed, meaning instead that the focus was on the skills of the performer(s) and their ability to use themselves as comic tools. The show was also structured in a similar manner to a variety show, featuring musical numbers from guest musicians, and guest stars making appearances in sketches. Alongside this creation of theatre on television, Morecambe and Wise were also encouraged by their directors to make use of constraints of television such as the framing of camera shots in order to develop their performance skills for television. Ideas such as using the camera to perform an aside or reaction shot, which would be lost in the auditorium of a large theatre, or exploiting camera angles to hide a punchline until the time was right to reveal it, became a key part of their performance. The ability to pre-

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record sketches that required a lot of scenery and set-up work allowed Morecambe and Wise to create larger, more ambitious material that would have been very difficult to achieve whilst touring in the theatres.

Although most of the footage of the first BBC series has been lost, the second series through to the tenth, along with seven Christmas Specials, are available on DVD (TM&WS, 2010). This gives fifty-two standard episodes, which are between forty and fifty minutes long, and the seven Christmas Specials, which are between fifty-five and sixty-five minutes long, spanning an eight-year time period. Whilst part of each programme is taken up by at least one musical number from guest musicians, and titles and credits were also present, this still leaves a wealth of material performed by Morecambe and Wise. The availability of this amount of material means that an exploration of musicality within *The Morecambe and Wise Show* can suggest whether the way musicality is used within the show remains the same throughout the period, or whether it changes to reflect the growing skills of the performers or the needs of the material being produced at the time.

Variety theatre grew out of the earlier music hall entertainment, with the term variety first coming into use in the early 1900s as a means of distinguishing the two forms of performance (Double, 2012: 38). Variety shows were "not bound together by a narrative or even a theme" (12) and would contain performances from "dancers, comedians, singers, musicians" (20) and speciality acts, which could be "magicians, acrobats, jugglers, ventriloquists or any of the other weird and wonderful acts which appeared in variety theatres" (10). Variety theatre experienced a slump in the 1920s, but was successfully revived at the end of the decade, and continued to run throughout World War II (51-68). In the 1950s, the popularity of variety began to decline, partly due to the rise of television and rock and roll, and most of the dedicated variety theatres had gone by the mid-1960s (69-92). Variety theatre lived on through shows in town halls and civic theatres (201), summer

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seasons at seaside resorts, and pantomime (206). There were also television variety shows such as *Sunday Night at the London Palladium*, and some acts were able to secure their own shows, such as Morecambe and Wise (205). *The Morecambe and Wise Show* maintained the 'variety' of variety performance, featuring musicians, guest actors, dancers, and sketches which acknowledged the specialty acts such as ventriloquists and strongmen.

Both Eric Morecambe and Ernie Wise started in variety theatre as solo child performers who danced and sang, eventually appearing in the same touring show (McCann, 1998: 21-89). The double act grew from a friendship that developed between Morecambe and Wise whilst touring. After a period of separation due to the Second World War, Morecambe and Wise resumed performing, gradually working their way up the bill on the British Variety circuit and also performing in pantomimes. Having achieved a level of popularity in the variety theatres, they began to perform regularly on radio in 1949 (83). They gradually built up a reputation for themselves, and in 1954 their first television series, *Running Wild*, was broadcast, but was not well received by critics (105-166). After the failure of Running Wild, Morecambe and Wise returned to the variety theatres, again having to build up a reputation, but their ability to be billed as 'stars of radio and television', even if the television series had not been successful, boosted their appeal (117-130). Having again established themselves as a formidable act on the variety circuit, they were offered another television series by ATV in 1961 (131-149). *The Morecambe and Wise Show*, also known as *Two of a Kind* whilst at ATV, was much more successful than *Running Wild*. Moving to the BBC in 1968, and then to ITV in 1978, *The Morecambe and Wise Show* ran for twenty series and spanned over twenty years. During that time, Morecambe and Wise still performed on radio, in summer seasons, and in pantomime, as well as starring in four films: *The Intelligence Men*, *That Riviera Touch*, *The Magnificent Two*, and *Night Train to Murder* (131-293).

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I have chosen to use *The Morecambe and Wise Show* in order to explore musicality in comedy because of Morecambe and Wise's strong background in live performance and the wide range of performance types present within the programme. This allows my analysis of their work to explore a variety of ways that musicality is present within their work, whilst keeping a tight focus on one specific moment in comedy performance history; in this case, the focus is on Morecambe and Wise's television work during their time at the BBC. I will be following Oliver Double's convention of describing material from *The Morecambe and Wise Show* in the present tense, as the performances, whilst being recorded for television broadcast, were still very much a live event played in front of a studio audience (Double, 2014: 325). I hope this analysis will demonstrate an alternative method of analysing comedy that is not specifically focused on the manipulation of language within jokes, and also allow for a consideration of how other performance elements also form a part of the creation of humour. At the same time, I believe that broadening the use of concepts of musicality first developed as part of work on musicality in theatre will demonstrate musicality's ability to be transferred between performance media, and encourage others to explore musicality in whatever performance work interests them.

Outline of Sections

This thesis will begin with an exploration of the use of music to create comedy in *The Morecambe and Wise Show*. Huron's devices for creating musical humour will be used as a starting point, with a consideration of how the devices are used to violate audience expectation within the material. This section will focus on three devices in particular: incompetence cues, mixed genres, and incongruous quotation. This will be followed by a section discussing the referential power of music through the concept of 'intermusicality'.

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The presence of intermusicality in Huron's devices will be discussed, as well as examining the use of intermusicality in further material from *The Morecambe and Wise Show*.

After this exploration of how music is used to create comedy, this thesis will then consider how musicality functions within *The Morecambe and Wise Show*. This will begin with a section discussing the role of rhythm and timing in both musicality and comedy, in order to establish their importance within musicality in comedy and to establish ideas that will be referred to in later sections. This will be followed by a section on the use of sonic punctuation in *The Morecambe and Wise Show*, which examines how sound can be used to add emphasis for comic effect through rhythmical synchronisation and matching sound quality to movement quality. This will be illustrated through the use of further material from *The Morecambe and Wise Show*. There will then be a section considering the musicality of movement, with particular attention paid to the rhythmic sensitivity of the performers. The use of rhythmical movement in work discussed in the section on sonic punctuation will be acknowledged before exploring the role of rhythm in movement in other material. The consideration of musicality in *The Morecambe and Wise Show* will conclude with a section discussing the musicality of speech. The use of rhythm will again be a prominent point of analysis, alongside consideration of other aspects of musicality in speech, and will be explored in further material.

Chapter 1 The Use of Music in Comedy

1.1 Musical Humour

As discussed in the introduction, Huron's nine devices for creating musical humour focus on musical analysis, rather than musicality. However, beginning with an analysis of the role of music in comedy may reveal similarities between the creation of comedy through music and the creation of comedy through other means (such as speech, physical work, or visual gags), and thus suggest areas which may be considered from a musicality standpoint. Huron emphasises that the nine devices he developed "all involve violations of expectation" (2006: 287). Whilst they might target slightly different areas of listener expectation, they all ultimately create laughter by violating the listener's expectation. While much of the music on *The Morecambe and Wise Show* fills the role of accompaniment or incidental music, there are some instances where the inclusion of music makes use of Huron's devices in order to create humour.

One of Huron's devices that occurs multiple times within the BBC recordings of *The Morecambe and Wise Show* is the use of incompetence cues. Incompetence cues occur when musical passages are "performed in a crude or unrefined manner", including use of "bad pitch intonation, implausibly loud sounds, sloppy rhythms, and crude instrumental or vocal timbres" (Huron 2004: 702). These unrefined performances break audience expectations by violating "a number of performance-related schematic norms" (Huron 2006: 287). This device is most often used in conjunction with the appearance of a guest performer on the show, who is either made to look bad or messed around by the apparent inability of the other performers.

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In Series 9, Episode 2, singer Frankie Vaughan is asked by Wise to perform a second song as a 'special request'. He declines, saying that he does not have the music for that song, but is assured by Wise that the music has been taken care of. The introduction for the song is played by the orchestra that provided the accompaniment for Vaughan's first song, but as the introduction ends, the curtains pull back to reveal a 4-piece band, featuring Wise on drums, Morecambe on trombone, a gentleman on banjo, and a woman on piano. As Vaughan begins to sing, the 4-piece band takes over the accompaniment. Their performance is much less polished than the orchestra, although generally in roughly the right key and rhythm, and the balance between the musicians and singer is often unsettled, with Morecambe on trombone drowning out Vaughan's singing. At the end of the song, Morecambe fails to hit his final note correctly, resulting in multiple attempts to get the final note right. Vaughan looks less than impressed, and leaves the stage after they have finally finished playing, stomping on his straw hat in frustration on the way off (TM&WS, 2010: s9e2). The combination of "bad pitch intonation" and "implausibly loud sounds" (Huron, 2004: 702) creates a stark contrast between this performance and Vaughan's first song, and even the introduction to the second song. Having just seen Vaughan give a polished, professional performance, the audience would expect the second song to be performed to the same high standards, but this expectation is then violated by the incompetence cue. The choice to delay the incompetence cue until the professional orchestra has played the introduction helps to reinforce the audience's expectation of a polished performance before it is finally broken, heightening the contrast between performance standards and generating laughter from the audience.

In the 1976 Christmas Special, Morecambe and Wise announce that they're going to do "something for the old folks", and ask for the pianist to be sent on. The pianist arrives in hat, scarf, gloves, and a large overcoat. As he removes these outer layers, it becomes clear

that the pianist is the singer Elton John. After some jokes about contemporary slang, how much John will get paid, and what Morecambe and Wise are going to perform, it is decided that they will perform 'Play a Simple Melody', with Morecambe singing the first melody and Wise singing the countermelody. However, when they attempt to start the song, Morecambe sings his first few words, and then switches to singing Wise's melody with him when he joins in. Wise attempts to explain to Morecambe that he is supposed to carry on with his part, and they try again, with the same result. After a few rounds of attempting to sing the song and then Wise explaining, Elton John attempts to explain the principle to Morecambe, but Morecambe again keeps switching to Wise's melody when he joins in. After repeated explanations, John loses his temper, declaring he is not used to working under these circumstances. This upsets Morecambe, who leaves the stage, and Wise follows after scolding John. John is left alone onstage, and attempts to sidle off in order to save face (TM&WS, 2010: cs1976). Here Morecambe's inability to sing the part he has been assigned when Wise begins singing a separate part provokes John into reacting in an angry manner. This reaction is out of place in a professional performance setting as it reveals a loss of control on the part of the performer, breaking the audience's expectations of a professional performance.

