Creative bodies; embodied creation: performative behaviour and identity as emergent materials for new collaborative works

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manchester Metropolitan University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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2024

Acknowledgements

ABSTRACT

I instigated this practice-led research project to make a concerted change in my compositional practice and explore how the performers I worked with could be more meaningfully integrated into my pieces and processes as collaborators. By building a community of regular collaborators (mostly working one-on-one), I have led multiple creative projects to critically investigate how the unique behaviour and identity of individuals can be "used" as a compositional material, and how identity can be constructed (and co-constructed) through new compositions and performance. Conceptualising this investigation, and by extension, my music as an ongoing dialogue between myself and the people I work with, the scores and recordings presented in this portfolio and thesis are fragments or tracings of the variously intimate interactions I had with performers around identity. In this thesis I have defined the abstract spaces which have framed these interactions, which I explain using concepts of performativity (Butler, 2015; Butler, 2007; Kondo, 2018; Spatz, 2015) and embodied technique (Spatz, 2015; Spatz, 2016) as well as engaging with critical literature in anthropology and ethnography to analyse how my methods have curated, disrupted, subverted or accelerated these abstract spaces.

Participating in this project as a composer and performer, at the beginning of this research (and during the Covid-19 pandemic), I curated a new performance space for myself that was necessarily detached from the structures of the western art music (WAM) concert hall. Having instigated a personal enquiry into my identity as a musician, I created an audiovisual/ ASMR/ experimental piece from the materials of this enquiry that was framed within a politics of spectatorship (formulated through McGrath (2001) and Laing & Willson (2020)). Many of the dialogues I had with other performers subsequently gathered within or around the folds of this reflection, producing materials for composition that I handled through specific scoring and audiovisual methods while undertaking a rigorous critique of my own positionality.

This critical and reflexive research expands and integrates composition and performance strategies to creatively harness and construct performer identity on the contemporary WAM stage, within notated and non-notated practices.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In this thesis I discuss my practice as a composer and the transformation this underwent during my research between September 2019 and September 2023. I embarked on this project to make a concerted change in my compositional practice, particularly in the ways I worked with, or collaborated with, performers. Until 2019, I primarily used collaboration as a method to investigate the extended possibilities of an instrument alongside its player. My pieces were always for the concert hall and my scores were through-composed and intricately notated. I often had extreme control over the performer's sound, action, and ultimately (from my perspective) behaviour. This was something I actively wanted to change.

Specifically, before this research I would collaborate by theorising the timbral possibilities for an "expanded instrument", meeting with players afterwards to workshop these ideas.[1] I would leave the collaborative space again (in the abstract) to notate, develop and structure these ideas. I would return to workshop sketches with the performer, making amendments based on whether the notated ideas were successful or not. This working method for collaboration is well documented by performers, composers and theorists including Fitch & Heyde (2007, pp. 79-92), Clarke, Doffman et al. (2017, p.122-134) and Roche (2011, pp. 57-83). While for me this has led to some incredibly fruitful relationships, it has also led to strained dialogues in hierarchical structures that I have found uncomfortable, where the score has dictated my relationship with the players.

1.1. Aims

My desire to make a change in my practice was inspired by an experience at the Darmstadt International Summer School 'Composing for Cello' Workshop in 2018. This experience led me to realise I was more interested in a performer's individual

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[1] This could be described as connecting to Lachenmann's famous proclamation that 'composing is building an instrument' (2004, p. 56).

approach to my music, and to their instrument, than I was in any reproduction of my own imagined or theorised ideas. I was excited when the performer's gestural behaviour (which I define as the innate qualities in a performer's action or movement, as this relates to their individual practice) seemed to reveal something of their personality and wanted to fold these qualities into the material of the work itself. I wanted to see the performer's idiosyncratic approach to performance "produced" on stage, through the behaviours that they brought to performance. In early 2019, I consequently began focusing my collaborative efforts on in-depth studies of the performers I was working with.

These concerns led directly to this research, during which I aimed to compose with the unique identity and behaviour of collaborating performers. Specifically, I was interested in adding to the work of composers and performers who have written pieces entirely wrapped around individuals. Further, I was interested in pieces where behaviours that are repeatable from piece to piece with one performer might not necessarily be transferable to others. I was interested in working sincerely with the performer's *unique* personage where, through long-term collaborations, I would potentially develop intimate and privileged familiarity with each performer's identity and behaviour.

My definition of behaviour and identity began broadly, where I aimed to develop a wide variety of compositional and collaborative methods within this creative investigation. These were all linked by a desire to develop musical and extra-musical material from a holistic conception of performer identity. Then, I aimed to develop collaborative works from these materials. To me, behaviour was any diverse physical or social gesture performed or exhibited in the collaborative space, and identity was something more ineffable but that was experienced by an observer (or the performer themselves) through their actions or speech.

I aimed to 'dissolve the concept of a single author and work collectively' (Walshe, 2016, p.2), interrogating these particular aims of the New Discipline. To me these are in direct contention with the 'auteur'-like character Walshe describes in her New

Discipline manifesto (ibid.) but also feature in many extended compositional practices. While my practice does not sit within the New Discipline, it draws upon some similar materials as those who identify with it and similarly retains a largely score-based practice. This aligns with some aspects of the New Discipline that I find interesting, where scores are used despite pieces often being ontologically attached to the performers who made them (something that cannot be transmitted through a score). These pieces perhaps require (or even accentuate) a performer's specific personality, fitness, and a specific approach to performance practice in order to be realised. I therefore situate my discussion within this wide context. I combine this with critique from other disciplines (including in anthropology and ethnography) to explore my own extended practice.

1.2. Research context

1.2.1. My experience of observing performer identity in concerts

This research takes place in a contemporary western art music (WAM) context where "performer identity" can be demonstrated to be an increasingly significant part of aesthetics, where relationships between those on stage and their audiences are changing. As a *spectator*, reviewing works through the lens of performer identity is an inherently subjective task and seeing the performer as somehow revealed in the work relies on my own experience of the work in question. As posited by composer Matthew Shlomowitz, who draws on Kim-Cohen (2009) 'the subjectivity of the spectator [is] shaped by social, political, gender, class and racial experience' (2018, p.72) and this 'fundamentally shapes how artworks are experienced' (ibid.). In contemporary aesthetics, composers have brought this awareness into the ways they have asked performers to appear on stage (and this is what I believe Walshe refers to when she says '[New Discipline works] are works in which the ear, the eye and the brain are expected to be active and engaged… we understand that there are people on stage, and that these people are/have bodies' (2016, p.1)).

These aesthetics in performer identity are cultured through a wide range of contemporary practices. In my view, these include the expansion and diversification of the gestural palettes a performer must master, necessarily attained by individuals in *unique* combinations (perhaps extending their movement, vocal, and theatrical skills, or developing new instrumental vocabulary – see documentations of compositions by Rebecca Saunders (Fraser, 2019, p. 9) and Liza Lim (Aszodi, 2018, n.p.). I also experience this when composers have expanded the traditional boundaries around a musician's role on stage, including where performer experiences or subjectivity are needed to accomplish the meaning of a work (see *Stand facing an audience*, written for Leo Hülker's transitioning voice (Ingamells, 2018) and *I'm not a Robot,* where performers make musical decisions based on their political views (Whiteman, 2020)). Composers have also asked performers to generate material by reflecting on and meditating over the sound worlds they experience in their everyday practice or surroundings (see Cassandra Miller and Juliet Fraser's *Tracery* series (2017-) and Priestley's *Is this the correct amount of social distancing* (2020)).[2] These works bring the phenomenological performer to the audience's attention.

Composer-Performer works, in which the 'composer' appears 'onstage as the composer' (Shlomowitz, 2018, p. 73) also force audiences to consider who is

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[2] Perhaps this enhances how meaning is created in all performance, on two levels. First, between performer and piece – where the subjective experience is needed to realise details within the work. Second, by the audience, who hear/see the results of this but where this is more or less important to different audience members. Although the absence of the subjective experience would take a huge amount away from the work, the significance of its presence depends on who is viewing the work. This is readable in Ferneyhough, who describes that to perform his *Unity Capsule* (1976), the performer must 'mediate between worlds' of the 'instrument/performer' relationship to create an 'auto-mythology' (in Vanoeveren, 2016, p. 72). Most performers will not know whether this was important to an audient's perceived meaning of the piece.

presented and represented on stage (see Krogh Groth (2016, pp. 686-687)).[3] Works such as Bastard Assignments' *Lockdown Jams* (Spear, et al., 2020-2021) and Trond Reinholdtsen's *The Norwegian Opra* (2009-2013) are particularly pertinent here, where the composers are on stage (but it is not clear whether it matters that the audience know that or not) and where these works take place in online spaces or temporary DIY spaces that deliberately deconstruct the WAM concert hall (with its normative structures and expectations). This doubly challenges the way a musician might act or formulate themselves within the performance space and the way the audience might respond to them. Again, the phenomenological performer, and questions surrounding identity, are potentially brought to the audience's attention.

1.2.2. Performer identity in the literature

"Performer identity" is recently interrogated in the literature as something produced in acts of performance, collaboration, or other "doing". Pianist Catherine Laws' project entitled *Being a Player: Agency and Subjectivity in Player Piano* (2019, pp. 83-170) is a deep interrogation of how subjectivity is produced in performance (p.83). She explores this through creating the performance *Player Piano* (Laws, Catherine, et al., 2016) defining 'subjectivity' as 'produced through the interaction of different human and non-human agents' (Laws, 2019, p. 83). Laws draws on improvisation specialist Chris Stover, who writes of 'musical performing bodies as emergent subjectivities' (in Laws, 2019, p.100) to contextualise her work, but draws attention to the fact that 'there is still relatively little work on, or through, performance that directly addresses such questions' (p.92).

Laws provides a reflective account of making *Player Piano*, asking '*do I produce myself in performance or does the situation – do the structures of performing – produce me*' (2019, p.99, emphasis original), evoking Judith Butler's performativity theories

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[3] The composer might not have to be physically present to achieve this, but presenting through audiovisual material instead (see *HELLO* (Schubert, 2014) and the subversion of Walshe's representation in the AI-aided process of making *ULTRACHUNK* (Walshe & Akten, 2018)).

(1988). *Player Piano* was devised from four separate compositions, created in collaboration with four composers whose brief was 'to develop a new piece with [Laws] that would explore, draw out, even exploit aspects of what they think of as [her] characteristics as a performer' (2019, p.86). Laws' focus on *musical* identity is distinct, and her reflexive account of the ways that this piece utilises her body at or near the piano is an influential text in my research. I join Laws in 'examin[ing] the *experiencing of music* from the perspectives of different performers, composers, and listeners' (ibid., emphasis mine) as this connects to 'work in feminist theory, queer theory, and embodied cognition' (ibid., p.92).

The uses of performativity, as a theory to account for whether identity is something experienced or observed, is debated. While Laws considers both readings in her writing (from the experience of performer and audience), musicologist Sanne Krogh Groth has recently examined performer identity from the observer's perspective (2016). Her paper reviews the live-on-stage Composer-Performer practices of Juliana Hodkinson, Simon Steen-Andersen and Niels Rønsholdt and she draws from sociomusicologist Simon Frith's (1996) 'Music as Performance' (2004) (reading this through Phillip Auslander (2004)) to present three ways a Composer-Performer might be experienced by the audience; as themselves, as their 'performance persona', or as a 'character' (2016, p. 691). Extending this research, Krogh Groth has also interviewed other Composer-Performers to ask if there is a relationship these artists want to foster with the audience when appearing on stage, and how far 'personal' or 'biographical' layers are important in the expression of the work (2017, n.p.).[4] Krogh Groth uses this interview to ask how meaning is formulated across these works and how far the Composer-Performer being on stage contributes to the meaning of the work. Simon Waters asks similar questions about the relationship between representation and meaning in Tullis Rennie's 'fixed medium composition' (Waters, 2015, p. 22) *Muscle Memory* (2018), but conceives of Rennie as an 'ethnographer documenting a conversation between two people, one of whom

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[4] She interviews Kristian Hverring, Louise Alenuis and Simon Steen-Anderson (2017).

happens to be himself' (Waters, 2015, p. 23). Waters too draws on Frith (1987) but analyses how this piece has a 'social function' for audiences, analysing Rennie's presence as 'produc[ing] a pleasure of identification… with the performers of that music' (Frith, 1987, p.140 in Waters, 2015, p.25).

Theatre scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte is a key proponent in conceptualising performer identity phenomenologically, through the eyes of the spectator, or in other words as something produced between the 'actor' and the audience's experience of this individual (2008). Her work fuses the 'actor' and any dramatic character they might play into one reading of identity, where this is formed 'between' these two states (p. 77). In this reading, works such as Jessie Marino's *Nice Guys Win Twice* (2018) or Elaine Mitchener's *Industrialising Industry* (2015) – in which Marino and Mitchener take on dramatic personas – are as equally able to 'reveal' the authentic identity of performers as unacted works like Jennifer Walshe's *Training is the Opposite* (2014) and Kathryn Williams & Annie Hui-Hsieh's' *PIXERCISE* (2018)). The authentic performance of Walshe's boxing match, or Williams' High-Intensity Interval Training sequence on stage, invite the audience to observe the individual strengths, limitations and perseverance of these women. In my view, these aspects of these performers' bodies (including their gender) are a key part of the expression in these works.

1.2.3. Performer identity as a compositional material

Composers have interrogated performer identity as a compositional material, consciously replying on aspects of individual behaviour to attain the expression in their works. Meaning is created in Larry Goves' *happy/boomf/fat* (2018) when the individual traits of performers, who eat giant marshmallows in the piece while responding to intricate performance directions, lead to unique and personable qualities being revealed in the performers. I have seen performers break out in fits of coughing or laughter, observed sincere perseverance, and watched as players guarded their mouths self-consciously from the audience. The individualism of these actions underscores the humour, warmth and playfulness within the work. David

Gorton's *Charon* (2019) similarly amplifies individualistic traits by asking two guitarists to play a piece in complete unison; drawing attention to every minute difference in the players' movements and sounds. In Steven Takasugi's *The Flypaper* (2012), flautist James DeVoll performs a subtle counterpart against a video of himself, where the differences in minute details such as gaze and breathing patterns draw attention to the individualistic body on stage.

Other composers have moved away from using 'the body' as a primarily physical phenomenon, using performer experience and various narrative techniques to seemingly blur composition with documentary. Sarah Hennies' *Contralto* (2017) is a piece that blends video with live percussion and strings to document the stories of transgender women with vocal dysphoria – Hennies has filmed several women describing their experiences, overlaying this with recordings of the group singing together, set against live strings and percussion. Hilda Westerkamp's, *MotherVoiceTalk* (2008), 'assembles excerpts of Japanese-Canadian artist and poet Roy Kiyooka… speaking and interviewing his mother' alongside recordings of herself and her own mother (Woloshyn, 2017, p. 74). Annea Lockwood's *Ceci n'est pas un piano* (2002) is a piece for piano and tape, which is a recording of the performer describing her hands in detail.[5] In all of these works, the voice of the performer is heard directly, either live or embedded through audiovisual elements. Monika Voithofer recently alluded to the prevalence of the voice in New Discipline works (and other extended performance practices), citing philosopher Sybille Krämer's theory (2015) that 'the performance of the voice is identity creating - it is a trace of the body in the language, it expresses the unsayable' (in Voithofer, 2018, p.9).

1.3. Methodology

In my project, I worked to extend these artistic enquiries and put the unique identity and behaviour of performers as the central conception in my works. I did this through

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[5] This is one of the works that Laws incorporates in her 'Player Piano' (2016).

various methods that interrogate and critique this aesthetic as a *collaborative practice*, where composer and performer roles would be extended beyond traditional boundaries. I also drew from the methods of other disciplines that are concerned with the epistemology of identity, researching this reflexively through their art-making. This included close readings of Tim Ingold's methods in anthropology (2013) and theatre practitioner Ben Spatz's conceptions of embodiment research (2015; 2016; 2017; 2020).[6]

Tim Ingold advocates that anthropologists must go to 'study with' the individuals they ask to learn about, and 'hope to learn from them' distinguishing this from other practices (which in Ingold's argument, include ethnography) that 'study of and learn about' people (2013, pp. 2-3). Ingold's methodologies are structured by participant observation, which he describes as 'absolutely not a technique of data collection… participant observation is a way of knowing from the inside' (p. 5):

> 'An anthropology that has been liberated from ethnography… would no longer be tied down by a retrospective commitment to descriptive fidelity. On the contrary, it would be free to bring ways of knowing and feeling shaped through transformational engagements with people from around the world, both within and beyond the settings of fieldwork, to the essentially prospective task of helping to find a way into a future common to all of us' *(pp. 5-6).*

In my view, Spatz' work exemplifies how artists might occupy Ingold's research spaces in order to ask questions about performer identity and behaviour. A key proponent of embodiment as a research discipline, Spatz has conceived of ways that

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[6] Where the latter is arguably an extension of the former; theatre practitioner Ben Spatz likens embodiment research to 'experimental approaches to anthropology and performance (as) philosophy' (Spatz, 2016, p.258)).

artists might develop alternative methods for developing knowledge about 'the body' (2017; 2018; 2020).

In Spatz's artistic research, conceptions of a final work or performance are displaced in favour of creating an **epistemological space** to build knowledge about the practitioners within it. Spatz 'abandons the most fundamental principle of contemporary performing arts, namely the performance of an artistic "work"' to prioritise this (2020, p. 21). Their recent project with performers Nazlihan Eda Erçin and Agnieszka Mendel, 'Dynamic Configurations with Transversal Video' (2020), replaced any work-focused practice with a 'laboratorial' space (ibid., p.33) in which the trained performers worked together on various materials, encountering and investigating questions about their embodied technique as they worked. Performance aims were replaced with entirely epistemological ones, and questions such as 'what is bodily technicity?' (p.23); 'how does the presence of [a] camera affect the practice?' and what 'are the responsibilities and powers, the limits and obligations, of each of the... named roles?' guided their activity (pp. 37-38). Spatz defines this experimental space as a 'laboratory', where 'experimentality is any kind of "trying out" (opening cut) coupled with observation (closing cut)' (p.33). Spatz says 'laboratoriality', or inscriptive experimentality, requires that both the "trying out" and the observation be archivally traced' (p. 33), where crucially, alternative ways of tracing the 'closing cut' might be sought beyond 'live performance and performance documentation' (pp. 105, 110). In Spatz's project, various avenues of enquiry developed and subsided, all under a 'formal investigative framework, aiming to explore the relationship between technique and identity by working practically with a particular set of songs' (p. 39).

My work used a similar epistemological structure in order to ask questions about performer identity and behaviour. My 'laboratorial' space first displaced notions of creating a final performance in order to freely explore the techniques, gestures, personalities and ideas of my collaborators while working towards a shared practice. As in the fluid roles adopted by Spatz (2020, p.102), I looked for opportunities where myself and/or my collaborators could participate in both composition and

performance tasks in order to build knowledge about ourselves and each other, but unlike Spatz (2020), did not define the limitations of the physical space or time that this investigation might take place in (see Spatz' recommendations of this in (Embodied Research: A Methodology, 2017, pp. 6-19). I simply made (or co-made) pieces from this knowledge when I was invited to (by programmers, venues, the performers themselves, etc).

To me, this creative architecture was more important than retaining my own compositional identity, practice, or language and therefore this research had the potential to become a highly transformative experience for my practice. Led by experimentalism, and following questions as they arose in the collaborative space, it could potentially lead anywhere and become anything.[7] Comparing these words to the sentiment in Marina Abramović's description of her relationship-led artistic practice with Ulay, and how the deterioration of this relationship impacted her work, delineates the territory this work could potentially enter, and the boundaries between private and public life that might require my navigation. She says 'until I walked the Great Wall in 1988, I wanted the public to see me only in one way, very radical, no makeup, tough, spiritual. And after I went through that experience, and all the pain of separation, there was a moment when I decided to stage my life, and to have fun with it. I just said, Why not; let's have it all' (in Biesenbach, 2010, p.16).

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[7] I conceived that 'abandoning the work space' (Spatz, 2020, p.21) might also enrich dialogues that examine composer-performer practices. When activities are only viewed as a process serving the work-concept (as defined by Lydia Goehr, (1992)), which she says always 'result[s] in a complete and discrete, original and fixed, personally owned unit… called [a] musical work' (p. 206), the concept 'continues to shape a standard or 'establishment' interpretation of… the practice it regulates' and assumes to uphold regulative activities (e.g. that the performer 'complies with a score, plays these notes and not others, plays in such a way as to indicate respect for the genre musically and historically conceived' (p. 104)). Similarly, Bourdieu argues that developing knowledge about culture through only the rules, laws and models that govern that culture, without also objectively interrogating the schema and practice that give rise to these rules, risks a 'misrecognition' of the practice that is produced by this dialectic (1977, pp.3-6).

My restructuring of a traditional compositional process was formulated through the following research questions:

RQ1.   What methods can I use to investigate the social, technical or sonic behaviours that are carried by or between myself (as composer and/or performer) and other performers in collaboration?

RQ2.   How can the knowledge this produces about us as individuals or a collective be used to construct identities for the stage, through composition?

RQ3   How can I facilitate a practice that enables my collaborative partners to create non-hierarchically?

RQ4   How am I positioned as a composer in a body of work that emphasises "betweenness" and "hybridity"?

RQ5   How does this knowledge transform the performance practices of the collaborative participants?

1.4. Method

In this practice-led research project, I predominantly worked one-on-one with performers in dialogic collaborations to investigate these research questions. I worked with performers who were at various stages in their careers (which I later expanded to include working with non-professionals) and conducted this research with performers that I had worked with previously. This included soprano Ella Taylor, percussionist Darren Gallacher and clarinettist Sarah Watts, as well as people I knew but had not worked with (including bassist Ben Evans, who I had lived with platonically from 2016-2019 after a traffic impact left him with lifechanging injuries and we both had lost someone extremely dear to us, which I state here to explain some of the background against which this work took place). I also established new relationships with flutist Jenni Hogan and cellist Amy Jolly, after meeting them at a conference in November 2019.

The individuals mentioned above were, in 2019, at various stages in their careers – some of them were just out of postgraduate study and others were established professionals. All of them had been trained within a UK conservatoire or university, which I anticipated might have implications for the 'behaviours' we could explore together. I wondered if the allure and sheen of virtuosity, and the risks and rebellion of idiosyncrasy, might make this investigation into unique identity difficult. I was wrong and ended up considering 'amateurism' (Frisk, 2017) as a valuable space to find and enter with each performer, but nonetheless extended my community of collaborators to include *CoMA Manchester*, a community group I began directing in 2020 containing professionals and amateurs. I maintained the longest collaboration in my research with this group.

Figure 1 shows the various ways in which relationships with each of my collaborators were maintained (or lost) throughout this research. At the start of this research, it was important to me that each method for collaboration was developed around the relationship I had with each individual at the time, and that the initial questions asked in the "epistemological space" (as described in 1.3, p.23) were wrapped around those that my collaborative partner was interested in asking about their practice. Therefore, the methods I present throughout this thesis are necessarily differentiated in each collaboration, each adapted to the relationship I had with my collaborative partner and the compositional scenario presented (including being impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic). These pieces are developed from the methodological principles set out in 1.3, including pieces that I wrote for myself, Darren Gallacher, Jenni Hogan, Amy Jolly and CoMA Manchester. I present these pieces alongside four others that I wrote within a more traditional commissioning model; for Sarah Watts, Weston Olencki, Ensemble Recherche and House of Bedlam. Here, I have scrutinised my research questions within collaborative relationships that were structured very differently in terms of the time, dialogue and hierarchical labour patterns. These led to important methodological developments across my project and have expanded my contribution to knowledge where this reflection necessarily looks at my research questions from very different angles.

Chapters 2 and 3 set out the methods by which I started by working in spaces of open experimental practice (as structured through the "epistemological space"), where my investigations were guided by answering questions about the body-instrument relationship. This "answering" was explored through musical improvisation and verbal narrative, documented on cameras/ microphones and sometimes inscribed in text, from which I created audiovisual pieces without scores (see discussion of *as in mirrors* in 2.2 and *Flect* in 3.1). With Jenni Hogan, these experimental spaces developed into working exclusively (and remotely) through video and without our instruments throughout the Covid lockdown. As previously, this left an archive of documentary materials featuring (this time exclusively) conversation, from which I created a backing track and then wrote a new live part for flute (which I created by improvising on my own instrument before transcribing this into a playful score utilising a number of new notation methods). This was an important piece for how I went onto consider liveness within my work.

With CoMA Manchester, I experimented with setting up these experimental spaces through open scoring methods (rather than setting them up through dialogue alone, see 3.3.1). Dialogue and facilitation remained an important part of my process, though I narrowed the methods by which I invited players to engage with my investigation into the instrument-body relationship. Here, I used the open score to invite players to explore gestures they did and did not like on their instruments. This became an important strand of my investigation focusing on the physiological relationship players have with their instruments and extended instrumental gestures.

In Chapter 4, I present four significant pieces that were created within a more traditional commissioning model as part of this portfolio and thesis: *You may own us but we are going to inform on you* (written with Sarah Watts); *To find myself staring back* (written for Ensemble Recherche); *WHAT IT TAKES* (written with Ben Evans for Weston Olencki); and *Lost in your whole world* (written for myself and House of Bedlam). In these projects, the collaboration was not structured by the same dialogic qualities as those mentioned above. Instead, the focus of these pieces was to find

ways to continue this intimate and personal work on the player-instrument-gesture relationship in projects that were structured very differently in terms of time, dialogue and hierarchical decision making. These projects include pieces that utilised (for the first time in this research) an extended WAM stave and relied heavily on the score to frame the space of practice and facilitate the musicians' engagement with the inquiry into behaviour and identity. These pieces are part of the lineage that has brought me to my conclusions about composing with unique behaviour and identity and are discussed at length in this thesis where they have huge significance in the more nuanced findings I have encountered. *You may own us* also contributes new knowledge on working with generative AI in composition, both in how Sarah Watts and I curated a datasets for Recurrent Neural Network training, and how we used the generated outputs in our final composition.