Both of these sketches use incompetence cues to disrupt the audience's expectation of a polished musical performance. Morecambe and Wise were known to have some skill in musical performance, as their stage act, radio programmes and television shows often featured them singing. The additional presence of a guest star such as Frankie Vaughan or Elton John suggests that the performance will be professional, and of a high musical standard. This is then disrupted by Morecambe and Wise's fooling around or perceived lack of ability; Morecambe is more than likely capable of continuing with his melody when Wise begins to sing, but the performance decision that Morecambe makes when choosing to

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switch to Wise's melody makes it appear that he is incapable of maintaining his melody. However, in later programmes such as those that these sketches appear in, there was also a level of expectation that Morecambe and Wise would fool around with guest stars and gently poke fun at their star status. The BBC programmes contain lots of examples of guest actors, such as Peter Cushing and Glenda Jackson, appearing in Wise's 'plays what he wrote' that were characterised by grammatically incorrect lines and Morecambe not always taking things seriously. Guest singers and musicians, such as Shirley Bassey and John Hanson, were also given similar treatment by being provided with sets that weren't quite built correctly or by Morecambe and Wise pretending to have prepared a massive chorus to sing with them, only for it to turn out that the chorus was Morecambe and Wise holding cardboard cut-outs. As the sketches outlined above come from later programmes, it is possible that the incompetence cues actually reinforce expectations that something is not going to go as planned, rather than breaking expectations of a well-rehearsed competent performance. The humour here would come from the audience's sense of anticipation that something is about to wrong, although not knowing what might go wrong, and the fulfilment of that anticipation generates laughter.

Whilst incompetence cues are particularly visible in *The Morecambe and Wise Show* through its frequent inclusion of guest stars, other devices can also be seen in material that does not necessarily include live musical performance. Another two of Huron's devices can be seen working together in the quickies 'Wagner at Work' and 'Elgar at Work' from Series 2, Episode 2. In 'Wagner at Work', Morecambe adopts the character of the composer Richard Wagner sat at his desk writing music. He thinks for a moment, then mimes writing on the paper in front of him. As he writes, Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkyries' is played in. He stops to think, then writes again, with 'Ride of the Valkyries' played in again, beginning from where it stopped the previous time. He stops to think again, and then writes again. However, this

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time it is not 'Ride of the Valkyries' that is played in, but the opening bars of the theme tune for *The Archers*, a BBC radio show. When he stops writing, he looks at the page, then crumples it up and throws it away. 'Elgar at Work' follows a similar set up. Wise adopts the character of the composer Edward Elgar, again sat at a desk writing music. He thinks for a moment, then writes, and a few bars of a piece of classical music are played in. He stops to think, then writes again, with another few bars of the piece of classical music played in. He stops to think again, and then writes again. However, this time it is not the piece of classical music that is played in, but 'Ride of the Valkyries'. Whilst this is playing, Morecambe (as Wagner) enters, and makes gestures to Elgar to say that that is his music. He stops Elgar writing, then takes the pen. He writes for a moment, but no music is played in, and then hands the paper to Elgar. As they both look at it, the 'Colonel Bogey March' is played in (TM&WS, 2010: s2e2).

The devices that are evident here are mixed genres and incongruous quotation. The mixed genres device features an abrupt switch between different styles, most commonly juxtaposing 'high art' and 'low art' styles (Huron 2004: 701; 2006: 284-5). The 'high art' style of Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkyries' and the piece of classical music is juxtaposed with the military march style of the 'Colonel Bogey March', and the perceived 'low art' style of the theme tune for *The Archers*. These juxtapositions emphasise the use of incongruous quotation, which breaks the audience's expectations of how the scene will unfold based on what they have seen so far by using an "improbable schematic context" (Huron, 2004: 702; 2006: 286). When the audience first hears a piece of music played into the scene, particularly a well-known piece such as 'Ride of the Valkyries' they will form expectations about how they expect the music to continue. In 'Wagner at Work', after hearing a sustained section of 'Ride of the Valkyries' played across a brief pause, the audience would expect the next music they hear to be a continuation of 'Ride of the Valkyries'; this would

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both fit logically with the progression of the music and be a logical continuation of the scene, as so far Morecambe's writing has coincided with 'Ride of the Valkyries'. Instead, the next piece of music they hear is the theme tune from *The Archers*, which disrupts their expectations by not being a continuation of 'Ride of the Valkyries'. The contrast between the 'high art' style of 'Ride of the Valkyries' and the 'low art' style of the theme tune from *The Archers* adds emphasis to the broken expectation. The audience's mind is thrown from the perceived 'cultured', 'refined' sounds of Wagner to the 'soap opera music' of *The Archers*. The unexpected nature of the sudden switch of music in combination with the contrast in the connotations of both pieces, and the fact that the sketch makes it appear that Wagner is writing the tunes for the first time, builds up a logically ridiculous situation which results in audience laughter. This same kind of expectation is built and then disrupted in 'Elgar at Work', by playing in a piece of classical music twice, and then playing in 'Ride of the Valkyries', which both breaks expectations and provides a reference to the previous scene, which allows Morecambe as Wagner to enter and create the juxtaposition between the 'high art' style of the piece of classical music and 'Ride of the Valkyries', and the military march style of the 'Colonel Bogey March'.

The use of Huron's devices within these sketches demonstrates the ability of music to function as a tool for creating humour outside of the purely musical setting that the devices were developed in. The use of incompetence cues in *The Morecambe and Wise Show* usually forms a part of a larger scenario, where a verbal set up is used to establish expectations of a professional performance that are then violated by the incompetence cue. The mixed genres and incongruous quotation devices, on the other hand, are often presented without any form of verbal set up and only a few visual cues, which allows the music to take centre stage in the formation and violation of expectations.

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1.2 The Referential Power of Music

The examples of mixed genres and incongruous quotation discussed above raise an important point about the creation of meaning within comedy performance. Huron's devices all function through the violation of listener expectation (2006: 287), but the audience must have some form of reference point in order to have an expectation to be violated. In the absence of any spoken text, these references must come from other sources such as physical action, visual cues, and in the case of 'Wagner at Work' and 'Elgar at Work', the music itself. The ability of music to create references has often been a point of discussion in theoretical work on musicality. In his 2010 article, Roesner suggests that, because it "struggles to make any factual, fictional or narrative statements" (295) in the way that spoken or written language can, music is "primarily self-referential. Music makes statements about music" (295). This lack of external meaning allows for a focus on the process and technical work of creating performance, which allows performers and audience members to become "mindful not only of *what* is being told on stage, but *how* it is being told" (296). This self-referential capability of music is useful when considering the role of musicality in comedy, as it facilitates an analysis of humour that looks past the immediate impact of *what* is funny in a scene, and explores *how* that humour is created.

Viewing music as purely self-referential, however, denies its capacity to act as a cultural reference through its use in other performative and non-performative settings. Roesner does acknowledge that this is "a much debated topic" (295), and in his 2014 book, he also discusses music's external referential capabilities. He suggests that music has a "*connotative* referential potential" (211, emphasis in original), which allows music to carry meaning by forming links to "textual, visual, kinetic or spatial" (211) material. It is the connotative references created by the use of 'Ride of the Valkyries' and the theme tune from *The Archers* in 'Wagner at Work' that facilitate the function of the mixed genres

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device; without those connotative references that indicate what genre of music the two pieces belong to, the audience would have no way of knowing that the genres had been mixed. The lack of references would prevent the audience from forming expectations, which then removes the ability for expectations to be broken. This concept of connotative references in music is similar to Ingrid Monson's idea of 'intermusicality', which Roesner also discusses (221-8). Building on the concept of intertextuality, Monson developed the idea of 'intermusicality' "as a way to begin thinking about the particular ways in which music and, more generally, sound itself can refer to the past and offer social commentary" (1996: 97). Roesner suggests that

> intermusicality […] forms a web of references, of allusions, quotations, citations and evocations that allocate an important role to the audience's individual and collective knowledge of the origins, contexts and layers of meanings that certain musical materials, principles or styles bring with them. (Roesner 2014: 221)

This idea of "a web of references, of allusions, quotations, citations and evocations" is particularly important in comedy. Double dedicates a whole chapter to the use of references in his 2014 book *Getting the Joke*. Although Double is focusing on stand-up comedy, his ideas on references still apply to other verbal forms of comedy, and some non-verbal forms. He believes that "References are the basic blocks of knowledge from which the joke is built. In order to understand it, the audience must recognise whatever […] cultural artefacts it may contain. It's a process of shared understanding" (221). Intermusicality acknowledges this "shared understanding" through its focus on the knowledge that the audience brings to their experience of the comic material. It can allow music to take the place of text in a comic piece by facilitating the creation of the necessary references for the audience to understand what they are seeing. This understanding allows expectations of what might be about to happen to form, which can then be broken, as in Huron's devices above.

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As the majority of material on *The Morecambe and Wise Show* is based around verbal humour, a large amount of the references are within the spoken text. Within the material, intermusicality is used in conjunction with spoken, visual, and physical references to facilitate the audience's full understanding of the presented material. This can be seen in the 'Singin' in the Rain' routine from the 1976 Christmas special. The routine parodies the famous scene with Gene Kelly from the film *Singin' in the Rain* (1952). Wise plays Kelly's character and Morecambe plays the policeman in the background. The costumes and set are extremely similar to those in the film, and Ernest Maxin's choreography includes elements taken from the film. However, in the Morecambe and Wise routine, there is no rain. Wise puts up an umbrella, and mimes kicking up puddles, but stays dry throughout the routine. Morecambe, in the background as the policeman, has water thrown onto him from windows, poured onto him from drainpipes, and pushed onto him from an awning by Wise (TM&WS, 2010: cs1976).

For many, the song 'Singin' in the Rain' is indelibly linked with the film scene. In order to create a clear parody of the film scene, the sketch must be able to present the audience with a recognisable reference to the original scene. This reference allows the audience to identify the "cultural artefact" (Double, 2014: 221) present in the work, and thus form expectations of what should happen within the sketch. Intermusicality works alongside the costume, set, and choreography to add an extra layer of similarity between the routine and the film scene. This utilises the "*connotative* referential power of music" (Roesner 2014: 211, emphasis in original) in order to give the audience the clearest possible reference to the film scene. Without a clear reference, the humour in the scene would be derived from the contrast between the lyrics of 'Singin' in the Rain' and the choreography which suggests the presence of rain, and the lack of rain present in the routine. Whilst this may be enough to create humour, the use of intermusicality in conjunction with the costume, set,

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choreography, and verbal introduction adds a further level of cultural reference to the routine and allows the creation of a parody. All these levels of cultural reference develop the audience's expectations that they are about to see a direct copy of the film scene. However, the audience's expectation is unfulfilled or disrupted when the rain fails to appear. The intermusicality of the song forms a vital function in the execution of the parody, by helping to form the cultural references to the original material, which are then broken within the action of the sketch.