In Chapter 5, the final methods I present are in projects with CoMA Manchester and Amy Jolly, where in the former I developed my open score methods within a mixed ability ensemble context and invited participants more meaningfully to co-fix the investigative framing in my scored music. The latter presents a collaborative method I developed with Amy Jolly, whereby over four years we have not developed methods to create single pieces by, but instead developed a "space of practice" – a method which governs our labour patterns, decision making and aesthetics as a composer-performer duo. This intertwines methods of working from within this wider project (including audiovisual documentation and arrangement, open score practice, free exploratory practice) with specific methods of handling fixed material, to present an original and nuanced way of working as equals in composer-performer collaboration.
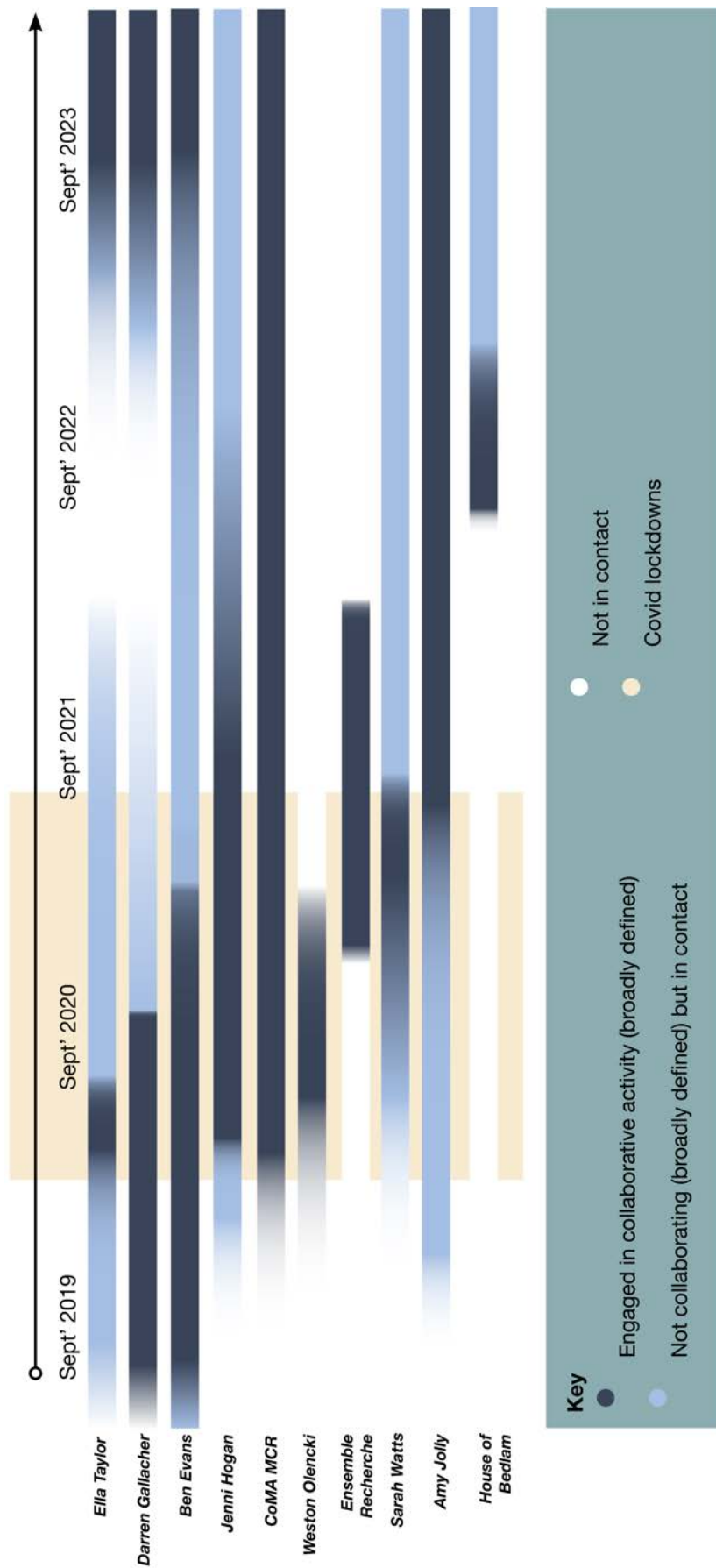
Figure 1: Community of collaborators involved in this research

1.4.1. Creative output

This research employs practice-led methods exemplified by composers such as Cassandra Miller (2018) and Josh Spear (2022), who have studied their creative practice as it developed through their collaborative approaches towards music-making. My text combines a qualitative and self-reflective analysis of my collaborative processes and the resulting pieces, with the critical analyses I carried out throughout this research. I have drawn from autoethnographic methods to combine these evaluations. I provide a reflexive account of my practice-research and situate this within both my personal experience and the contextual and theoretical frameworks I encountered during the process.[8] This writing therefore reflects my interdisciplinary perspective and expands the scholarship of composer-performer collaboration outside of a labour-focused/ performance-focused perspective, considering how identity is produced in collaborative composition.[9]

I have dealt with identity as it is structured by things like intimacy, vulnerability and power and how this has impacted the relationships and aesthetics produced through

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[8] I have reviewed autoethnographic methods including by Ellis (2004) and Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis (2015); as well as reviewed the purposes and styles of composition PhD commentaries through Scheuregger and Leedham (2020).

[9] The interrogation of composer-performer collaboration over the last two decades has largely focused on taxonomizing co-working practices and evaluating labour patterns. This has included work to determine whether an activity can be qualified as collaborative or not by composers including Hayden & Windsor (2007) and Alan Taylor (2016) and work to describe the ways in which performers are integrated into the compositional process (see Kanga (2014); Roche (2011); Roe (2007); Östersjö (2013), Gorton & Östersjö (2017), Fitch & Heyde (2007), Hooper (2012), Vieira (2016), Aslan & Lloyd (2017), Jennifer Torrence (2018)). These studies consider collaboration as an activity serving the production of a final work and evaluation focuses on hierarchy within labour activities, with interesting dialogue around the ways performer and composer interactions have bearings upon the compositional materials. My work expounds this into a discussion of how aspects of identity are produced and constructed within these spaces.

collaboration.[10] I add to the work of soprano Juliet Fraser and composer-performer Josh Spear, who both write about 'intimacy' as a necessary condition of 'true' composer-performer collaboration (Fraser, 2019, p.51; Spear, 2022), and the work of clarinettist Heather Roche, who argues that free dialogue and trust are a condition for collaboration (2011, pp.96-122)[11]. I depart from the work of Miller, who alludes to vulnerability and power dynamics within collaborative spaces when she says it is 'a way of allowing for unpredicted and unpredictable outcomes, for process-led makings and interactings… [this] is not only a way of being together, but also a way of making together, participating and musicking together' (2018, p. 122). I continue this work that discusses the *relationships* between composers and performers within creative workflows and assess how the relationships I had with performers have structured the readings of identity we have made together, and the materials we have produced within our series of interactions.[12]

This original research project will provide composers and performers with an in-depth study into multiple methods for handling performer identity and behaviour as a compositional material. In developing an interdisciplinary methodology for working with performer identity and behaviour, composers and performers will be able to use this research to critically situate their own practice, and ask questions of the

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[10] Composer Lauren Redhead argues that aesthetics are produced in collaboration which 'transcend[s] issues of labour… since aesthetics are not created in the same way that scores and performances are, and nor are owned or written.' (2018, pp. 30-31).

[11] These conditions are cited in other scholarship on creative collaboration, including writer Ellen Mara de Watcher's appraisal of collaborations in the visual arts: 'the ability to converse, disagree and hold incompatible views, and yet move beyond conflict towards creation is essential to collaboration. It is a basic human dynamic, one that the Russian literary theorist Bakhtin called the "dialogic process" (2017, pp.19-20).

[12] Catherine Laws also refers to 'the production of embodied subjectivity in… performance, constituted by a range of interactions: with the composed materials (in addition to improvised moments), with the piano and other sound-making objects, and with the space of performance' (2019, p. 89). My investigation extended this to fiercely look at the ways in which composer-performer interaction impacted identity and behaviour, not within labour models, but in the ways my 'participant-observation' of identity and behaviour was significant.

decisions they are making, or the collaborative spaces they are structuring. My methods for collaboration will be useful to composers seeking to develop this element of their practice, and my open notation practices will be useful to composers and performers seeking to integrate composition and improvisation within their music.

Chapter 2: Behaviour as technique, behaviour as performance

See Portfolio, 1. *as in mirrors_film*

2.1. Formative projects

In Autumn 2019, I initiated projects with Darren Gallacher (percussion) and Ben Evans (bass) to begin working within the methodological principles set out in Chapter 1. In both cases, we aimed to find a meeting point between their professional interests and my research. With Darren, we followed his interest in corporeal movement as a de-coupled extra-musical parameter; Darren was interested in how he could develop virtuosity in the minute movements of his hands and body at and away from his instruments. For three months, we discussed his (and others') movement in performance, what composing with movement might mean aesthetically for us, and how we might begin making something new from this starting point. We then began experimenting with more unfamiliar percussive materials in order to explore the ways these impacted Darren's movement palette. This included suspending glass jars and terracotta plant pots in water. Away from these physical materials we also experimented with hand movements and developed a palette of gestures to perform "in air".[13] These imitated different hand strokes Darren was familiar with which was significant because it was something we could both access (there were fewer barriers for me as a non-percussionist and I was able to develop these gestures simultaneously with Darren).

Ben was interested in expanding his sonic palette (and improvisatory language) through various new pedals he had acquired in the previous months. We experimented for twelve months with combinations of pedals and performance techniques, creating a multitude of soundworlds. Ben often found himself testing techniques that were new to him – using an e-bow, a contrabass bow or coins on the

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[13] Darren had recently performed Thierry de Mey's *Silence Must Be!* (2002). We decided to develop our own palette of hand gestures, decoupled from any instrument.

string to activate the sound, for example. As a result, shared learning became significant throughout this research and is something I will return to in Chapter 5.

In both instances with Ben and Darren, our practice was built on this exploration of the materiality of sound or gesture through a new "instrument" that we created together. My understanding of 'performer behaviour' was in how Ben and Darren interacted with, and developed technique from, the affordances of this new instrument. While this was one method by which I could investigate the social, technical or sonic behaviours of my collaborators, I began to question how this approach captured the "uniqueness" of them; and how I could develop this method from something where I was exploring a more universal approach to embodied instrumental technique (Spatz, 2015, p.16), into something that was more personal.

2.1.1. Embodied technique verses performative behaviour

Embodied technique is a term used by Ben Spatz to refer to 'transmissible and repeatable knowledge of relatively reliable possibilities afforded by human embodiment' that structure the way humans interact with everyday or specialised tasks (2015, p. 16). In WAM, this might refer to the way a musician walks onto stage or turns the page of their music, as well as more specialised behaviours such as how to strike a timpani with a mallet to produce a certain sound, or produce a harmonic on an electric bass. In my view, this is what Walshe's examples of compositional practice in the New Discipline exemplify, written for specific bodies, or with able-bodied musicians in mind: 'how to locate a psychological/physiological node which produces a very specific sound; how to notate tiny head movements alongside complex bow manoeuvres; how to train your body so that you can run 10 circuits of the performance space before the piece begins...' (Walshe, 2016, p. 2).

Taking a step backwards out of the specifics of New Discipline practices, it could be said that since the practice of composition was divorced from performance (Frisk, 2017, n.p.), composers – who unless they were writing deliberately for a scratch group including non-musicians – have written for a musician's embodied technique

when they imagine how a performer will predictably interact with their instrument, or use their voice, to achieve a desired outcome. In today's compositional practices, this conception of a musician's embodied technique has expanded, with composers often asking performers to execute non-musical tasks, perhaps by expecting musicians to observe impeccable timing to execute theatrical actions (for example in Shlomowitz' *Letter Pieces 1-8* (2007-2012)), or find intricate detail in sound. Juliana Hodkinson does this when discarding 'the customary control of bow and left-hand fingering' to carry a viola along a 'long, suspended thread' on stage (2017, n.p.). These composers draw on the 'epistemic dimension of practice' (Spatz, 2015, p. 16) in that they know performers will reliably approach these tasks with their specialised and embodied technique as musicians. This is put into a state of play in pieces like James Saunders' *They are always different, they are always the same* (2016) whose score invites performers to engage with different ensemble skills such as following each other, or stopping/starting non-musical actions together (if they want to) but where the performers, or perhaps more aptly, participants, might not have the skills to execute these actions within normative musical expectations. The piece was 'first realised as part of an ongoing project run by Lutherie Urbaine working on new music repertoire with school children in Bagnolet' (Saunders, n.d.).

It is still of course possible to observe the unique personage of performers in these works structured by expectations for transmissible, repeatable technique (as it was in my work with Darren and Ben). However, I was more interested in creating a performance context whereby the behaviours needed to perform the work were not reliably repeatable by other performers; where the transmissibility of the work stopped with the performer with whom the work was created for/with. I did not want to write for a generalised conception of a musician's embodied technique, but to find ways of observing the performer's behaviour and identity outside of this epistemic dimension of performance practice.

By rejecting the epistemic dimension of embodied technique in musicians (as repeatable, reliable and crucially, *transmissible* knowledge (Spatz, 2015, p. 16)) I was embracing and exploring what it might mean to generate knowledge that was not

repeatable (but focussed instead on "liveness" and ephemerality) and not transmissible (e.g. behaviours could not necessarily be reproduced by other performers). I was interested in what identity meant in composers' works such as Timothy Cape's *Wildflower* (2017) (where in my view his Irish accent and footage from his local beaches were as much a part of the gestural language as more repeatable choreographies and vocalisations) or Laura Bowler's *Cover Squirrel* (where collaborator Rosie Middleton's rehearsal process is revealed through recordings taken in this space and played as an audio backing against Rosie's live performance on stage (2022)).

2.2. Restructuring the epistemological space

While asking these questions, I had been playfully developing a project in which I became one of my collaborators. I wanted to use this opportunity to interrogate what I meant by performer behaviour and identity and consequently developed this project by conceiving of collaborating with myself as a flautist, which I have "identified as" since I was a child. At the time I had felt this part of me was relatively divorced from my compositional practice, where my activities as composer and flautist were situated within different networks and aesthetic worlds, and I had distinct memories and experiences of these parts of my life. I aimed to keep these parts of me separate in this project, and situated myself as a collaborating performer, filtered from the memories and experiences of my compositional self.

I considered this 'break' (Butler, 2015, p. 12) within my own conception of selfhood as a creative endeavour to explore *facets* of my own identity and what these meant for my understanding of authenticity. The various intentions of such 'breaks' are demonstrated by artists and writers including musicologist Marie-Anne Kohl. Kohl analyses Walshe's formation of Grúpat (a composer-performer collective formed entirely of characters Walshe devises and performs (Milker Corporation, n.d.)), and Laurie Anderson's formation of her male clone, as using their alter egos to critique societal pressure to define oneself as an 'autonomous, coherent subject' (Kohl, 2012,

p. 85). Artist Anne Bean said of her time living as Chana Dubinski, 'I didn't see myself as another person or as using an alter ego… I saw myself manifesting much more of the being that I intimately recognised, away from the 'shape' that life, friends and one's self holds one in" (La Frenais, 2016, p. 4). Marina Abramović reflects on the differences between her and Ulay's views on how they expressed and represented themselves in their work; '[Ulay] wanted to draw a line between the private and the public [but] then everything went to pieces… and I went on in the public, trying to act both roles at once' (Biesenbach, 2010, p. 14). The concept of 'breaking' is used by Judith Butler to describe, and admit that it is possible (as perhaps shown above), for someone to consciously reject their iterative self-formation and act as the agential and 'sovereign I'. (2015, p. 14-16). I began this process, not knowing where my limits were, or who I might become, reveal, or act.

2.2.1. New interpretations of behaviour and identity

I therefore started the process of writing a piece for myself to play, knowing that I wanted to explore "my flautist's" relationship to the flute. I had spent some time in mirrored studios at Sheffield's Montgomery Theatre with my flute trying to make my sound and body more physically extreme in response to personal preoccupations I had about the way I look when I play the flute, which I felt looked too fragile and gendered. I wanted to make my body look robust, unwavering and assertive. I wanted to make my sound ugly.

Figure 2: Alternative fingerings I explored to distort the timbre of my sound

In this space, divorced from any concept of producing a final work at the time, I was asking questions such as 'How can I make my body feel less fragile or gendered by the way I produce sounds on the flute, or in the way I hold my body when I play?'. These questions had led me to explore new articulations (including using different phonetic families to filter the beginning of any sound I produced on the flute, for example fricative phonemes including θ, ð, s, f), new fingerings to distort my timbre (see Figure 2) and new ways of holding and angling my body, such as widening my stance and pushing the end of my flute further from my body, to use up more physical space. I also explored rejecting my unconscious embodied movement when playing the flute (which I felt was too fluid, too graceful), and experimented making this more angular and jolting.

I did all of this work in front of cameras, creating recordings over several months, alongside keeping diary entries and writing poems as self-reflective tools throughout the process.

Figure 3: Screenshot of recording made to observe movement in the mirrored studio

Figure 4: Screenshot of recording made with stylised framing to observe embouchure

2.2.2. The mirrored studio & performativity

As stated, this work was done in front or mirrors and cameras. Sometimes, I even framed close up shots of certain body parts (e.g. see Figure 4). I was interested in how this framing would impact the behaviours and identity I consciously and unconsciously executed in this space.

If the concepts of 'performance', 'identity' and 'agency' that I had been exploring with Ben Evans and Darren Gallacher could be explained through notions of embodied technique (Spatz, 2015), the behaviours I was experiencing here were certainly not explainable as repeatable, reliable or transmissible possibilities afforded by my training as a musician. They were ephemeral and of the moment. This space felt unfamiliar as a compositional or performance practice in exciting ways. I was playing in concepts of performativity first expressed by Judith Butler in 1990. Together with writing by theatre ethnographer Dorrine Kondo (2018, pp. 27-31), Spatz (2015, pp. 51-52) and Butler's own revisions of the concept (2015, pp. 8-28), I have understood this to mean that identity is produced and reproduced between conscious and unconscious interactions with norms and power, where power may be sought or imposed (Kondo, 2018, p.28) and where norms are in a constant iterative state of acting on and forming behaviour. This process of self-formation does not just happen in isolated moments, but is preceded by a 'matrix' (Butler, 2015, p. 15) of 'technologies, structures, institutions [and] other both personally and impersonally related, organic and life processes, to mention just a few of the conditions for emergence' (ibid., p.19).[14] Processes of reflection and concepts of self-referentiality were also part of this experience (where the latter is formed through the former) (ibid., p.47-48).

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[14] The ways in which these 'norms' or 'laws' structure identity are highly contested among scholars (see Butler, 2007, pp. 34-46) but this thesis, which documents how I interacted with various performers throughout this project, gives the reader insight into some of the ways that I experienced hierarchy, directionality and agency in the experimental musical spaces of contemporary WAM.

What does this mean for my research? There is debate over the relationship between agency and power in performativity dialogues (see, for example, writing on Foucault by Butler (2007, pp. 126-150) and Sedgwick (2003, pp. 9-17)), but my experience of the mirrored studio was that the 'norms' I would usually experience while playing my flute were completely disrupted and that I had new power and agency in this space. This is corroborated by Kondo's experience of creative and everyday spaces: 'the relation between norms and performance/performativity [can be read as] fluid (Kondo, 2018, p. 28). She says 'norms… can be rendered unfamiliar, enacted in politically challenging ways… [are] potentially immanent to power… Performances, either onstage or in everyday life, are replete with possibility arising from, not transcending, power' (ibid.). This would potentially re-theorise what "identity" meant in my project – not as a sum of the techniques and contributions a performer offered in collaborating, but as something that could be read dynamically in live creative spaces. "Identity" was consistently transforming where performers had agency to challenge and deconstruct the norms they would usually experience in everyday life and/or with their instrument.

In this thesis, **the mirrored studio** from hereafter refers to any 'self-referential' (Butler, 2015, p. 110) (inherently reflexive) *and* creative space occupied by a performer or myself in this research, where performers might experiment with their own agency and power within performative states. This self-referentiality might be enhanced by the presence of cameras or mirrors, or even just knowing that a performance is being watched. I contend this further disrupts the agential and conscious structure of these spaces (in ways articulated by Kondo above (2018)), and that the behaviours a performer might exhibit in this space are flushed with new possibilities arising from this power. Butler might contend that this process describes a 'breaking' from 'primary and enduring modes of dependency and interdependency' (2015, p. 14) and that the resultant subject is weak, or 'brittle' (ibid.). I contend that this playful space between everyday life and creative performance is rich with possibility for strong new identities to be tried on, sought out and thread into ourselves.

2.2.3. Moving to the work space

Wanting to create a piece from the materials I had created through documenting the mirrored studio, I began to conceptualise how I might move into the "work space".[15] This move coincided with entering the UK Covid-19 lockdown for the first time, where all forms of representation went online and I conceived that any public performance I did as composer-performer would have to be through YouTube, social media (such as Instagram or Facebook) or an online conferencing software such as Zoom or Skype. This was undeniably a strange turn for this research to take, particularly in a context where I had realised the importance of ephemerality and live performance in my research questions. Nevertheless, this immediately brought a rich new dimension to the questions I was tackling.

Going online in this way brought my practice into a critical world dominated by visual artists, where those working with self-representation (historically investigated in this discipline through the self-portrait) were already questioning how to represent themselves through the 'institutions and interfaces that attempt to define their representational forms' (Vasey, 2013, p. 8). 'Social media demands a radical re-evaluation of photographic agency, one that shifts our understanding of visibility. As private space has been eroded and broadcasting of intimacy is what is expected of us, artists have sought further forms of representational effacement' (Vasey, 2013, p. 7). The YouTube videos of Jeremy Bailey, 'who adopts the persona of a bedroom 'geek'' (2015 in Kholeif, 2011, p. 9) and the Instagram account of Amelia Ulman, who adopts the persona of a 'glamorous, Kardashian-like woman' (2014 in Kholeif, 2018, p. 127) are examples of artists who have subverted the performative space into 'institutions and interfaces' that demand self-representation and these projects were

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[15] This was not the first "work" I made in this research, and I had been considering how knowledge about identity could be used in composition separately in a traditional commissioning model with soprano Ella Taylor and librettist CN Lester (see Appendix A and Appendix B for the score and recording). However, this deviated from my research questions, and is not discussed at length here.

inherently about thinking through different ways of acting in these spaces. For composers or performers in WAM, representation is traditionally limited to the physical concert hall. This has been changing and now some composer-performers are experimenting with how to represent themselves through visual interfaces (see, for example Alexander Schubert's *Wikipiano* (2018-), or Pocknee, Ingamells et al.'s *#textscoreaday* series on Twitter (2020).

In this project, my decisions over how I would represent myself online were heavily influenced by Jennifer Walshe who, in an online meeting in 2020, commented that the recordings from my mirrored studio were evocative of images and sounds that you might encounter online through ASMR videos, including visuals of my hands on the flute keys, and audio recordings of air being filtered through various embouchure shapes and into the instrument.[16] While I knew I wanted to use this material directly in the piece, at this point I also decided I would further subvert my own representation as a flautist and create materials for the piece as an ASMR performer. I did not know whether I was acting, or whether this was some inflection of my own identity created in a performative space, but this ambiguity did not matter to me in my "construction" of identity when working with these materials later in video editing software. The final piece constructs identity between the recordings I made in the mirrored studio, the poetry I created to reflect on the process, ASMR footage, fictionalised interviews and highly stylised pop-art imagery that underlines the DIY aesthetic the piece was created in. At the beginning these intertextual references are seemingly unrelated, but as the piece moves on they increasingly resonate with one another and the highly personal nature of the material revealed to the audience becomes clear.

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[16] Largely hosted on YouTube and TikTok, ASMR videos aim to activate an autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR) in the listener. ASMR performers do this by closely recording everyday or specialised sounds (from brushing hair to clicking flute keys, for example), as well as closely recording their own voice talking to the listener.

2.2.3.1 The construction and production of identity

It is perhaps a strange notion to separate the 'construction' and the 'production' of identity in/for performance; both the terms themselves, and the extent to which the passive/active implications within these terms are true, remain contested by scholars seeking to understand how conceptions of the 'self' are formed (Butler, 2015, p. 11); (Sedgewick, 2003 in Kondo, 2018, p. 28). Despite this, I have separated these terms in my research in order to delineate identity as read through materials; purposefully arranged, handled and 'constructed' by a 'narrative authority' (Butler, 2015, pp. 10-11). This is a process that is 'inevitably belated', does not require having been at the scene of 'identity formation', and does not even have to carry truth (ibid.). This is distinguished from identity as read through performative embodied actions, which in 'addition to the physical, this space of possibility includes much that we might categorize as mental, emotional, spiritual, vocal, somatic, interpersonal, expressive' (Spatz, 2015, p. 15) and where identity is read as 'produced' through these actions. This includes physical gestures that are entwined and inseparable from technologies such as instruments, and where a performance might constitute a 'subversive, unfaithful citation' of the self (Kondo, 2018, p. 27) by performing actions that deliberately rebel against the iterative processes of subject formation. I contend that these latter spaces of production are intrinsically collaborative; whether with the instrument, the self, or other participants.

Much of my music in this project, as an object, presented the constructed identities of my collaborators to the audience. This happened where I assembled the materials we produced within the collaborative space into a new music object. In *as in mirrors*, this happened at the point I started to make decisions about how materials would be arranged to create an expressive narrative for the audience to follow, a process that in itself led to other performative spaces to emerge, and be captured in an audiovisual format. Figure 5 shows this entire process, drawing attention the decisions I made that *stylised* how I portrayed identity; including planning the acoustic development captured within the ASMR microphone and designing the

colour palettes of my clothing and lipstick.[17] The figure also shows that the ASMR performer re-enacted gestures that I had developed in the mirrored studio.[18] This sequencing between the production and construction of identity blurred the boundaries between authentic and fictitious performance, which became a feature I leaned into going forward.

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[17] Table 1 shows how I positioned the microphone in the flute, and performed gestures either through an open or closed cylinder (open or closed keys) to create the impression that sounds were getting closer and closer to the listener and the acoustic environment was becoming increasingly closed.