Alongside this intermusicality between the 'Singin' in the Rain' routine and the film scene, there is also another possible layer of connotative reference within the music. Within their television career, Morecambe and Wise had previously recorded sketches which involved the song 'Singin' in the Rain', which could also be referenced by the newer routine. In a sketch from 1962, Morecambe has water poured on him whilst singing 'Singin' in the Rain' (Morecambe and Wise: The Whole Story, 2008). This was further developed in a sketch from 1971, in which Morecambe and Wise perform a series of excerpts from songs themed around weather. Morecambe's songs are themed around rain, with 'Singin' in the Rain' amongst them, which results in water being poured on him, whilst Wise's songs are themed around sunshine, allowing him to stay dry. Morecambe tries to force Wise to sing 'Stormy Weather', but Wise avoids singing the words "Stormy weather" by pretending to be unsure about the tune. Morecambe attempts to coach Wise through the song, but ends up singing the words "Stormy weather" himself, and has yet more water poured on him (TM&WS, 2010: cs1971). For members of the audience who were familiar with Morecambe and Wise's previous work, these sketches will also be a part of the references that the use of the song creates. This could have created an expectation that Morecambe would end up significantly wetter than Wise during the 'Singin' in the Rain' routine, which is then fulfilled when Wise stays dry throughout, and Morecambe gets so wet from having water poured onto him that

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he chooses to recline in the horse trough full of water at the end of the routine (TM&WS, 2010: cs1976).

The use of intermusicality alongside references in other elements of the material is also present in the 'Grieg Piano Concerto' sketch from the 1971 Christmas special, although it may not be obvious to every member of the audience. In this sketch, Morecambe and Wise trick André Previn, a well-known classical music conductor and pianist, into conducting Morecambe as he plays the Grieg Piano Concerto. After persuading Previn that Morecambe is skilled enough to play the concerto, Previn reluctantly agrees to conduct for Morecambe. A few false starts with the introduction occur before Morecambe finally plays the piano. Previn interrupts his playing, claiming that Morecambe is not playing the correct music. Morecambe takes offence, so Previn demonstrates how to play the Grieg Piano Concerto for Morecambe. Morecambe declares Previn's playing to be rubbish and makes to leave the stage, but as Previn begins playing the music Morecambe had been playing, Morecambe returns, saying "That's it!" (TM&WS, 2010: cs1971).

This may appear to be another example of Huron's incompetence cues, as Previn is fooled into conducting for Morecambe, who appears unable to play the correct music, and then ends up playing Morecambe's music at the end of the sketch. However, the sketch is more complex than it appears. The false starts with the introduction may be an incompetence cue, but when Morecambe does play the piano, it is Previn's reaction that suggests his playing is also an incompetence cue. The intermusical relationship between the music Morecambe plays and the Grieg Piano Concerto creates a reference that may only be recognised by some of the audience, but has the potential to heighten the comedy for those who pick up on it. There is some conjecture as to whether the two pieces bear any resemblance to each other, as Morecambe's piece has been described as "a vamp that bears no resemblance to Grieg's Piano Concerto" (Braben, 2013: 115), while the subtitles on the

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BBC DVD describe it as an "UPBEAT MUSIC HALL TUNE" (TM&WS, 2010: cs1971). When Morecambe finally starts playing, the audience is presented with a melody line that is almost identical to the main theme of the first movement (as shown in the comparison below), and a bass line that has been simplified and is not necessarily harmonically correct.

Figure 1: Comparison of Morecambe's playing and the original music by Grieg. The first four bars of Grieg's music have been written an octave lower for easy comparison, as indicated by the dashed line. (TM&WS, 2010: cs1971; Grieg, undated)

For the audience members who recognise that Morecambe is playing a simplified version of the Grieg Piano Concerto, an intermusical relationship is created which plays with "the audience's individual and collective knowledge of the origins, contexts and layers of meanings that certain musical materials, principles or styles bring with them" (Roesner 2014: 221). The knowledgeable audience's expectations for a performance of the Grieg Piano Concerto have already been disrupted by having the opening flourish played by the orchestra rather than the piano. Morecambe's perceived inability to play the piano part correctly further heightens the conflict between Previn and Morecambe, leading to the exchange:

> Previn: But you're playing all the wrong notes.
> Morecambe: I'm playing all the right notes, but not necessarily in the right order. (TM&WS, 2010: cs1971)

As shown in the comparison above, Morecambe is indeed correct, as he is playing the right notes for the melody line, with the fifth bar containing the right notes, but not in the right order. The intermusical relationship created by the similarities between Morecambe's piece

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and the original Grieg arguably heightens the comedy precisely because of the similarities. If Morecambe had simply played an entirely different piece, the argument between Previn and Morecambe would have revolved around Morecambe not knowing the Grieg Piano Concerto. By having Morecambe play a simplified version of Grieg's music, the line "I'm playing all the right notes, but not necessarily in the right order" (TM&WS, 2010: 1971) acquires a deeper level of meaning, because Morecambe is playing the right notes, or at least some of them. For those audience members who recognise this, this moment almost becomes an incompetence cue on Previn's part, as it now appears that Previn has not recognised that Morecambe is playing the correct music, and so is not as knowledgeable as his star status positions him to be.

This exploration of the role of music in comedy has revealed some important points about the way music works to create comedy in *The Morecambe and Wise Show*. The connotative references that the music brings to the material through its intermusicality plays an important part in establishing the "process of shared understanding" (Double, 2014: 221) between Morecambe and Wise and their audience. This is especially important in sketches that do not involve speech, as the lack of references from language must be replaced with references from another source in order for the audience to understand what is happening. These references allow the audience to form expectations about what might be about to happen, which can then be disrupted in a number of ways, with Huron's devices outlining methods of breaking expectation through the use of music. These references can also be used to create situations where humour is generated through the fulfilment of expectations, rather than their violation, by creating references to similar occasions in previous material. Whilst these examples have focused on the use of music in Morecambe and Wise's work, these concepts of connotative references and broken (and fulfilled) expectations can also be observed in the larger proportion of their work that does not have a strong musical focus,

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alongside other elements of musicality. Here features of music such as rhythm can be seen at work within performance processes that may not contain a single note of music, emphasising that musicality exists in both music and non-musical frameworks.

Chapter 2 Rhythm and Timing

Whilst Huron's devices and the concept of intermusicality provide insight into how music can create references that are key to the audience's understanding of a comic sketch or scene, they only address one or two specific details of how musicality is being used within the material in order to generate laughter. Even though they make skilled use of musicality, much of Morecambe and Wise's material is not primarily musical in the way that Bill Bailey's is, and so it demonstrates the use of other elements of musicality. As discussed in the introduction, current academic exploration of comedy performance often addresses ideas of rhythm and timing, which can be linked to the use of music, but can also occur independently as part of the embodied process of comedy performance. Speaking with Davis Rider Robinson, the actor Geoff Hoyle emphasised the importance of musicality in his work on physical comedy: "DR: That's a good point. Music is such a part of physical comedy. GH: Music and musicality. It's all about rhythm. Italian playwright Dario Fo once said to me, "Theatre *is* rhythm."" (Robinson, 1999: 116). Hoyle's emphasis on rhythm in his work suggests an important intersection between comedy performance and musicality, as Roesner's exploration of musicality also demonstrates a keen interest in rhythm. It is a recurrent theme in the theatrical work he examines in his 2014 book, as evidenced by the number of entries it has in the index; "rhythm / rhythmical" has twenty-one single page entries and twenty-nine multiple page entries (302-3). These entries cover every section of the book, crossing a wide range of practitioners who use musicality in a variety of different ways, which suggests that for Roesner, rhythm plays an important part in musicality in theatre performance.

Expressing a precise function of rhythm in musicality is difficult; just as musicality can be defined differently by everyone who uses it, rhythm can also have several definitions depending on the context in which it is being used. Dictionary definitions of rhythm often

suggest a sense of forward movement in time (Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2015). In music, rhythm can be said to describe "the way that sounds are grouped together in different patterns over time" (Winterson & Harris, 2014: 2), sometimes describing "a characteristic rhythmic pattern <rumba *rhythm*>" (Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2015). This concept of a "characteristic rhythmic pattern" could be very interesting to explore in the analysis of musicality in a theatrical performance setting. As discussed in the introduction, the work of a number of different practitioners has been considered through the framework of musicality, and it is possible that each practitioner may have a specific way of utilising rhythm that acts as a signature in their work. If this occurs in theatre performance, it may also occur in comedy performance, with each style or performer possessing a characteristic use of rhythm. However, this will have to be explored elsewhere, as it is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The importance of rhythm in music is evident in its recurring presence in work on music theory. Rhythm is sometimes used by authors of books on music theory as an overarching title for sections discussing note durations and time signatures (Taylor, 1989; Winterson & Harris, 2014). As Harris puts it, rhythm "is, in fact, the heartbeat of music. It includes pulse, relative length of notes, a sense of emphasis, and the general sense of motion that causes music (and life) to move forward." (Winterson & Harris, 2014: 1). Harris's comment, along with rhythm's use as a section or chapter title, reveals that a discussion of rhythm in music actually covers a number of criteria that are being brought together under the label of rhythm. Rhythm covers the tempo (or pulse) of a piece; the metre, how often a beat is emphasised; and the rhythm of the notes of the piece, "the pattern of the long and short notes being used at any particular time" (Powell, 2010: 183-184). These distinctions are important for any in-depth analysis of music, where it is useful to be aware that while increasing the tempo of a piece will affect the duration of a note, it will not change the

pattern in which the long and short notes are arranged. For a more general analysis of material that is not strictly musical, however, combining these criteria under the label of rhythm is sufficient.