[18] I had spent a lot of time with a 'th' (θ) sound (experimenting with filtering flute tones through embouchures that I felt looked less fragile than 'normal' articulations of sounds on the flute). This curled my lips back to reveal my teeth and tongue and seemed to embody a more gruesome gesture than any 'normal' way of playing. I combined this with gestures that made sense to a 'constructed' ASMR persona: moving the headjoint, tapping the body of the flute, key clicks, whistle tones and air tones.
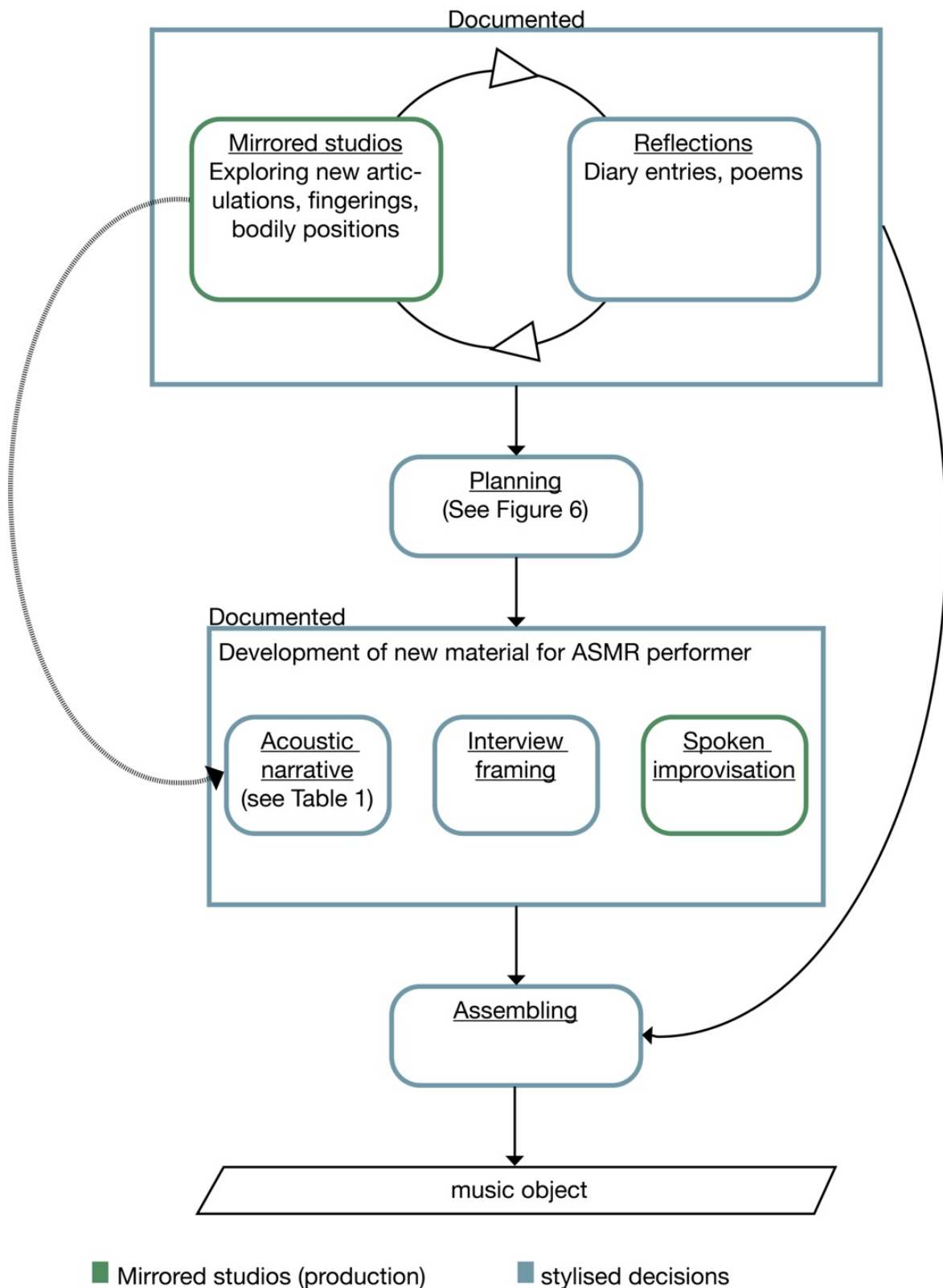
Figure 5: Diagram showing the processes of identity production and construction in making as in mirrors
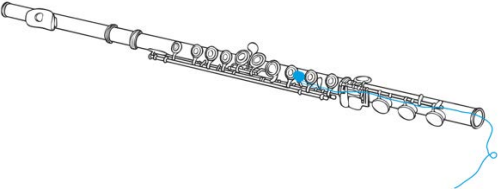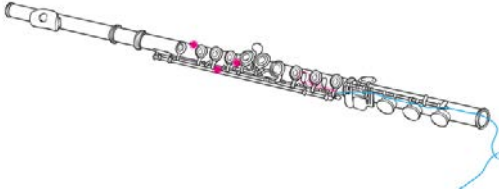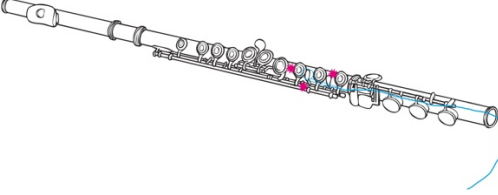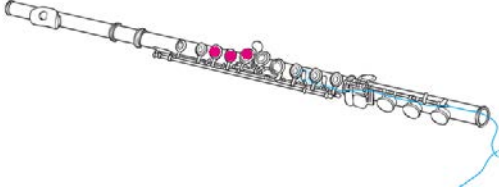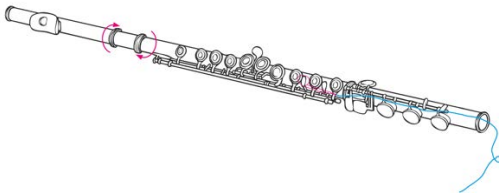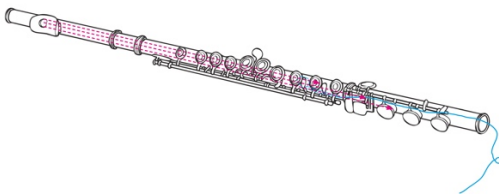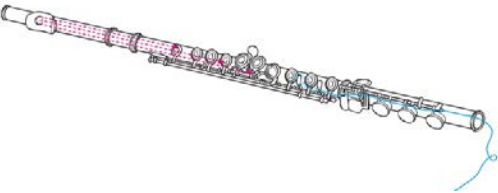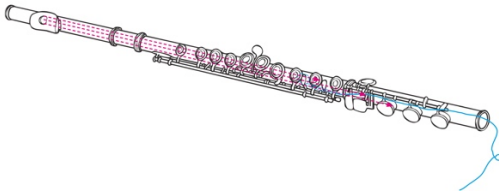
SOUND | VIDEO

ⓘ

① Heavy breathing – all keys closed – generated after air circulated in later processes.

ⓘ: blank affect

② nails on flute and ASMR introduction (speak near microphone)

② CORRESPONDING FOOTAGE FROM WEBCAM

③ key clicking + still talking. (inc closed chamber + laughing)

③ CORRESPONDING FOOTAGE FROM CAMERA, CLOSE UP

④ keys moving with air / harmonics + description

④ harsh bashing of keys, close up shot from camera

⑤ whistle tones (open then closed). Always moving.

⑤ pop art effect – to black effect + whistling

⑥ whistle tones + moving keys (introduce)

⑥ close up laughing

⑦ sustained F / Tbi (no keys down)

⑦ talking (extracts from diary)

⑧ Talking into the flute (about process, about diaries)

⑧ Blank screen

⑨ Th sustained (open and then closed)

⑨ close up mouth fricatives

⑩ Heavy breathing – all

⑩ CORRESPONDING FOOTAGE

ⓘ = clips of fricatives + talking

ⓤ = clips of fricatives flute only

= filming round ① – corresponding footage

= filming round ② – close ups from camera

= filming round ③ – camera – from back

= filming round ④ – webcam w/ effects.

Figure 6: Scan of planned structure for as in mirrors

Table 1: as in mirrors *ASMR actions to gradually develop a closed/close acoustic environment*

Position of microphone inside the flute	Action 1 – tapping the body (away from mic)
Action 2 – tapping the body (near mic)	Action 3 – key clicks (away from mic)
Action 4 – key clicks (near mic)	Action 5 – twisting the headpiece (half of keys depressed)
Action 6 – Breathing down open tube (keys open)	Action 7 – Breathing down closed tube (keys depressed)
Action 8 – Whistle tones down open tube (repeated with sliding hands on keys)	Action 9 – Whistle tones down closed tube (repeated with sliding hands on keys)

Table 1: as in mirrors *ASMR actions to gradually develop a closed/close acoustic environment*

Action 10 – "th" (θ) articulation with open tube	Action 11 – "th" (θ) articulation with closed tube
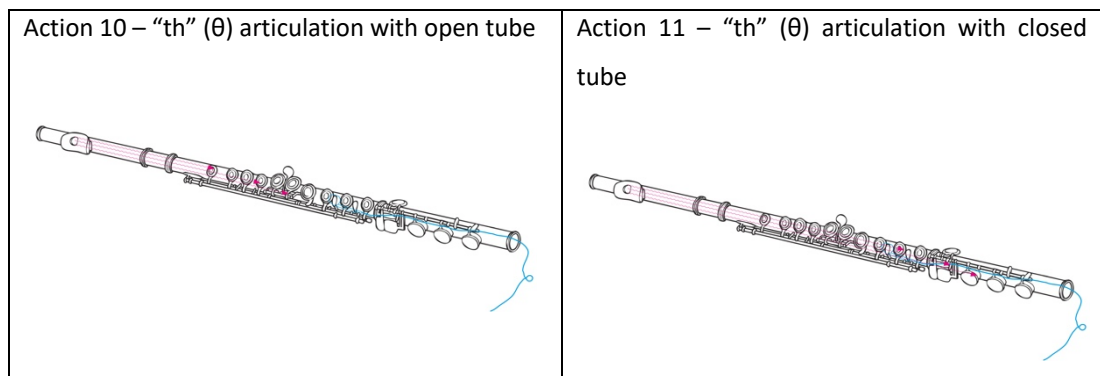
2.3. Further reflection

This project became hugely significant in illustrating how identity could be read through composition, and how the behaviour of an individual could become a compositional material. The music object, in this process, was something that identity could be read through, folded as it was with constructed or stylised behaviour. Figure 7 rotates the flow shown in Figure 5, to suggest how identity might be read through this fixed audiovisual material.

It is possible to map the labour in this project of 'producing' and 'constructing' identity onto performer / composer characteristics, which I have largely avoided in this thesis as I tried to promote fluidity in these roles. However, a reading of these labour-relations becomes necessary in light of certain power-structures; particularly where I was still experiencing strong hierarchy in my collaborative endeavours. During the creative process for *as in mirrors*, I frequently became uncomfortable that my aesthetic instinct as a composer was affecting my role as a performer. I had always intended to push personal revelations beyond a point with which I was comfortable, but this became a difficult balance in performance between privacy and authenticity. As such, the final work is a delicate compromise with regard to my personal composer-performer dialogue, and the lasting emotional impressions of this working mindset were consciously woven into my approaches in subsequent collaborations.

Music object

mirrored studios   reflections

acoustic narrative   interviews   improvisation
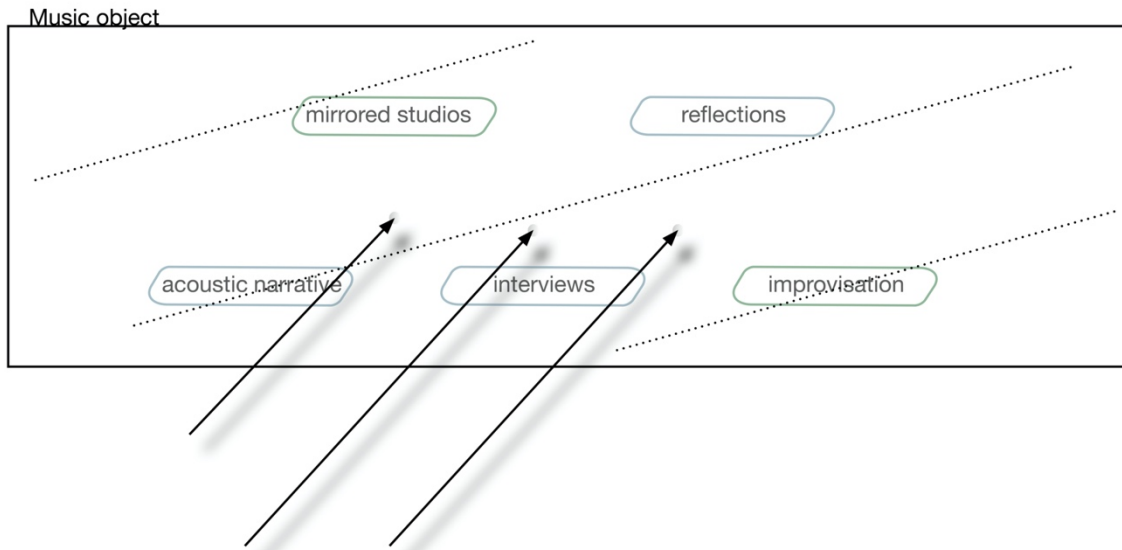
Figure 7: How identity is 'read' by audiences of as in mirrors *through the fixed music object*

Chapter 3: Politics, ethics and the control of aesthetics

See Portfolio, 2. *Flect_film*

See Portfolio, 3a. *Conversation Piece score* and 3b. *Conversation Piece recording*

See Portfolio, *4a. Song for CoMA* (open score) and *4b. Song for CoMA film*

In the following six months I experimented with adapting different methods from *as in mirrors* to work with my long-term collaborators. At the time, I did not think it appropriate to simply repeat the epistemological process that I had conducted in the mirrored studio*,* asking myself questions about how I could transform my playing in response to deeply personal and historic experiences on the instrument. I worried, perhaps unnecessarily, about asking people to take this investigative direction in our work, fearing that the performers might experience the discomfort I described at the end of the last chapter. This process could effectively redraw the relational structures of the composer-performer space (both in terms of how we might relate to each other, and ourselves), and I decided this required extreme care going forward. In the meantime, I considered what other methods I could draw forward from this piece. In particular, I interrogated my use of **documentary**.