It is this use of rhythm as a label that is most often used in comedy analysis, and it often occurs alongside the concept of timing. Timing in comedy is another complex issue, with definitions coming "in all shapes and sizes" (Double, 2014: 365), but it appears to sit hand in hand with rhythm, and not only in discussions of comedy. In his 2010 article, Roesner discussed the idea of musicality as a key element of theatrical training, suggesting that "Creating a sensitivity towards *rhythm*, *timing*, sound quality, musical form, dynamics, space and sound etc. through corresponding exercises and experiments develops an awareness (and to some extent, the technical skills) to perceive and craft theatre as a sonoric and rhythmical event" (295, emphasis added). Rhythm and timing were also the elements of musicality that Roesner specifically mentioned when discussing the possibility of extending his work in musicality in theatre to "popular/comedic performances" (Roesner 2014: 256). This demonstrates a connection between the embodied process of musicality and the embodied process of comedy performance, with rhythm and timing being considered important elements of performance in both areas. The question of whether having a musician's knowledge of rhythm and timing helps with comedy timing is still open for debate. When André Previn, who appeared in the 'Grieg Piano Concerto' sketch discussed earlier (TM&WS, 2010: cs1971), was asked if he thought musical timing helped with comedy timing, he replied "I have known a lot of unfunny musicians, trust me. Er no I don't think so" (*Morecambe and Wise – The Show What Paul Merton Did*, 2009). Even if a knowledge of musical timing is not necessarily an indicator of comedic ability, however, rhythm and timing still form a part of comedy's embodied performance process.

The idea of 'comic timing' is often seen to be a 'common knowledge' concept when discussing comedy performance (Double, 2014: 365; Wright, 2006: 145). Reviews of comedy performances often comment on the timing of the performer: "His delivery is dispassionate and dry, but the timing and lack of fear is first rate" (Anon., 2015); "his tales of provincial misadventure are by far the funniest parts of his set, delivered with witty self-deprecation and perfect timing" (Blow, 2011); "Renkow has been taking voice lessons, so now he adds to his comedy weaponry exponentially improved comic timing" (Copstick, 2015). As these reviews are written for the general public, they are unlikely to contain any subject-specific or obscure terms, suggesting that 'good' timing is appreciable by laymen and experts alike. Timing has even been made the subject of jokes about comedy:

> Miss Fanagonellan: What could you teach Des [O'Connor] about comedy?
> Eric Morecambe: Timing. The art of timing.
> Miss Fanagonellan: What is the art of timing?
> Eric Morecambe: Well, in Des's case, getting out of the theatre before the audience. (TM&WS, 2010: s9e4)

This joke plays on the idea that it is common knowledge that timing is important to comedy, which builds the expectation that Morecambe is about to impart some performance knowledge. This is then broken by Morecambe instead insinuating that a fellow comedy performer needs to escape from his audience. If timing was not considered to be understandable by anyone without comedy performance experience, then the setup of the joke would not be understood by the audience, and would likely fail to create any laughter.

Discussions of rhythm and timing in comedy are not confined to one form of comedy performance, although how the terms are used can vary between practitioners. In Wright's 2006 book *Why is That So Funny? A Practical Explanation of Physical Comedy*, "Rhythm" and "Timing" are given their own distinct chapters within a larger section of the book (vii). Wright's understanding of rhythm and timing is built upon his work with Lecoq's 'states of

tension'. He believes that the "tension states are a cycle of different levels of physical intensity, that indicate different states of mind but essentially they're just clearly defined rhythms given more clarity by their direction in space" (122). These rhythms work alongside a dramatic context to create meaning and emotion within a scene, and can create comedy through "playing inappropriate rhythms, or from making huge transitions" from one state of tension to another (128-9). Timing assists the creation of meaning by "deflecting, stopping, or changing the rhythm" (146), and acts like punctuation for the flow of rhythms within the material. For Wright, rhythm is an integral part of the physical process of acting, which is then shaped by timing and dramatic context to create meaning, emotion, and ultimately laughter.

Whilst rhythm and timing are distinct ideas for Wright, the line between them is often less clear for other practitioners. When defining the term "Rhythm" in *The Craft of Comedy*, which focuses on comedic acting and often references Restoration plays, editor Barton places timing as a specific part of rhythm: "*Rhythm*: The combination of stress, pause and timing, a sense of which is essential for comedic acting" (Seyler & Haggard, 2013: 84). In the second edition of his book *Getting the Joke*, Double promotes "Timing" (2014) to its own chapter, as in the first edition it formed part of his chapter on "Delivery" (2005) in stand-up comedy. He even provides a literal example of the point he is making: "The secret of great comedy is – wait for it – timing" (2014: 365). Double also brings material on rhythm into this chapter, commenting that "Rhythm is probably as important to comedy as it is to music, but in comedy it's much harder to identify and notate" (370). This difficulty in capturing the rhythm of a comedy performance is why musicality is better placed to explore performance processes in comedy than strict musical analysis. Double's particular is focus here is on stand-up comedy, which is a primarily spoken form of performance, but the

difficulty of identification and notation of rhythm in comedy also affects analysis of other comedy forms that aren't specifically using music.

The differences in the shape of rhythm between speech and sound in particular have been noted by van Leeuwen. Attempting to describe sound events in terms of their timing, he breaks "sound time" down into "unmeasured" and "measured" time, with measured time being defined as "time you can tap your feet to" (1999: 6), so having a discernible beat. He then breaks "measured" time down further, into "metronomic" and "non-metronomic" time. Metronomic time follows a strictly regular beat, whilst "non-metronomic" time "stretches time, it anticipates or delays sounds and so on" (7). Most importantly, he notes that "non-metronomic" time is "the time of human speech and movement" (7). The ability to slide away from a regular beat when needed is a vital tool of comedy performance, particularly in live performance, as it allows the performer to respond to the feedback they receive from other performers and audience members. If a performer fumbles a line, another performer can take a step back from the rhythm of the joke and find a response to the fumble. If the audience laughs in an unexpected place, the performers can choose to delay their next line or action so that it doesn't get swallowed up in the laugh and missed by the audience. In a sketch set inside the flat that Morecambe and Wise shared within the world of the show (TM&WS, 2010: s5e3), Morecambe crosses to the window behind Wise, looks out, then laughs and turns back to Wise. This unexpectedly gets such a large laugh from the audience that the sketch almost pauses for fifteen seconds, with Wise turning to the audience with bemusement on his face at their laughter. If the sketch had been working to a strict beat, this pause could have disrupted the entire sketch, but instead Morecambe and Wise are able to delay their next lines until the audience has sufficiently calmed down for the lines to be heard.

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This distinction between "metronomic" and "non-metronomic" time (van Leeuwen, 1999: 7) illustrates why rhythm is easier to identify and notate within music than within comedy. The strict rhythms of "metronomic" time are easier to identify against the strict beat, and more amenable to the use of a system such as Western musical notation to present that rhythm without the music present. The sliding and stretching of "non-metronomic" time forces the rhythms away from a strict beat, making them harder to clearly identify and then represent without seeing or hearing that event at the same time. This is something that I have encountered in my work on musicality in *The Morecambe and Wise Show*. Whilst some of their material has strong musical links and is therefore shaped around a strict beat, much of their material exists within the flexibility of "non-metronomic" time because this allows them to respond to the feedback they receive from the audience by adjusting the rhythmical shape of their performance. Attempting to write out a section of speech and movement as an example allows me to capture the specific words and actions that are presented to the audience, but it is very difficult within that writing to illustrate the exact rhythms of that speech or movement. Even material with a strong musical basis is difficult to notate in a way that clearly illustrates what is happening, as fine details can become lost due to the constraints of notation (for my attempts to notate the rhythm of a movement routine, see Appendices). Discussing rhythm in comedy performance within the framework of musicality acknowledges that those rhythms may not be as strictly regulated as they are in music, but the rhythm of the material still plays an important part in its ability to create humour.

It is clear from the wealth of material discussing rhythm and timing within comedy that rhythm and timing play an important role in comedy performance. Whether there is music present in the scene or not, whether a sketch is built around speech or physical action, an attention to rhythm forms a part of the embodied process of performance. It may then be supplemented with wordplay or visual gags, but rhythm still forms a central part of the

creation of humour, through the performers' ability to time that wordplay or visual gag to the exact moment it will have the most impact. *The Morecambe and Wise Show*'s wide range of material contains many clear examples of rhythm working through music, sound, movement, and speech in order to create humour.

2.1 Sonic Punctuation

While intermusicality and Huron's devices for creating laughter rely on the specific use of music and its ability to create references to other cultural artefacts, music, and sound more generally, can also interact with other performance elements beyond simple accompaniment. Through matching specific rhythms or qualities of performance, or sometimes deliberately countering those rhythms, music and sound can add emphasis to specific moments of performance. This is often called 'sonic punctuation'. This idea of one theatrical element, such as sound, providing emphasis for another, such as movement, can also be extended to the interaction of areas as diverse as "text, music, lighting, set and movement" (Roesner 2010: 298). Sonic punctuation is often discussed as part of the analysis of animation, with references to "the full syntax of cartoon sonic punctuation – crash, bang, wallop and the rest" (Lorimer, 2013: 73), although it has been acknowledged that this affinity for "creating and applying individual sounds for sonic punctuation and comedic effect" was built upon "borrow[ed] techniques from radio and the theater" (Whittington, 2012: 369). Due to these strong links with animation, sonic punctuation is sometimes also known as 'mickey mousing'. Jacobs explains that the term mickey mousing "encompasses a number of different aspects of the relationship between music and action, and music and other sounds" (2015: 58). It can refer to "a tight synchronization between movement and/or cutting and the beat" (58), "the musical imitation of physical movement, as in the use of a glissando when a character slides down a rope" (58), and is "sometimes

applied more generally to any tight integration of music and sound effects, as in the use of what is supposedly a frog's croak in the place of a bass-line note" (58).

The 'Breakfast' routine from Series 9, Episode 6 of *The Morecambe and Wise Show* provides the clearest example of the ability of sonic punctuation to emphasise actions and gestures for comic effect. It is set in the kitchen of the fictional flat that Morecambe and Wise shared in the television series, and begins with Morecambe and Wise sat at the table eating breakfast whilst listening to the radio. The announcer on the radio introduces David Rose's 'The Stripper'. As the music begins, Morecambe and Wise rise from the table to continue with breakfast, their actions becoming a dance around the kitchen to the music: Wise throws bread to Morecambe, who puts it in the toaster; Morecambe looks for eggs in the cupboards, then finds them on the counter; Morecambe throws the eggs to Wise, who cracks them into a bowl and then stirs them; Morecambe chops grapefruits, then separates the pieces for squeezing; Wise joins Morecambe to help squeeze the grapefruit; Morecambe tosses pancakes while Wise prepares the teapot; Wise pours water from the kettle into the teapot, then goes to take the now toasted bread from the toaster; Morecambe opens the fridge and Wise dances in the spotlight; Morecambe retrieves strings of sausages from the fridge, which both Morecambe and Wise dance with, first in front of the fridge and then around the table towards the door as the music ends (TM&WS, 2010: s9e6).