3.1. Documentary, intimacy and *Flect*

In *as in mirrors,* the mirrored studio was documented through audio and visual recordings, poetry, interviews and diary entries, which were used directly in the final piece. Other material, such as the ASMR gestures described in Table 1 (p.50), documented the gestural exploration I had carried out in the mirrored studio, now quoted within a new performative context. These materials reveal an intensely personal space, where despite the processes that I carried out to construct this identity for the stage, moments of my performative identity are undeniably revealed.

Flect, created with Darren Gallacher in August 2020, was an attempt to rethink the methods that I had used to construct identity, and create a piece entirely from a stylised documentation of a performative space (focused by our joint epistemological

enquiry). As discussed in Chapter 2, between October 2019 to July 2020, Darren and I had spent our collaboration exploring his embodied technique as a percussionist. While we had documented these interactions (and thus our performative behaviour) through video or diary entries, when the opportunity to present an audiovisual piece arose, instead of using this material directly we chose to record new material and extend our enquiry into a more stylised space. We developed new material for the multi-percussion set up – I wrote a new score (see Figure 8 and Figure 9) which we recorded Darren performing, alongside a free improvisation on the instrument (made of cans, terracotta pots and glass vases), heard at 00:09 – 01:00, or from 07:07 – 08:00. We also filmed the silent choreography we had previously developed from various camera angles (see Figure 10), as well as filming Darren freely exploring different movements in various stylised frames (e.g. within mirrored boxes and behind glass vases filled with water). We also recorded an 'interview' between myself and Darren, where I'd asked him to reflect on the process, heard at 05:54. This generated a huge array of content that documented where we had reached in our epistemological enquiry by August 2020. This was recorded over one week, which I then arranged into the audiovisual piece in consultation with Darren.

Live part - section A

This document consists of 50 units. They can be played in any order, but have been grouped here by groove, instrument and saturation so that you can map them onto the structure.

The units marked with * are core units that can be comfortably looped and returned to often. The amount of change and variation you introduce should increase as the piece goes on. This applies to dynamics too. Start *mp*.

Any additional direction marked with ± is optional.

Pitches can be transposed or decorated at any time.

Figure 8: Extract from my initial sketch, composing for the multi-percussion set up

Figure 9: Extracts from my final composition for multi-percussion set up

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Hand Notation

There are three families of hand poses.

Family ▮
(flat palm, fingers extended)

Family ●
('make a fist')

Family ▲
(thumb and third finger in contact, elegant)

▯◖ palms facing inwards
▭▭ palms facing upwards
▬▬ palms facing downwards

◖◗ palms facing inwards
○○ palms facing upwards
●● palms facing downwards

▶◀ palms facing inwards
▽▽ palms facing upwards
△△ palms facing downwards

Extensions
▷◁ middle finger inflecting inwards, other fingers spread
▮▮ thumb seperated

Extensions
▶◀ inverted pose, static flicking

<u>Set 1 (jars, water and hands)</u>
A - I show nine sequences
Film each sequence seperately (unless indicated with segue)
Someone will need to fill the water for you as both your hands are as still as possible. Hopefully I will be th to do this.

A
STATIC
No water (dry jars)

E
STATIC
Both jars empty (and dry)

B
STATIC
LH jar filled completely during filming (as fast as possible)

F
Hand position II
Both jars filled before filming

C
STATIC
RH jar filled before filming
LH jar empty (and dry)

G
Hand position III
Both jars filled before filming

D
STATIC
RH jar filled before filming
LH jar filled completely during filming (as fast as possible)

H
Hand position I
LH jar empty (and dry)
RH jar filled completey during filming

I
Hand position VI
LH jar already filled before filming
RH jar filled completely during filming

Figure 10: (Above) Hand gestures, abstracted from percussion strokes. (Below) Choreographic sequence for filmed content.

To me, the resulting musical object is interesting in terms of its presentation of Darren's identity, where the stylised staging of the performative space has perhaps undermined the authenticity of the identity observed there. While certain markers of documentary aesthetics were upheld in *as in mirrors*, for example that it was structured by certain durational qualities including that the 'documentary makers' had spent time with the subjects and footage/audio presented was from different points in the subject's timeline (including footage being recorded in the 'present'), these have been blurred in *Flect*. *Flect* is more ambiguous in its durational presentation. We have not distinguished past from present or between live and fixed material. In this blurring of reality, the audience is not brought into the process of making the piece like many of the other works in this portfolio, but is kept at a distance, impacting the intimacy between audience and performer.

This sense of distance was perhaps perpetuated in the process of collaborating with Darren where my reluctance to define the parameters of what I meant by identity and behaviour to Darren (due to the cautiousness I expressed earlier) had limited the depth of the epistemological enquiry; the questions I posed (heard in the piece) did not invite much further enquiry, which, to me at least, is tangible in the work. This cautiousness stretched further, and manifested in a reluctance to make cuts to Darren's contributions (imagined or realised). I was reticent about contributing too much of my own compositional material (imagined or realised) out of a desire to maintain the largely non-hierarchical—if diffident—structure within which we had found ourselves.

At this stage in my research, my position as a collaborator felt disconcerting. I was challenging the view that a composer must make a recognisable imprint on any music made in collaboration. Arnold Whittall presents this view when he says – 'if one definition of a great composer involves the ability to work with and for outstanding performers without losing any of the creative independence and distinctive personality their work embodies, this leads to the unsurprising conclusion that the most rewarding and interesting collaborations will be with performers who enhance what is most worthwhile about the composer in question' (Whittall, 2017, p. 26).

This is a position I challenged in these early stages of my research where I attempted to negate the traditional hierarchy within a composer-performer relationship and develop a shared practice that was distinguishable from anything either of us had achieved alone. However, it was perhaps inevitable that in the early stages of this intended transformation, my position as a collaborator felt disconcerting and unfamiliar; as developing a shared practice takes time to develop. At this stage in our collaboration, all of the familiar routes into my practice had become unravelled but we had not yet mastered a new and shared way of working together. I contend that *Flect* was created in the midst of this and represents a huge challenge in this research, which was to have enough time to develop a shared practice while still taking on performance commissions. This became pertinent in my research where the privilege of truly long-term collaboration is completely contingent – Darren moved away a few months after the premiere of *Flect*, and we did not work together again until Spring 2023.

3.2. Documentary and the politics of spectatorship

Around the period of the collaboration with Darren, I had been working with flautist Jenni Hogan around a very different understanding of behaviour and identity and thus changing the nature of any materials documenting the mirrored studio. Moving away from my focus on identity as read through a performer's relationship with their instrument, this project subverted the social trend of recording selfie videos on a mobile phone (for example on Snapchat, TikTok or Instagram) to read identity in this performative space and create materials for composition.

Throughout this project, Jenni and I recorded videos of ourselves talking to one another, sending these privately through WhatsApp (see Figure 11). This was led by a joint interest in exploring how we performed to each other in this virtual space and we explored several ways of delineating this *mirrored studio* (see Table 2). This project also integrated a practical investigation into a *politics of spectatorship*, which

I became interested in as an artistic enquiry after considering my position as a spectator in this research. I interrogated my aims to make performer identity "visible" through composition, which is perhaps a product of being a world citizen in a surveillance society (McGrath, 2001). [19] I had become interested in how an awareness of being watched impacted or completely derailed our performative behaviour, theorising that the behaviours we performed to each other would be necessarily different in this space to others where this awareness was not so heightened.

When beginning the project, we were relative strangers, having only met a couple of months prior at a conference in late 2019. Our process weaved in and out of 'work spaces', where our initial videos were stylistically structured around a one-minute description of our day (see Table 2), conceived of as materials for a final piece, but later moved outside of this concept when the need for human connection during the Covid-19 lockdowns turned this process into a social salvation (that was incidentally documented). From the beginning, we had abandoned our roles as flautists and composers with the aim of creating a non-hierarchical performative space (which we did not believe we could achieve while in these roles) and had made videos with a much more holistic concept of who we were, so it felt incredibly natural that this process became a vessel to develop friendship. Table 2 shows how the use and content of the videos changed over three months as we struggled to keep to our performance brief throughout the lockdowns.

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[19] I use the phrase 'politics of spectatorship' here to refer to the ways in which watching, and being watched, are both a part of contemporary aesthetics (as explored in Chapter 1), but also how an awareness of this might affect the ways we perform to each other and to audiences. I have adapted this term to extend fashion scholars Laing & Willson's 'the politics of looking' (2020), whereby these authors re-examine the concept of 'gaze' through a feminist intersectional perspective (pp. 9-18). The non-teleological history of ideas around 'gaze' and 'looking' (pp. 3-9) are one small part of my conceptual adoption of the term 'politics of spectatorship', which to me is broad way of trying to understand how performative behaviour is impacted when we know certain people are watching us.
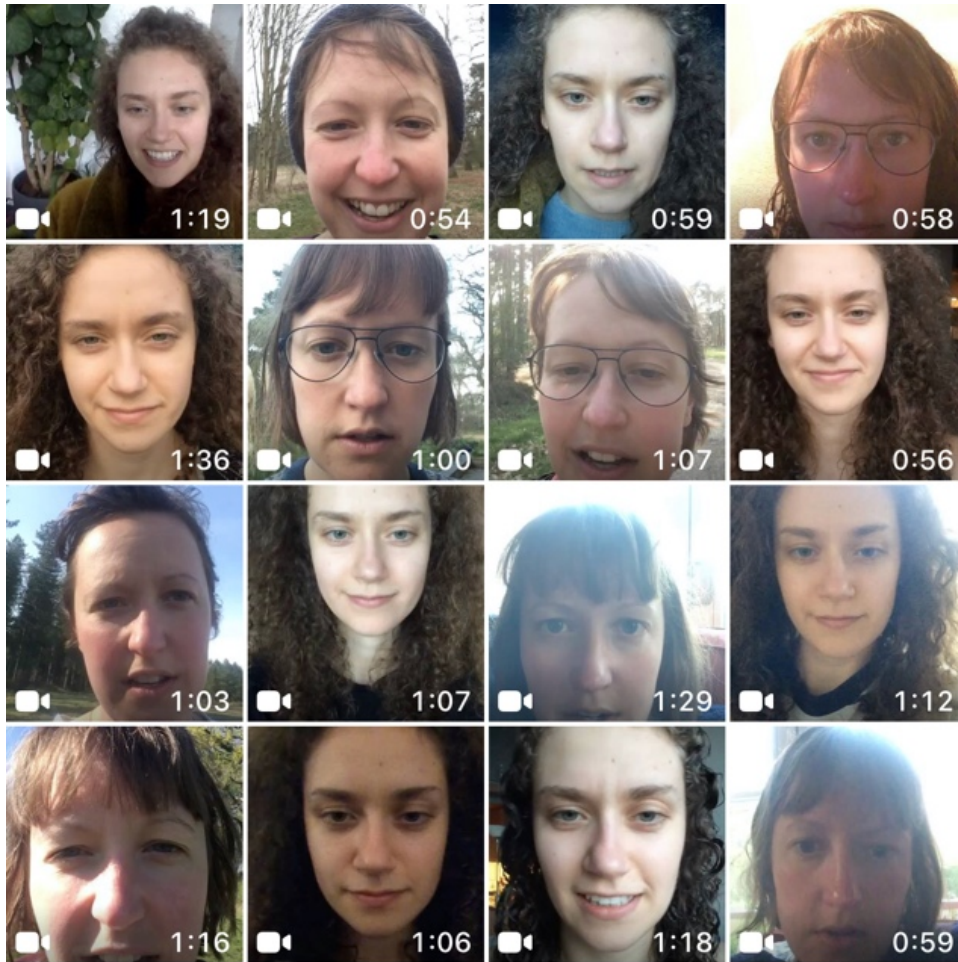
Figure 11: Screenshot of WhatsApp media in April 2020

Table 2: Overview of the aims and content of 66 video diaries sent between 20 March and 2 July 2020.

Videos dated	How 'mirrored studio' was delineated	Content produced
30 March - 3 April 2020	Front view camera shot 1 minute video	Overview accounts of activities in the day. Some personal details included.
3 April – 9 April 2020	Aim of videos: describe day	Increased personal details within accounts of the day. Tangents included. Excuses about why hadn't been consistent with the videos included. Time restrictions loosened.
9 April – 16 April		"Hope you're ok" included in videos from Jenni. Initiations of conversation, rather than performance, first responses to each other's videos.
16 April – 20 April		Updates on lives included as separate from brief or instead of brief, responses to each other's lives.
20 April – 30 April	Front view camera shot 1-2 minute video Aim of videos: describe day and	Using videos for continuing conversation. Thanking each other for support. References to the entries that we'd written down, rather than said in the videos.

	document thoughts that we don't want to say out loud	
1 May – 8 May	Front view camera shot 1-2 minute video Aim of videos: describe day (documenting thoughts discarded)	Using videos to talk about personal concerns and our research. Jenni uses video to follow up on absence from Ellen. Key details of day described.
19 May – 27 May	Front view camera shot	Longer videos to describe what had been happening in 10 days of no videos and how we had been. Expressions of concern for each other. Updates on larger events in lives. Direct responses to each other's videos.
1 June – 11 June		Key details of day described in detail. Inquiring about details in each other's lives.
22 June	Front view camera shot 1 honest video and 1 video on previous brief (could be a lie)	Using videos to talk through personal problems. Juxtaposing these with accounts of day. Responding to each other's fictionalised and real videos, trying to help each other with problems.
23 June – 2 July	Front view camera shot 1-2 minute video Aim of videos: describe day	Key details of day described.

3.2.1. Conversation Piece

In September 2020, Jenni asked me to write her a 3.5 minute piece for her upcoming recital at the Bishopsgate Institute in November (which was later postponed by a year due to another Covid wave). We agreed that this was an opportunity to use the video diaries we had recorded in the previous months, with Jenni expressing that I could use this material in any way that I wanted to. This was another opportunity to experiment with applying the methods I had used in *as in mirrors* to my work with other performers but I have organised the following analysis through various elements that had become entangled and blurred within *Flect*, but that evolved here.

3.2.1.1. The perception of authenticity

Having agreed a commission for solo flute with Jenni that would utilise the materials we had produced through our video diaries, I decided I would create a backing track to represent this. After reviewing the sixty-six videos, I selected and extracted fragments of audio from across the "database" and restructured them as described

in Table 3. Through this process, I created an entirely new narrative, often removing the semiotic object from our conversational phrases so that I could construct new meaning when I fused different material together.

Table 3: Structure of Conversation Piece

00:12-00:45	ES and JH quotes detailing our days in lockdown, including the excitement of being able to go outside for a walk
01:00-01:40	Juxtaposition of JH descriptions of positive and negative experiences during lockdown
01:33	JH expression of concern for ES - "not heard from you in a bit"
01:57 – 03:00	JH description of negative experiences in lockdown including whispered in a whispered voice, juxtaposed against ES mixed positive and negative descriptions of lockdown experiences including reference to the news
02:40	JH expression of concern, references to the act of creating videos, to friendship

I constructed a new meaning for the piece around the narrative of two friends communicating throughout the Covid-19 lockdowns, with an expressive arc that moved from a focus on the experiences of lockdown to a focus on the friendship itself, including where this was lost and found. The flute part that I created to be played live alongside this track (and that I developed by improvising on my flute against the track) underscores this expressive arc with different techniques that emphasise breath and breathlessness (deliberately alluding to the Covid infection), including prescribing alternative fingerings that require ever-increasing breath to produce the desired sound, which becomes naturally cloudy and indistinct (see Figure 12 and Figure 13).

highest spectral fluctuations, lots and lots of breath, push push push!

effort always 𝆑 sounds 𝆏𝆏
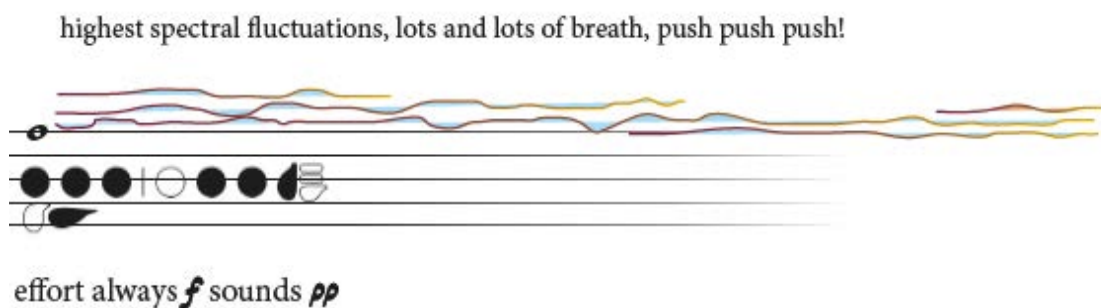
Figure 12: Alternative fingering from page 2 of the score

Figure 13: Alternative fingerings for ostinato, from page 5 of the score

3.2.1.2 Liveness

I was satisfied that this piece carried a personal depth that had been absent from *Flect*, afforded by the materials used to assemble the piece, which had not just chronicled the collaborative process, but the development of intimacy and trust produced through the collaboration. I contend that the authenticity, liveness and rawness of this process is tangible throughout the piece.

Until this point, "liveness" was something that I had "captured", either by documenting the mirrored studio, or documenting improvisation, but was not something I had actively attended to as material, as something that could be nurtured through my compositional decisions. In *Conversation Piece*, I aimed to emphasise Jenni's live presence on stage and composed the flute part so that Jenni would have to navigate conflicting and unstable time spaces, including improvised time where Jenni decides where to place events; metric time where Jenni follows the metric accents implied by different rhythmic patterns; and mapped time where Jenni must play gestures in time with the track (where these gestures have been abstracted from the pitch and rhythm of Jenni's speech). As in Figure 14, these layers are often overlapping or unstable, creating risk and fragility in the performance that if tangible to an audience, emphasises the liveness of Jenni's personage on stage and underscores the intimacy of the piece.

Figure 14: (Left) Extract showing 'improvised ' time where Jenni chooses where to place events and 'mapped time' where Jenni must play gestures in time with the track. (Right) Extract showing 'mapped time' and 'metric time'.

3.3. The role of editor

In both *Flect* and *Conversation Piece*, I had taken on the role of editor, pulling all of the collaborative materials together into the final piece and structuring the narrative of the work. If keeping with my aims to understand how identity could be constructed non-hierarchically, editorial decision-making would have been a joint task and although I ensured that there would be ample opportunity for both Darren and Jenni to suggests edits to the work-in-progress (where they could not make changes themselves, not being upskilled in iMovie), neither had much say in the organisation of materials. I made several changes to the backing track for *Conversation Piece* after Jenni felt that my own voice was not represented enough in the track, but otherwise these decisions were entirely my own. At this point in my research I considered this necessary, where the barriers in technical use of video software and the time pressures of the upcoming performances did not create conditions where this labour could easily be shared.

While a relatively normal process in WAM, this role as editor was potentially problematic for the non-hierarchical collaborative practice I aimed to achieve, and I became overtly aware of the power relationship this labour pattern produced. This was perhaps emphasised because of the types of materials I was dealing with, specifically using the documentation of our collaborative practice in the piece. Alone, these materials are 'intimately linked to the individuals who produced them, while also having significance independently of [them]' and do 'not claim to represent "what happened" objectively, but only as a particular audiovisual tracing produced by the intersection of multiple contributions' (Spatz, 2020, p. 126). Reconstructed, these materials do stake claim on "what happened" – they emphasise certain moments, hide others, and juxtapose events to create new meanings. I found it awkward that I had made these decisions without Jenni or Darren, in pieces that were so wrapped around their stories and in materials so 'intimately linked' to them (ibid.).

Ben Spatz was presented with this 'technological, legal, ethical, political' (p.125) consideration in their own presentation of embodiment research and editorial use of similar documentary materials. They write that the

> 'postponement of the compositional power that organizes artistic and knowledge production, which Foucault famously called the "author function" (1984)… produce[s] a genuinely experimental event… all participants meet together in the temporality of emergent interaction. However, the author function…is displaced from the temporality of the lab only to return later with a distinct temporality of its own: that of the "editor function" or the role of the video editor… The editor has the power not only to select and order fragments of audiovisual material but also to juxtapose these with textual and spoken language and other materials. It is well-known that juxtaposing even a single word with an image can radically alter the meaning of both (Ranciere 2007)' (2020, pp. 127-128).

This problem has been widely considered in ethnographic methodology:

> 'Scholars grappled with the ethics of researchers hiding their voices behind a false objectivity, and the ethics of the power discrepancy between vulnerable participants and a researcher who remained invisible and in control of the story that was told… The tradition of researchers entering indigenous or other "exotic" cultures and social groups to produce authoritative ethnographies or in search of a master narrative was seen to be a colonial practice of questionable ethics. Research in this tradition was criticized for presuming to represent others (Coffey, 2002); for being racist, appropriative, and exploitative (Lincoln & Denzin, 2005); and for failing to care for and maintain relational ties (Ellis, 2007b; Ellis et al., 2011). In representing

others, researchers too often spoke for others, thereby disrespecting, misrepresenting, or erasing their voices. In maintaining the fiction of objectivity, researchers failed to place themselves in the study or to acknowledge their own motives, perspectives, emotions, and status.' *(Lapadat, 2017, p. 591).*

In ethnography, this problematic positionality begins to be addressed when 'reflexive researchers acknowledge that their own objectivity is a fiction, and embrace the idea that any account they provide is a partial perspective as seen through their own point of view at a particular place and point in time' (Lapadat, 2017, p. 591). '[Reflexive researchers] say "I" in their research writing, aim for transparency, attend to voice, present their interpretations as a constructed text, and resist the temptation to produce authoritative accounts or interpretations that generalize' (ibid.). I began to consider how this literary perspective might impact my own work and address my anxieties over the authorial role that I was developing through this research. My first experiments with this were in *Song for CoMA*, an audiovisual piece developed with CoMA Manchester, premiered in March 2021 in the Royal Northern College of Music's PLAY festival.[20] For this piece I created a narrative voice communicated through text on the screen. This was both layered over and entangled with audiovisual materials I had elicited and collected from the group. I aimed this narrative would be an honest commentary about the decisions I had made as an editor, positioning myself as a transparent, scrutable voice in the piece. Several other

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[20] CoMA Manchester is an all-abilities, community-based ensemble that I revived (and became the Music Director for) in March 2020 alongside composers Bofan Ma, Shaun Davies, and Stephen Bradshaw, and a handful of players who joined after attending CoMA's 2020 Festival event in Manchester. Although membership naturally fluctuates through time, and has grown and changed since 2020, I consider this group to be the most consistent and long-term collaborative relationship in my research. I perform with the group on my flute, directing dialogic rehearsals from within the ensemble. In January 2021, I began working more collaboratively with the group as a composer. I wanted to again attempt to create a playful performative space for players to consider their relationship to their instruments and to untangle some of the ethical considerations I had hitherto been facing.

methodological developments happened in the lead up to this, which I would like to touch on now before returning to my use of voice in this piece.

3.3.1. Structuring performative and editorial spaces

These methodological developments came at a time where I had begun experimenting with other methods for curating the mirrored studio. In late 2020, I had begun experimenting with using open scores (a nebulous concept I encountered in this research) as a method to build knowledge about a performer's embodied relationship with their instrument, and as a method for collaboration. To me, open scores are texts that offer a decisive handing over from the composer to the performer (corroborated by Shlomowitz (2017)), where the performer can make decisions that impact the harmonic, tonal, organisational, visual, gestural etc, expression and language of the piece and where these are differentiated from the interpretational decisions made in a 'traditional' fully notated score (though this is a spectrum, rather than distinct categories). More specifically, these texts provide a structure for performers to participate in the compositional process, and towards one end of this spectrum, dissolve (for the player at least) any boundaries between composition and improvisation.[21] The score, in these moments of participation, might be there to inspire, guide or instruct the performers and the decisions over language that they might make (and that have traditionally been made by composers since the composer-performer roles became split around the Romantic era), but utilise a normalised interaction between performers and scores to imply that the performer makes decisions within a structure or stimulus that is previously delineated by the composer.

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[21] What distinguishes these activities is the timeline by which they take place – for example Matthew Shlomovitz's *Letter Pieces* (2007-2012) ask the performer to define their own actions in advance of performance, which are then arranged and structured according to the score, whereas in Fredric *Rzewski's Les Moutons de Panurge* (1969), players are instructed to 'hold the last note' of a notated score 'until everybody has reached it, then begin an improvisation using any instruments' – the participation happens within the live moment of performance).

My open scores deconstruct the timeline by which the performer participates in the compositional process, and I use them to guide the interactions within different moments of an iterative process of collaboration. Shlomowitz states that open scores 'are a *model* for making music, which can be defined as collaboration between performers and an incomplete score' (Shlomowitz, 2017, pp. 6-7, emphases mine). More specifically, my open scores are *tools* within a collaboration that break down normalised interactions between performers and scores, performers and composers – and in line with my research questions, performers and their instruments – into delineated spaces. These tools magnify different moments of the composer-performer-score interaction. They are but one part of a multifarious process, structuring performative spaces and displacing editorial or constructive tasks by pushing these into some point in the future.