This simplified overview of the action of the routine underplays the complexity of the choreography and its relationship with the musical score. Not only is the action carefully timed to coincide with specific elements of the music, but a comparison of the music with other recordings of 'The Stripper' suggests that the music has also been arranged to better create sonic punctuation of action, creating a mutual relationship between action and music, rather than just fitting actions to the music. The version of 'The Stripper' used in the 'Breakfast' routine runs to approximately 60 bars (not counting the opening *glissando* note).
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This contrasts with widely available commercial recordings of 'The Stripper', which run to approximately 44 bars (again, not counting the opening *glissando* note) (e.g., Rose, 2013). This would suggest that the version of 'The Stripper' used in the routine was specifically arranged for the routine, adding an extra 16 bars, possibly as a result of the devising process between choreographer and director Ernest Maxin and Morecambe and Wise. Two of the extra 16 bars are added within the main body of the music; the addition of these two bars allows the audience time to process and react to the previous gag, preventing them from becoming overloaded and allowing each gag to be processed individually, as well as a part of the overall routine. The other 14 bars are added at the end of the music, extending the routine and allowing more space for action.

This 60 bar arrangement of 'The Stripper' works closely with the choreography of the routine to create sonic punctuation through "a tight synchronization between movement and/or cutting and the beat" (Jacobs 2015: 58). The preparation and squeezing of the grapefruit, which happens over the course of six bars, has every action timed to the beat: chopping a grapefruit (first beat), raising the knife (second beat), chopping (third beat), raising (fourth beat, etc.), chopping, raising, chopping, putting the knife down, splitting two halves of a grapefruit, grabbing the next pair of halves, splitting, grabbing, splitting, grabbing, splitting, grabbing, squeezing the grapefruit, resting, squeezing, resting, squeezing, resting, squeezing, resting. Alongside this tight timing to the beat, the choreography is arranged so that the stronger actions (chopping, splitting, and squeezing) fall on the first and third beats of the bar. This makes use of the natural stresses or accents that occur within a bar of music:

> Usually the first beat in a bar (the **downbeat** or **thesis**) is given the
> greatest stress or **accent**. In […] bars with four beats, the third beat may
> receive a secondary accent (not as great as accorded the first beat but

slightly greater than either the second or the fourth beat). (Blatter, 2007: 17, emphasis in original).

Taylor suggests that "it is usual to think of beats as being grouped in twos or threes. Consequently, a bar of four is divided into two groups of twos" (1989: 4), which would then account for the slight stress on the third beat of the bar, as it forms the start of another group of two. Placing the stronger actions such as chopping on the first and third beats of the bar gives a natural emphasis to these actions by timing them with the stresses in the bar.

At the start of the routine, the throwing and catching of the bread, and later the eggs, is similarly tightly synchronized. The throws follow the same sequence: the throw happens on the fourth beat of the bar, so that the catch happens on the first beat of the following bar, which, as explained above, naturally accentuates the timing of the catch. The bread is placed into the toaster on the third beat, an action which also extends to the fourth beat. The eggs are cracked on the rim of the bowl on the second beat, and their contents deposited into the bowl on the third beat, with Wise disposing of the egg shell on the fourth beat. This sequence changes for the final egg, which is thrown into the bowl, shell and all, on the second beat of the bar. Moving this action to the second beat of the bar disrupts the rhythmic sequence which has been built up in the previous three bars, thereby breaking the audience's expectations of what is going to happen. It also adds an element of syncopation to the sequence by placing an emphatic action on a beat which is not normally stressed. This synchronization of actions to the beat is not limited to larger actions, such as throwing or chopping. Even small actions, such as Wise exhaling after vigorously stirring the eggs, Wise dunking the teabag in the teapot, or Morecambe lifting his glasses in astonishment at the sudden appearance of extra pancakes, are timed to specific beats of the music.

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As well as synchronizing movement and the beat, the 'Breakfast' routine uses "musical imitation of physical movement" (Jacobs, 2015: 58). I suggest that this imitation occurs in two different forms; in some places the physical movement was choreographed to take advantage of existing musical features, creating a retroactive musical imitation, while in other places the musical imitation was added to complement the choreography. The trill in the music when Wise vigorously stirs the eggs is also present in the 2013 recording of 'The Stripper' (David Rose, 2013), suggesting that this was already present in the score, and the choreography was arranged to match the existing music. However, when compared to the 2013 recording, it becomes clear that some extra percussion was added to the trill in the arrangement for the 'Breakfast' routine, which provides a "musical imitation" (Jacobs, 2015: 58) of the whisk hitting the sides of the glass bowl. Other additions similar to this include the addition of a slide whistle when the toast pops, extra bass drum beats when chopping the grapefruits and catching the pancakes, and the addition of a triangle when emptying the eggs in the bowl. In describing the initial choreographing process, director Ernest Maxin described these additions to the arrangement as "musical punches":

> Then I put in the musical punches – like when the toast comes up the music would go *du-dum-phweep-doing*, you know, as they caught it. Chopping the grapefruit: *pum*-bah-*pum*-bah-*pum*-bah. Squeezing it: *diddly-diddly-diddly*. And in the middle phrase, where Ernie's catching and smashing the eggs, you get *rom-ching-crash-bang! rom-ching-crash-bang!* from the orchestra. Mixing the omelette: *brrruuummm-da-da-da-dum*. I had to write the top line in, all the little musical accentuations to synchronise with each visual gag. (McCann, 1998: 255).

The addition of these "musical punches" (255) creates the "musical imitation" (Jacobs, 2015: 58) of the action within the routine. They also replace the standard diegetic sounds that would be expected to be produced by an egg being whisked or a grapefruit being chopped. After the sound of a bowl being placed on the table in the first bar, the next

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diegetic sound heard is the sound of the knife hitting the radio on the final beat of the music. This further accentuate the "musical imitation" (58) of the actions, because the imitation is replacing the natural sound.

While the 'Breakfast' routine provides the clearest example of the use of sonic punctuation in the *Morecambe and Wise* show, there are other moments where sonic punctuation plays an important part in the creation of humour. In the 'Singin' in the Rain' routine described above, the appearance of the water is synchronized to specific moments in the music. The initial downpour from the drainpipe is timed to coincide with the lyrics "come on with the rain", the water hitting Morecambe on the word "rain". The water thrown onto him from an upstairs window is timed to coincide with two notes from the trumpets (TM&WS, 2010: cs1976). These moments occur on the first beat of the bar which, as discussed above, adds greater emphasis to the action by timing it with the natural accents of the music.

There is also a routine where it is the lack of expected sonic punctuation which creates humour. In the 'Banana Boat Song' routine from the 1970 Montreux Entry, Morecambe and Wise plan to perform the 'Banana Boat Song' with singer Nina, with Nina singing and Morecambe and Wise providing accompaniment on a variety of percussion instruments. Wise shakes a pair of maracas, which rattle, and then hands them to Morecambe, taking a pair of claves for himself. However, when they begin the song for the first time, Morecambe's maracas do not make a sound, while Wise's claves do make a sound. This confuses Wise, who takes the maracas from Morecambe and shows him how to use them, at which point they rattle. Wise hands the maracas back to Morecambe, and they carry on with the song, but Morecambe's maracas still do not rattle. This process is repeated with a tambourine which rattles for Wise but not for Morecambe. When Wise takes the tambourine from Morecambe, he discovers that various movements that Morecambe makes produce percussion sounds: a head shake sounds like maracas, a hand shake like a tambourine, a
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leg shake like sleigh bells. They then carry on with the song, with the appropriate percussion sound being heard for Morecambe's movements (TM&WS, 2010: me1970).

By removing the expected natural sonic punctuation (the sound of the instrument) from Morecambe's actions, the audience's expectations of the scene are disrupted, which, as discussed above, creates humour within the routine. This is heightened by being placed in contrast with Wise's actions, as they are always accompanied by the sound of the instrument, which adds natural sonic punctuation to his actions. The routine then finishes by taking the audience's expectations of natural sonic punctuation, and reversing them by removing the natural sonic punctuation of the instruments and pairing the sound with a physical action instead; Morecambe generates the sound of the instruments from the movement of his body, rather than the manipulation of the instruments themselves. The reversal of expectations provides a good end point for the routine, as it completes the journey that the audience's expectations have taken throughout the routine: the audience comes in with a set of expectations, those expectations are confirmed (by Wise playing the percussion instruments) and then disrupted (by Morecambe playing, but failing to produce sound from, the percussion instruments), and then finally reversed (by Morecambe's body providing the instrument sounds).

The routines outlined here provide clear examples of how music and sound can be used to emphasise specific moments of performance. Whilst sonic punctuation is not directly reliant on the presence of a musical structure in order to be effective, these routines do make use of a musical structure. This allows Morecambe and Wise to take advantage of natural musical features, such as the stressing of the first beat of the bar, in order to further emphasise the relationship between sound and movement. It also provides them with a strictly regular beat that their movements can be synchronised to, even when those movements would not normally be tied to a strict beat. The organisation of "non-

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metronomic" (van Leeuwen, 1999: 7) human movements such as squeezing grapefruits within a "metronomic" (7) time frame feels unnatural and somewhat bizarre, creating an incongruity between with routine and everyday life which elicits laughter from the audience. Morecambe and Wise's ability to control their movement within this strict beat demonstrates a sensitivity to rhythm which can also be seen in their movement work elsewhere in *The Morecambe and Wise Show*.

2.2 Physical Comedy: The Musicality of Movement

Whilst the 'Breakfast' routine and the 'Banana Boat Song' routine described above illustrate the use of sonic punctuation in *The Morecambe and Wise Show*, the musicality of movement also plays a large part in the creation of humour through its interaction with the music and sound. This interaction between sound and action is a vital part of sonic punctuation; without some kind of action, whether movement or speech, there would be nothing to be sonically punctuated, and the routine would become a collection of sounds without context. The use of movement as part of the performance processes of physical comedy have recently been explored by practitioners seeking to pass on their knowledge to new performers, through work such as David Rider Robinson's *The Physical Comedy Handbook* (1999) and Wright's *Why Is That So Funny?* (2006). However, as discussed above, whilst works such as these may mention performance elements that have a strong presence in musicality, such as rhythm, they do not address these elements within the framework of musicality in physical comedy.

For Morecambe and Wise, rhythm plays a large part in the musicality of their movement. They were not formally schooled in a particular style of comedy movement, such as clowning or mime, but they both had a background in dance and developed their own ideas

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about movement through their careers on the variety stage. When they made the transition to television, director John Ammonds helped them to develop their movement to take advantage of the television format. This included ideas such as using small movements that could be picked up in a close-up camera shot, but that would be lost in a large theatre. Some of the techniques that Morecambe and Wise used may have been copied or adapted from other artists in the variety theatre. These techniques, as well as those that they developed for themselves, may bear similarity to other techniques such as clowning; Geoff Hoyle, an actor with experience in mime and clowning, says that before his formal training, "I learned clown and comedy techniques by imitating the vaudeville and music hall comics I saw and heard onstage or on TV and radio while I was growing up" (Hoyle in Lust, 2012: 202). Morecambe and Wise's use of movement was developed throughout their career as a double act across stage and screen. Their use of movement is rhythmically driven, although not necessarily as clearly as a dance would be, and often operates on a "*shared* sense of the 'right' timing" (Roesner, 2014: 55), which would have been fostered by working so closely together for many years.

The 'Breakfast' routine discussed above is built around a strict rhythmical relationship between movement and music. Although the routine's setting to music makes it feel more like a dance, it was built from everyday movements that held the potential to be worked in such a tight, regulated manner. Whilst Wright suggests that "Effective timing is more about inspiring instinctive reactions than executing choreography" (2006: 159), here it is the moulding of the "instinctive reactions" of both the choreographer and the performers by the choreography that creates the best comic potential; focused rehearsal then allows the movements to appear to be "instinctive reactions" again.

As well as dances and other choreographed routines which have a very clear relationship to music, Morecambe and Wise also demonstrate a strong sensibility to the rhythm of

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movement without the presence of music, and the rhythm of movement within a group of performers. In their years working the variety stages as a double act, Morecambe and Wise will have developed a sense of the rhythms of their partnership. When working alongside other performers, often guest stars who only appear on the show once or twice, they are able to develop this awareness of rhythm within the group, allowing the entire group to work effectively to achieve their goal of making the audience laugh. This strong establishment of a group awareness of rhythm can be seen in a short sequence of movement which takes place underneath spoken lines in one of Wise's 'plays what he wrote' entitled 'The House of Terror' (TM&WS, 2010: s6e1). In the sequence, Ernie Wise, Francis Matthews, and Eric Morecambe are seated in a row on three chairs, with Wise on the left, Matthews in the middle, and Morecambe on the right. Whilst Matthews and Morecambe hold a conversation about strange events happening in the house, Wise, Matthews, and Morecambe find themselves adjusting their positions in their chairs in unison, as described below:

> Matthews: You know...
> *Morecambe jumps and looks at Matthews. Laughter.*
> Matthews: ...this is a very strange house.
> *All 3 fold their arms, and at the same time lift their left leg and cross it over their right leg. Laughter.*
> Morecambe: Really? How do you mean?
> Matthews: Last year...
> *All 3 lower their hands onto their legs.*
> Morecambe: Yes?
> Matthews: ...somebody was poisoned here.
> *All 3 lower their left leg, then fold their arms, and at the same time lift their right leg and cross it over their left leg. Laughter.*
> Morecambe: What happened?
> Matthews: Well, the main suspect...
> *All 3 lower their right leg, and at the same time lower their hands onto*

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> *their legs; the following line is spoken while this happens.*
> Morecambe: Yes?
> Matthews: ...was the butler.
> *All 3 half raise their left leg, and at the same time half fold their arms,*
> *then lower their arms and legs again; after a short pause, this is repeated;*
> *after a slightly longer pause, Matthews suddenly raises his left leg and*
> *crosses it over his right leg while folding his arms; Morecambe and Wise*
> *copy this shortly after. Laughter throughout.* (TM&WS, 2010s6e1)

The ability of Morecambe, Wise, and Matthews to synchronise their actions in this way shows a strong group sensitivity to rhythm, particularly in order to synchronise their actions so tightly as to make it seem like there is no leader of the action within the group. When, in the final action, Matthews begins his movement before Morecambe and Wise, this feels less like a lapse in the group's rhythmical sensitivity, and more like a planned disruption of the rhythm. The action begins on a tightly coordinated count of three: raise arms and legs on one, lower arms and legs on two, pause on three. This then happens again on the same rhythm, but the pause is extended for two beats, with Matthews suddenly acting on the third beat of the third 'bar', and Morecambe and Wise following halfway through that third beat. When Matthews breaks the rhythm, he disrupts a set of audience expectations that will have been formed only moments before when the three beat rhythm was established.

Throughout the sequence, it is the synchronisation of Morecambe, Wise, and Matthews's actions, rather than the lines they are speaking, which prompt the audience to laugh. The group's rhythmical sensitivity allows them to tightly coordinate their actions which in turn generates the laughter from the audience. Aside from choreographed movements in a performance setting, or the repetitive nature of some types of physical work, people tend to fall into their own individual rhythms which are generally not synchronised with anyone else's rhythms. By developing a sense of rhythm which allows movement to be co-ordinated in an apparently unconscious manner, Morecambe and Wise are able to play on this

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abnormality to provoke laughter from the audience. By extending this rhythmical precision to include guest stars, they further heighten the level of abnormality, creating a greater impetus for the audience to laugh.

This idea of a tight rhythmical precision being abnormal and therefore comical was further developed in the 'Psychiatrist' sketch from Series 7, Episode 6. Morecambe and Wise are visiting a psychiatrist because they are saying the same things at the same time as each other, and also moving in the same way and at the same time as each other. Throughout the sketch they address the psychiatrist as one unit, barely making eye contact with each other (TM&WS, 2010: s7e6). Partway through the sketch, they also begin speaking in unison with the psychiatrist, and copying some of his movements as well, as described below:

> Receptionist: This way please, gentlemen.
> *Morecambe and Wise walk in and to the chairs in front of the desk. They walk in step with each other on the same leg, and arrive in at the chairs at the same time. Laughter as they arrive at the chairs.*
> Psychiatrist: Sit down, gentlemen.
> *In unison, Morecambe and Wise sit down, lift their right leg and cross it over their left leg and place their hands on their legs with their hands clasped together.*
> Psychiatrist: Now then, which of you is which?
> Morecambe & Wise: I'm Eric Morecambe and this is Ernie Wise. *Some laughter.*
> […]
> Psychiatrist: My first thoughts are that you've been working so closely together for so long that it'd appear that both of you are thinking and saying the same things.
> Morecambe & Wise: That's about the size of it. *Both lift their right hand, uncross their legs, lean forward and place their left arm on the desk.* And we also know what other people are going to say.

In unison, Morecambe and Wise lean back, lift their left leg and cross it over their left leg and pace their hands on their legs with their hands clasped together.

M&W&P: Really? I've never come across anything so unusual in all my experience. *Some laughter.*

Morecambe and Wise laugh.

Morecambe & Wise: See what we mean?

M&W&P: Well, upon my soul, this really is most unusual.

Morecambe and Wise uncross their legs, lean forward and place their left arm on the desk, at the same time as the psychiatrist leans forward.

M&W&P: How long has this been going on?

[…]

Morecambe and Wise turn to leave, and take a large step out with their right legs.

M&W&P: Not so fast. *Morecambe and Wise stop in a lunge position with their right legs forward. Laughter.* That'll be ten guineas please. *Laughter.*

M&W: *Gesturing to themself with right arm.* He'll pay. *Gesturing at the other one with right arm.* I'm skint. *Lowers right arm.* Good afternoon.

Morecambe and Wise walk out of the office in step with each other on the same leg. Laughter and applause. (TM&WS, 2010: s7e6)

This entire sketch is built around Morecambe and Wise's ability to build a group sensitivity to rhythm, to the point that the scenario of the sketch specifically references that they have been "working so closely together for so long" (TM&WS, 2010: s7e6). For the majority of the sketch Morecambe and Wise are seated in chairs next to each other, meaning they would only be able to see each other in their peripheral vision. This reduces the amount of visual cues available to synchronise the movement, meaning Morecambe and Wise have to rely on the rhythmical sensitivity they developed throughout their career. Throughout the sketch, it is the synchronisation of Morecambe and Wise's actions, later with the addition of matching the psychiatrist's actions, alongside the synchronisation of the speech between two or three speakers which prompts the audience to laugh. This tight synchronisation

would not be possible without the presence of a strong group sensitivity to rhythm, particularly in order to synchronise the speech of two or three speakers as well as Morecambe and Wise's movement.

Whilst these scenes demonstrate Morecambe and Wise's ability to work with other performances in order to cultivate a shared sense of rhythm within a larger group, there are also sketches which demonstrate the same sensitivity to rhythm within the double act. In the 'Table Football' sketch from the 1976 Christmas Special, Morecambe and Wise play two small men on a table football table who share a pole (TM&WS, 2010: cs1976). Due to the mechanics of a table football table, any movement made by one man on a pole is copied by any others on the pole. When Morecambe moves to his right, Wise moves to his right at the same time and travels approximately the same distance. When Wise slaps his foot on the floor, Morecambe slaps his foot on the floor as well, as described below:

> Wise: Oh I can't wait to get started.
> *Wise lifts right foot and slaps it on the floor 8 times, then replaces foot.*
> *Morecambe does the same with his left foot. In unison. Laughter, starting*
> *approximately half way through.*
> Morecambe: I wish you wouldn't do that.
> […]
> Wise: Looks as if he's already been seen to. Some laughter.
> *Wise lifts right foot and slaps it on the floor 8 times, then replaces foot.*
> *Morecambe does the same with his left foot. Wise is half a beat behind for*
> *the first 4, then on beat for the second 4. Laughter throughout.*
> Morecambe: I wish you wouldn't keep doing that.
> […]
> Morecambe: Have you heard about him?
> Wise: No.
> Morecambe: Here, I'll tell you about him. Come here.
> *Both take 4 steps to their right (right foot moves out, then left foot moves*
> *in). In unison, moving approximately the same distance. Laughter*

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throughout.

Morecambe: Go back, he's listening.

Both take 3 steps to their left (left foot moves out, then right foot moves in), ending in their original position. In unison, moving approximately the same distance. Laughter throughout.

Morecambe: He cheats.

[…]

Wise: Look out, the game's started!

Both take 3 steps to their right (as before), 1-and-2-and-3, pause on 4th beat, then the same to their left in same rhythm, then slap their foot on the ground 8 times (as above). Wise is half a beat behind for the first 2, then on beat for the remaining 6. Laughter throughout.

Ball rolls into the goal, bell sounds. Laughter throughout, applause after bell rings as goalie straightens up, gives a half-hearted attempt at waving his arms, and flops over again.

Morecambe: We're one down now.

Wise: We've started again!

Both take 3 steps to their right (as before), 1-and-2-and-3, pause on 4th beat, then the same to their left in same rhythm, then slap their foot on the ground 8 times (as above). Slapping in unison. Laughter throughout.

(TM&WS, 2010: cs1976)

Whilst there are a couple of small moments where Morecambe and Wise are slightly out of rhythm, the rhythm is quickly recovered without pausing or drawing attention to the error. The vast majority of the movement begins when both Morecambe and Wise are looking straight ahead, which reduces the amount of visual cues available to synchronise the movement. Their tight rhythmical tuning is very successful in provoking audience laughter; this is probably partially due to the context of the mechanics of the table football game, and partially due to the absurd nature of people following those same mechanical rules. As discussed above, synchronisation of action does not often occur naturally in everyday life. By bringing the table football players to life, this absurdity is again revealed, garnering laughter from the audience.

These examples all examine material that is built on the concept of rhythm as part of the embodied performance process of movement in comedy, whether it is a small section of a large sketch, a recurring event in a sketch, or the foundation for an entire sketch. The rhythmic sensitivity of the group is particularly important in these examples, as the material relies on the ability of the performers to synchronise their movement without obvious communication. *The Morecambe and Wise Show*'s intensive rehearsal process will most likely have assisted in the creation of rhythmic sensitivity with guest stars. With a three week rehearsal period for standard shows (McCann, 1998: 229), and a five week rehearsal period for Christmas specials (245), Morecambe and Wise were able to spend time building a group dynamic that allowed them to make the synchronisation of their movement appear effortless and spontaneous. This apparent spontaneity of the synchronised movement was very successful at producing laughter from the audience, demonstrating the power of paying detailed attention to the musicality of movement.

2.3 The Musicality of Speech

This analysis of musicality within *The Morecambe and Wise Show* has, so far, focused on moments of musical and physical comedy. Whilst these play an important part in Morecambe and Wise's material, the large majority of their work is predominately based on verbal humour. Coming from the variety theatre where they often performed in front of the curtains as front-of-cloth comics, speech was often the only comic tool at their disposal that would be able to reach every member of the audience. Whilst wordplay and puns such as "Tea, Ern?" (misheard as tea urn), catchphrases, and the general 'conversation' between Morecambe and Wise are clearly very successful at generating laughter from the audience, focusing only on the words of the script belies the complex work required to give those words the best comic impact.

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For Roesner, the work underlying a spoken text is an important part of musicality. In his 2010 article, he suggests that those who "not only occupy themselves with the content of a text, but also with its rhythmic and sonoric structure, reflect how language is being used and presented and on how the act of saying interacts with what is being said" (296). The interaction between what is said and how it is said is considered to be a point for discussion in comedy. Double suggests that it is "one of the hoary old questions people ask about stand-up: 'Which is more important, material or delivery?' Of course, it's an impossible conundrum. The ideal is that the two are inseparable and indivisible, working together in perfect synthesis" (Double, 2014: 387). Whilst, on the face of it, the conversation, puns, and wordplay of a Morecambe and Wise sketch appear to be generating the laughter from the audience, the musicality of the 'how' is often as important as the 'what'. It has been commented that "music and language have intrinsic features in common, such as pitch, volume, prominence, stress, tone, rhythm, and pauses" (Mora, 2000: 147). Morecambe and Wise make use of many of these intrinsic features in their performances in order to make the material more than just a series of words in order to generate laughter from the audience, with the rhythm of their speech often playing an important role in the creation of humour.

The 'Morny Stannit' quickie from the 1976 Christmas Special shows an element of careful crafting in its use of speech. Morecambe plays an "untidy newspaper seller" (BBC, 1976: 37) on a street corner, and Wise a "smart city gent" (37). Morecambe is calling "Morny Stannit", which Wise interprets as "Morning Standard". There is a brief exchange, during which Wise succeeds in getting Morecambe to pronounce it as "Morning Standard", after which Wise obtains a newspaper from Morecambe. Wise opens the newspaper, at which point the camera cuts to a shot over Wise's shoulder, revealing the name of the newspaper

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is not 'Morning Standard', but 'Morny Stannit', which is what Morecambe had originally been calling (TM&WS, 2010: cs1976).

Whilst the exchange between Morecambe and Wise functions as a set-up for the final visual gag of the newspaper's title, it is not just the final visual gag that gets laughter from the audience. Throughout the exchange, the contrast between Morecambe's 'accented' calling and Wise's precise pronunciation elicits laughter from the audience:

> Morecambe: (calling) Morny Stannit! (calling to Wise) Morny Stannit!
> Wise: (deliberately) Morning Standard!
> Morecambe: (looks bemused) Morny Stannit! *Laughter*.
> Wise: (deliberately) Morning Standard!
> Morecambe: (trying to imitate) Mooornnny Stannit! *Laughter*.
> Wise: (as before) Morning!
> Morecambe: (as before) Morneeeng! *A little laughter*.
> Wise: (as before) Stand-dard!
> Morecambe: (as before) Stannit! *A little laughter*.
> Wise: (as before) Stand-dard!
> Morecambe: (as before) Standard! *A little laughter*.
> Wise: (pleased) Morning Standard.
> Morecambe: (calling) Morning Standard! *Laughter*. Git your Morning
> Standard! *Laughter*.
> Wise: *Produces coin; he buys paper*. Thank you.
> Morecambe: (still calling) Morning Standard! Git your Morning Standard!
> *Wise unfolds paper. Cut to shot over Wise's shoulder to reveal the name of the paper is MORNY STANNIT. Laughter and applause.*
> Morecambe: (still calling) Morny Stannit! (TM&WS, 2010: cs1976)

It is possible that some of the laughter could be based on the perceived power difference between Morecambe and Wise within the quickie. The accents used here, with Morecambe using a regional accent whilst Wise uses an accent that is close to Received Pronunciation (RP), have the ability to create their own cultural referential meaning, in the same way that

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music can create cultural references. It has been noted that accents are often used "to make instant and unconscious judgements about a stranger's class affiliation" (Wells, 1992: 29). Wise's RP accent carries connotations of wealth, the upper class, and a 'correct' way of speaking, whilst Morecambe's regional accent carries working class connotations. The close attention that is paid to the individual musicality of each accent and how it influences pronunciation is a vital part of the creation of status within the quickie, as the only words spoken are "Morning Standard", "Thank you", and "Get your Morning Standard". In the camera script for the 1976 Christmas Special, Wise also asserts his higher status by verbally calling attention to the difference in accent:

> Eric: (calling to Ernie) Morny Stannitt! Getcha Morny Stannitt!
> Ernie: I beg your pardon?
> Eric: (calling) Morny Stannitt!
> Ernie: (superior) No, no, my good man. It's (deliberately) "Morning Standard"! "Morning Standard"
> Eric: (Nods & thinks a second) Morny Stannitt! Getcha Morny Stannitt!
> Ernie: No, look (mouthing deliberately) Morning! Morn-ning! (BBC, 1976: 37)

In the broadcast version of the quickie, this extra speech is no longer present, leaving only the direct contrast between accents to provide verbal assertion of status. Roesner suggests that a "spoken monologue creates a definite musical shape: a melody, timbre, rhythm, duration, etc." (2014: 122). Here the contrast between the "musical shape" of Morecambe's speech and the "musical shape" of Wise's speech clearly defines the difference between the accents, which helps to build the reference to cultural stereotypes of regional and class differences. Morecambe, in his role as a newspaper seller, extends the length of the 'or' sound in "Morny" and "Morning", creating a rhythm that begins with a long 'note' and is followed by shorter 'notes', while Wise's 'notes' are more regularly spaced. Morecambe calls at a higher pitch and volume, with Wise's pitch comparatively lower, and his volume

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quieter. This ability of the musical shape of speech to build references which also garner laughter alongside the final visual gag demonstrates Double's idea of material and delivery "working together in perfect synthesis" (2014: 387), as both contribute to the generation of laughter from the audience.

Series 2, Episode 2 contains an occasion where music and speech work together in a carefully controlled collaboration of rhythm to provoke laughter from the audience. The episode ended, as the vast majority of the shows did, with Morecambe and Wise performing a song together before the credits rolled, with 'Bring Me Sunshine' the song of choice for the episode. The song begins with Morecambe and Wise walking forward on the stage during the introduction. However, after singing the first two lines of the song, Wise, and then Morecambe, start speaking the following line to each other, as shown below (TM&WS, 2010: s2e2). The sung words are in italics, with the spoken words in normal type. Musical phrases have been separated by a line break, and a point where two lines overlap is indicated by a slash (/).

> *Both: Bring me sunshine in your smile*
>
> *Bring me laughter all the while*   Wise: In this world where we live
>
> *Both: In this world where we live*   Wise: There should be more
>   [laughter]
>
> *Both: There should be more happiness*   Morecambe: So much joy
>
> *Both: So much joy you can give*   Morecambe: To each brand-new /bright tomorrow
>   [laughter]

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Wise: To each   Both: Brand-new bright tomorrow
[laughter]

Make me happy   Wise: Through the years

Both: Through the years   Morecambe: Never bring me. Never bring me.
[laughter]

Both: Never bring me   Morecambe: Any tears   Wise: Any tears
[continued laughter]

Both: Any tears   Wise: Let your arms be as warm   Morecambe: Pardon?
[laughter]

Both: Let your arms be as warm
[much laughter]

As the sun from up above

Bring me fun   Morecambe: Bring me sunshine   Both: Bring me sunshine

Bring me love   (TM&WS, 2010: s2e2)

This use of speech inside a song is very rare in *The Morecambe and Wise Show*, and it has been speculated that this was a second attempt to record the song after one of the pair forgot the lyrics (*Morecambe and Wise – The Show What Paul Merton Did*, 2009). Whether planned or not, the attempts to act as a prompt before the next line begins, within the

steady, regular beat of the song, quickly garner laughter from the audience. Morecambe's ambitious attempt to fit "To each brand-new bright tomorrow" in earns the biggest laugh so far, and is only eclipsed by "Wise: Let your arms be as warm / Morecambe: Pardon?" (TM&WS, 2010: s2e2); the latter contained a word that was something of a catchphrase for Morecambe, usually addressed to Wise and spoken with a rising intonation that suggested disbelief or mild panic. This combination of the unpredictable rhythms of speech being hemmed in by the regular beat of the song demonstrates a sophisticated level of rhythmical awareness, and turns what would normally just be a simple musical number into a comedy moment that entertains both audience and performer.

These examples demonstrate the power of speech to create humour in ways that do not always rely on the meaning of the words used. The words spoken during the song 'Bring Me Sunshine' are not puns or a set up for joke, they are simply the next words that need to be sung. Through a sensitivity to rhythm and an awareness of audience response, those words are placed in exactly the right place to generate laughter from the audience. In the 'Morny Stannit' quickie, most of the dialogue is taken up with the words "Morning Standard", spoken in one accent by Morecambe and another by Wise. Although the dialogue is a build up to a final visual gag, without the careful work to get the correct musical shape of the accent the visual gag would not have the same level of comedic impact. If Morecambe had not been calling "Morny Stannit", the name of the newspaper would appear to be a misprint, and Wise's city gent character would not have spent thirty seconds correcting Morecambe's pronunciation only to discover that he had in fact been calling the actual name of the newspaper. In both cases, the examples demonstrate the power of paying attention to *how* the words are being presented, and not just *what* the words are.

Conclusion

This thesis has sought to open up a dialogue on the use of musicality in comedy by using existing scholarship on musicality in theatre as a theoretical base to examine musicality in the BBC recordings of *The Morecambe and Wise Show*. The idea of analysing comedy performance, and humour more generally, has often been seen as dangerous to the continued enjoyment of the material. As E. B. White put it, "Humor can be dissected, as a frog can, but the thing dies in the process and the innards are discouraging to any but the pure scientific mind" (White in Dudden, 1987: xiv-xv). The number of times this quote has been paraphrased or misquoted is a testament to how prevalent the concept that analysis kills humour is in today's society. Yet the continued presence and development of journals such as *HUMOR: International Journal of Humor Research*, which was first published in 1988, or *Comedy Studies*, which was first published in 2010, suggests that academic interest in the subject has not yet managed to kill the 'frog' of humour and comedy.

This analysis of musicality in *The Morecambe and Wise Show* suggests that there are two main ways that musicality functions within the material to assist the creation of humour. Firstly, the use of intermusicality makes use of the connotative references that a piece of music can generate in order to build cultural references that aid the audience's understanding of the material being presented. The audience's understanding is vital to the comedic success of the material, because if they are unable to grasp the picture or concept presented to them by the performers, then the punchline or comic scenario will not make sense and thus will not provoke laughter from the audience. In *The Morecambe and Wise Show*, intermusicality is not a stand-alone source of references, but works together with visual and spoken references to foster audience understanding. The presence of intermusicality in 'Wagner at Work', 'Elgar at Work', the 'Singin' in the Rain' routine, and the

'Grieg Piano Concerto' routine allows essential references to be formed that contribute to the generation of audience laughter.

Secondly, the natural rhythms present in the material are developed through a strong sensitivity to rhythm and timing, both within the double act and in a larger group context with guest stars and directors. The rhythms of music, sound, movement, and speech are all carefully crafted through a group sensitivity to rhythm and timing that was first developed in Morecambe and Wise's career on the variety stage. Whether that means that a knife cuts through a grapefruit as a bass drum sounds on the first beat of a bar of music, three performers synchronise crossing their legs whilst sat down, or a performer tries to prompt the next line of a song before it is sung, the tight interplay of rhythms is informed by years of performance experience coupled with focused rehearsal. Not everything can be rehearsed for, however, particularly when performing to a live audience, but their sensitivity to rhythm allows Morecambe and Wise to be flexible in their delivery of material and to respond to the feedback that the audience provides them with.

Both of these uses of musicality also inform ideas on the use of expectation within comedy. The thesis opened with an exploration of the use of Huron's devices for creating musical humour within *The Morecambe and Wise Show*, which are built around the concept that these devices create humour through the violation of audience expectations. The use of intermusicality and a sensitivity to rhythm can also contribute to the violation of expectation, through the development of cultural references or rhythmical patterns. However, within *The Morecambe and Wise Show*, they also work together with Huron's devices to facilitate the creation of humour through the fulfilment of expectations. A one-off incompetence cue in a piece of music may demonstrate a violation of expectations, but *The Morecambe and Wise Show* made incompetence cues a regular part of the material, particularly when a guest star appeared on the show. By the later series, it is likely that the

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audience would have an expectation that something would 'go wrong' when a guest star appeared, creating an anticipation that would then be released when a mistake was revealed and generate laughter from the audience.

Whilst this analysis has given a brief overview of the role of musicality in *The Morecambe and Wise Show*, it has been necessarily limited in its approach. Building an overview of the different uses of musicality within the show has allowed the discussion of varied elements of musicality and how they facilitate the creation of humour, but has reduced the amount of detail that each element can be covered in. The restriction of the material used for analysis to the BBC recordings of *The Morecambe and Wise Show* meant that it required less time to become familiar with the available material for the analysis, although the BBC recordings still provide over forty hours of material. However, this restriction excludes material from the earlier ATV programmes and the later ITV programmes which may also provide insights into the use of musicality in their performance. The choice to focus on one particular comedy show also means that conclusions drawn about the function of musicality within the show may not be directly applicable to other forms of comedy performance.

These limitations do suggest possible directions that further work on the use of musicality in comedy may take. One possible route would be to choose another specific show and to explore the use of musicality generally within that frame, as has been done here with *The Morecambe and Wise Show*. This method could also be used to analyse the work of one specific performer or group of performers, which could be used to investigate the possibility of identifying a characteristic use of musicality which runs through their work. Another possible route would be to choose one specific element of musicality, such as the use of intermusicality, and to produce an in-depth analysis of the function of that element of musicality within a show. Depending on the type of comedy performance chosen, this could have a variety of results. Analysing a stand-up comedy show which lasts for approximately

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two hours would provide a very concise analysis of that element of musicality in one specific performance moment, whilst analysing a television series with over forty hours of material would likely provide a broader view. A self-contained performance like a stand-up comedy show may also be the ideal place to attempt to develop a method of notating rhythm in comedy. Analysis of the rhythms of spoken comedy could benefit from the consideration of techniques developed for use in discourse analysis, which could then be adapted as necessary for use within the framework of musicality.

A third option could be to choose a form of comedy performance, such as stand-up comedy, and to examine the function of musicality within that form of performance. However, this may run the risk of attempting to analyse too wide a selection of material with too few similarities in their use of musicality. As discussed in the introduction, the flexible nature of musicality means that choosing one particular form of performance may still reveal a multitude of different uses of musicality. As such, it would be very difficult to create a generalisation of the use of musicality in comedy that reflected every single comedic form and individual performer.

Whatever direction the analysis of musicality in comedy may take, this thesis has offered a starting point through its examination of musicality in *The Morecambe and Wise Show*. The existing scholarship available on musicality in theatre has provided a theoretical base which, when combined with writings on performance processes in comedy, has provided an insight into how musicality functions across a wide range of material. This goes beyond the immediate impact of *what* is happening onscreen to investigate *how* it is generating laughter from the audience which, after all, is the ultimate goal of comedy performance. Whether that laughter is prompted by 'Ride of the Valkyries' turning into the theme tune from *The Archers*, two table football men trying to get close to each other to have a conversation, or someone "playing all the right notes, but not necessarily in the right order" 67
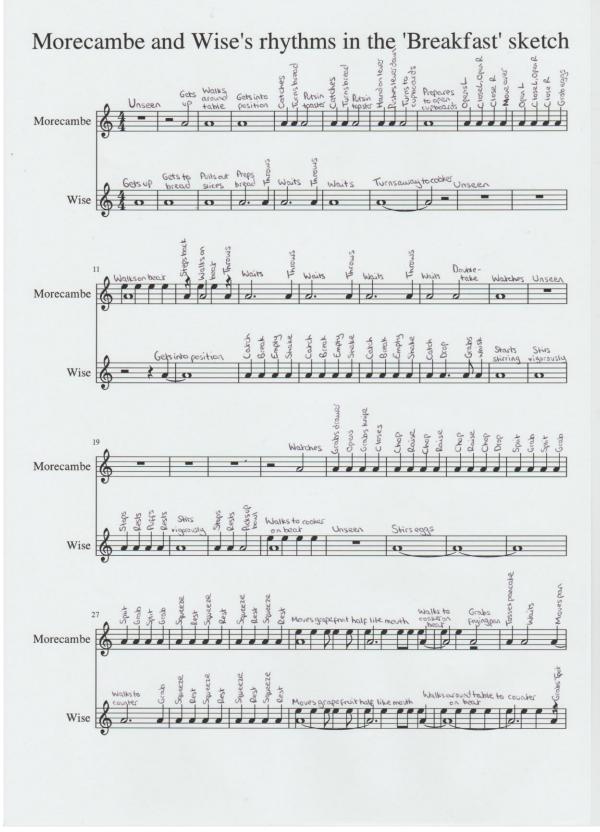
(TM&WS, 2010: cs1971) using musicality as a framework to analyse the material can shed light on how the laughter is created.
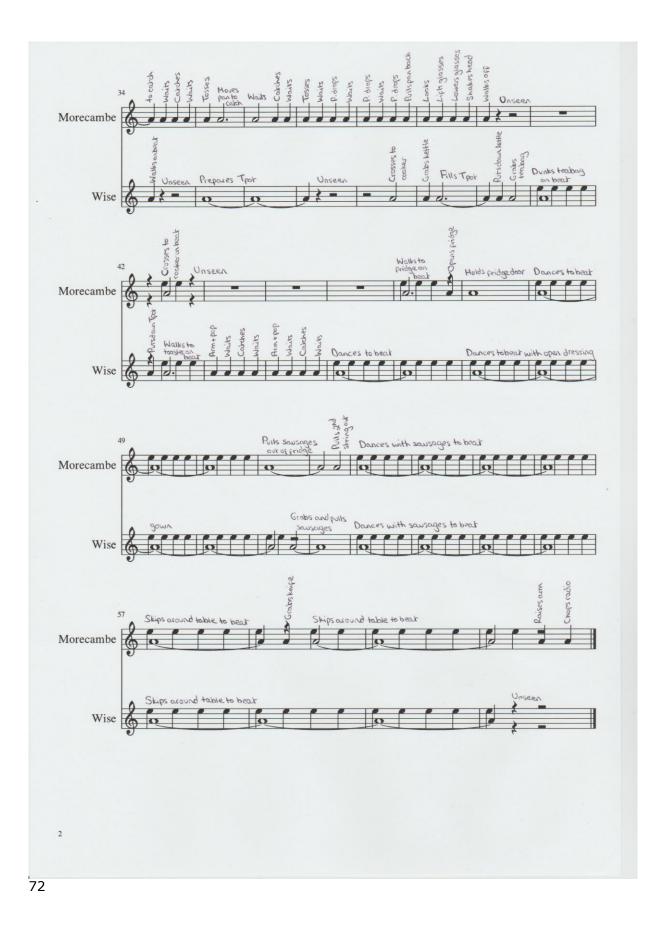
Appendices

Notating rhythm within the 'Breakfast' routine

The following images are my attempts to notate the rhythm of the movements within the 'Breakfast' routine using standard Western musical notation. The first image is the first draft of the rhythms, which are then clarified in the next two images. To maintain image clarity, they have been assigned a full page each.

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Morecambe and Wise's rhythms in the 'Breakfast' sketch

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