Study 2 for 'Songs for four'

Additional action/ behaviour instructions to workshop (tutti):

Behaviours (workout extensions)

sense　　　improvise a phrase using sounds and gestures that excite you. The same sound making means should not be used next to each other but can be used multiple times in the phrase.

nonsense　　improvise a phrase using sounds and gestures that you are not excited by or that you have a bad relationship with. Exaggerate these as far as possible. Use the same gestures next to each other as many times as you like (or don't like!)

movement　　improvise a phrase using gestures that either make your body change position rapidly or make you feel like your body is changing position rapidly.

meditation　　In sequence, explore familiar gestures that you might make if trying not to be heard by anyone.

Actions

twisting
grinding
tracing
picking
scratching
spreading

If using pitches, use pitches from any B section of study 1 (agree which section before beginning improvisation).

Give each behaviour or action a modifier (1-5) and a timbral coordination before beginning (blended, between, difference).

Figure 15: Open score for Ensemble Recherche

My research work with CoMA Manchester (during which I took on more of a composerly role than my usual activities directing the ensemble) took place after an initial workshop with Ensemble Recherche in December 2020. I started experimenting with more playful ways for a performer to consider their relationship with their instrument and Study No. 2 (Figure 15) was an open text score that invited performers to 'improvise… phrase[s] using sounds and gestures that [either] excite you,…you have a bad relationship with,…make your body change position rapidly…[or] that you might make if trying not to be heard by anyone' (see Figure 15). I considered this particularly successful where I could read performative identity by

hearing the musical gestures that performers had specific relationships with. I used a similar approach with CoMA Manchester, initially writing an open text score that invited ensemble members to use their instruments (or objects around them) to play sounds or phrases they did and didn't like (see Figure 16, p.74). As with Ensemble Recherche, to incite different energies (giving me a broader palette of materials to work with as editor later), performers were also invited to play sounds or phrases that made them 'meditate' or made them 'move'. This was designed to be done remotely, in each member's home as at the time we were all in Covid-19 lockdown.

It was important to me that in this 'remote stage' of the collaboration, performers defined their own performative space; their own mirrored studio. Through the text score, I encouraged performers to be creative with the ways they filmed the 3 to 60 second video clips and was pleased that I had found a way to build an inquiry around the performer's relationship with their instrument where the performer was the 'informer' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 18) on their own behaviour – they had autonomy over what to tell me, how to tell me, and even lie if they wanted. Alongside the remote exploration, I developed another open score structure to create a playful performative space when the ensemble was playing together (during one of our online rehearsals) and could perform gestures as-affecting and affected-by one another (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p. 284). I developed an open score designed to be played over Zoom after the 'remote stage' of the process had been completed (see Figure 17, p.75).[22]

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[22] At this point in my research, one of the biggest influences on my aesthetic was the Covid-19 lockdown. This open score had to work with the restrictions of playing together on Zoom, including the time-lag, poor sound quality and the way by which Zoom interfered with the input/output signals (blocking certain users in the mix it presented). Concepts of "liveness" were completely distorted. I anticipated these qualities in writing the open score, and created a global structure that these interactions could emerge within. These structural decisions also meant that I could control the overall trajectory of the piece – including that players generally moved from excitable sounds to meditative sounds over the course of the improvisation and that there were moments where the entire ensemble used the same behavioural stimuli at once (e.g. Round 1, cue 2).

Song for CoMA Manchester

Ellen Sargen

for 4-10 remote and rehearsing players

This piece is assembled by an editor at the end of two stages: the remote stage and the rehearsal stage. All players participate in both stages.

The editor will take audio and video footage from each stage and assemble it into a new 'Song for CoMA'.

STAGE 1: REMOTE STAGE - each player records one or more clip(s) of each of the following 4 behaviours on any instrument or object.

EXCITE! Play a sound or phrase* that excites you!

GET IT OVER WITH. Play a sound or phrase** that does not excite you, or that you have a bad relationship with. Exaggerate this as far as possible.

MOVEMENT! Play a phrase** using gestures that either make your body change position rapidly or make you feel like your body is changing position rapidly.

MEDITATION. Play a familiar gesture that you might make if trying not to be heard by anyone.

* The same gesture should not be heard consecutively
** Use the same gesture consecutively as many times as you like (or don't like!)

> When recording your clips, be playful with the camera angle. Perhaps we see your whole body or perhaps we see an extreme close up. Does this effect what you play? Different angles for each clip are welcome but not necessary.

FAQs
1. How long should each clip be? This is completely up to you - what feels like a phrase to you? Perhaps your sound has a natural time to it, ie. governed by a breath. Perhaps your sound will stretch on a very long time, and this is what you'll send to the editor. Be playful and have fun with it.
2. Can I use different instruments/ objects for each clip? Yes!
3. Can I send loads of different clips interpreting the behaviours in different ways? Yes!
4. How should I record my sound? Any recording device/s are acceptable. If you can and want to record audio and visuals seperately to enhance the sound quality that is wonderful but not necessary.

STAGE 2: REHEARSAL STAGE - for all players together in a digital or physical rehearsal space. The ensemble can use a mix of instruments and sound making objects, but always in the ratio instruments > objects. The whole rehearsal is recorded, and the ensemble uses the board overleaf to create a series of materials.
Instructions: There are 12 squares on the board, each with 4 behaviour instructions in them. Players choose 1 square per round, and the conductor gives 4 cues for players to execute their 4 behaviours as a sound or phrase (moving clockwise). The resultant sound is a mixture of behaviours on each cue. Players can use a variety of interpretations for any given behaviour. Players move from the top left side of the board to the bottom right over multiple rounds (determined by the ensemble before beginning.) This gives a trajectory of excitable to meditative sounds. Question marks can either be played as sustained tones or rests. Pitches variable. Tempos at the discretion of conductor.

1

Figure 16: Page 1 of the open score I created for CoMA

Ellen Sargen, 2021

2
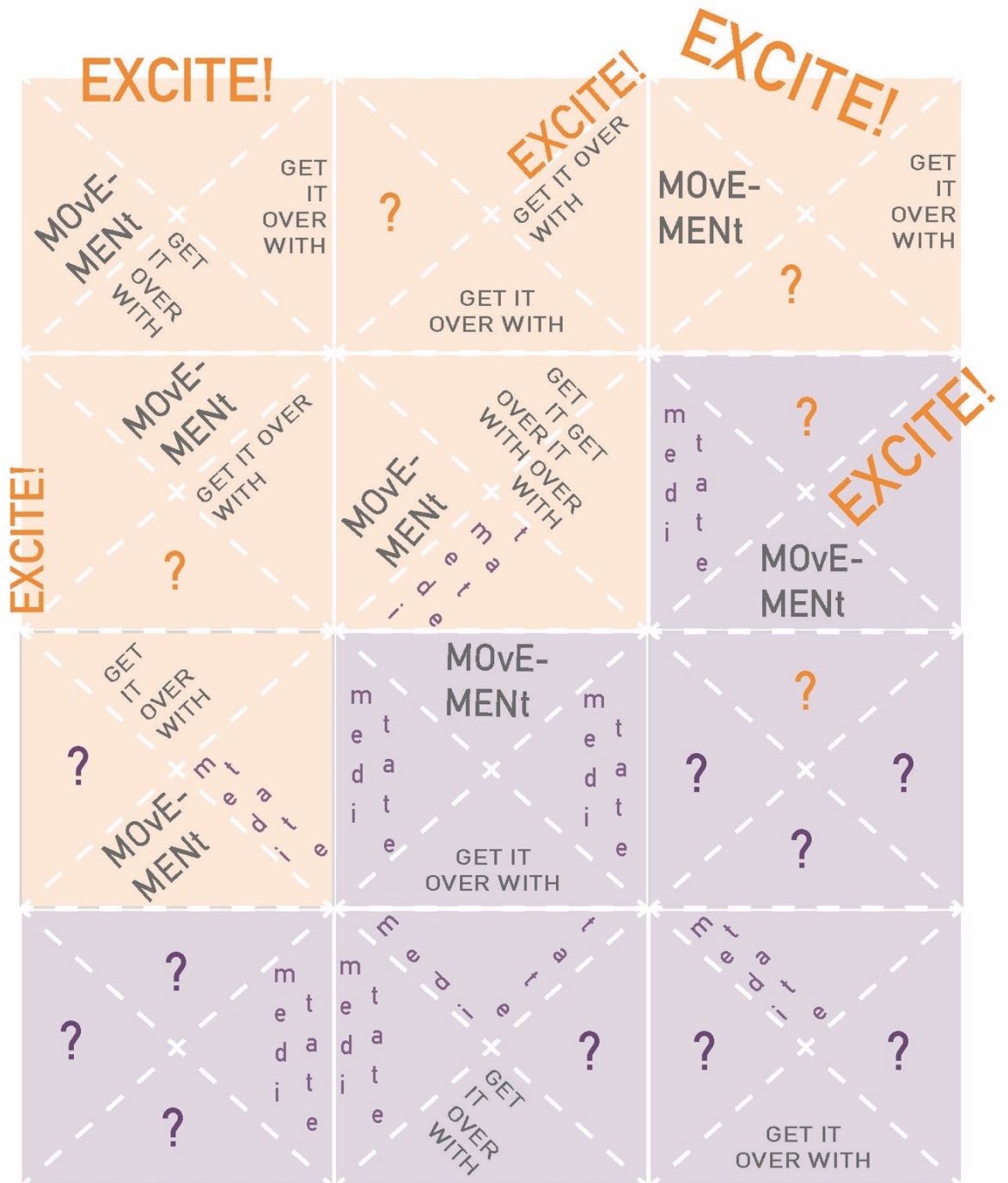
Figure 17: Page 2 of the open score I created for CoMA

Through this open score process, I collected over 50 remote videos and three full tutti realisations of the grid score with the intention of arranging these into a new audiovisual work (these are hosted on a website in Appendix C). It had been my intention to represent members equally and compose a narrative *through* the collaboration (as I had with *Flect*). However, I found myself favouring some contributions over others and at the initial compilation stage, my role as editor involved cutting up recordings, discarding contributions or even silencing the audio of certain contributions to keep only the visuals. As previously described, I found this power dynamic unsettling where I was dealing with materials that were so 'intimately interlinked with the individuals that had produced them' (Spatz, 2020, p.127-128), though pushed forward with combining player recordings to create interesting new textures, then arranging recordings in various orders to create exciting new gestural lines and events. Following my readings of Lapadat (2017, p.591), I attempted, through the work itself, to be transparent that I was an individual making decisions on behalf of the group and to recognise and scrutinise my impact as an artist on the piece. I composed a layer of narrative text (from my perspective) that would make my own positionality to the work apparent and in turn become a scrutable body in the final piece. The composition of this text, colloquial in tone to underscore the familial relationship I had with these players, emphasises certain words in the way it appears on screen, including 'control' and 'confession' (see Figure 18). These 'confessions' underscore moments where I had dramatically cut player contributions from the edit and highlight what I conceived as the most ruthless actions I made as an editor. My 'scrutable body' in this piece is one that has imbalanced power relations with the players on screen and has created the piece within this dynamic.

Conceiving of power dynamics in these terms is a deliberately provocative reading of what could be considered a relatively normal dynamic in WAM and in other disciplines that work through various approaches with individuals and their bodies (including dance, theatre, filmmaking and experimental art). From another perspective, working in this way allowed CoMA members certain freedoms in creativity at the start of the process (particularly while making their remote materials). However, in my project that aims to enable my collaborative partners to

create non-hierarchically (RQ3), and in research where I had experienced discomfort being positioned between the composer and performer roles in creating *as in mirrors* (in particular, as these pertained to my 'performer's' desire for privacy against my 'composers' desire for further confession as described in 2.3, p.51), conversations around power dynamics have arguably required additional scrutiny. This critical lens has led me to develop compositional nuances such as those analysed above that are centred around extreme care for the voices I work with, and have resulted in a gentle and tender aesthetic that is a reflection on the relationship I have with my collaborative partners.

3.4. Further reflection

These middling stages of my research were exciting, but I also found them unnerving – the collaboration with Jenni had proved to me that my open conception of identity meant that our interaction-led explorations could go anywhere, become anything.

The space Jenni and I opened up here was laced with vulnerability, most of which is not shown anywhere in this portfolio or thesis. For most of this collaboration, we had completely rejected conceptions of the WAM stage (arguably more than in any other project in this thesis). This was significant because the other projects in this portfolio remained situated within structures and practices of the WAM stage (or on the fringes of it) where we were not *redefining* this architecture but asking questions about identity *within* it. I contend this was a safety net within much of this research and that it is no coincidence that my collaboration with Jenni went to the most vulnerable and painful places in the entirety of this project (not shown). This was a partial influence on what could be viewed as a 'cautio[usness]' (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p. 177) within my subsequent collaborative methods.

It is clear that 'caution' had a wide-ranging impact on my collaborative and compositional choices. With Darren this resulted in a *reluctance* to define the parameters of an explorative space but 'caution' also led me to develop specific

methods that I consider a key part of my aesthetic language. I discuss these in Chapter 4, where the possibility for building intimate relationships with my collaborators was limited.
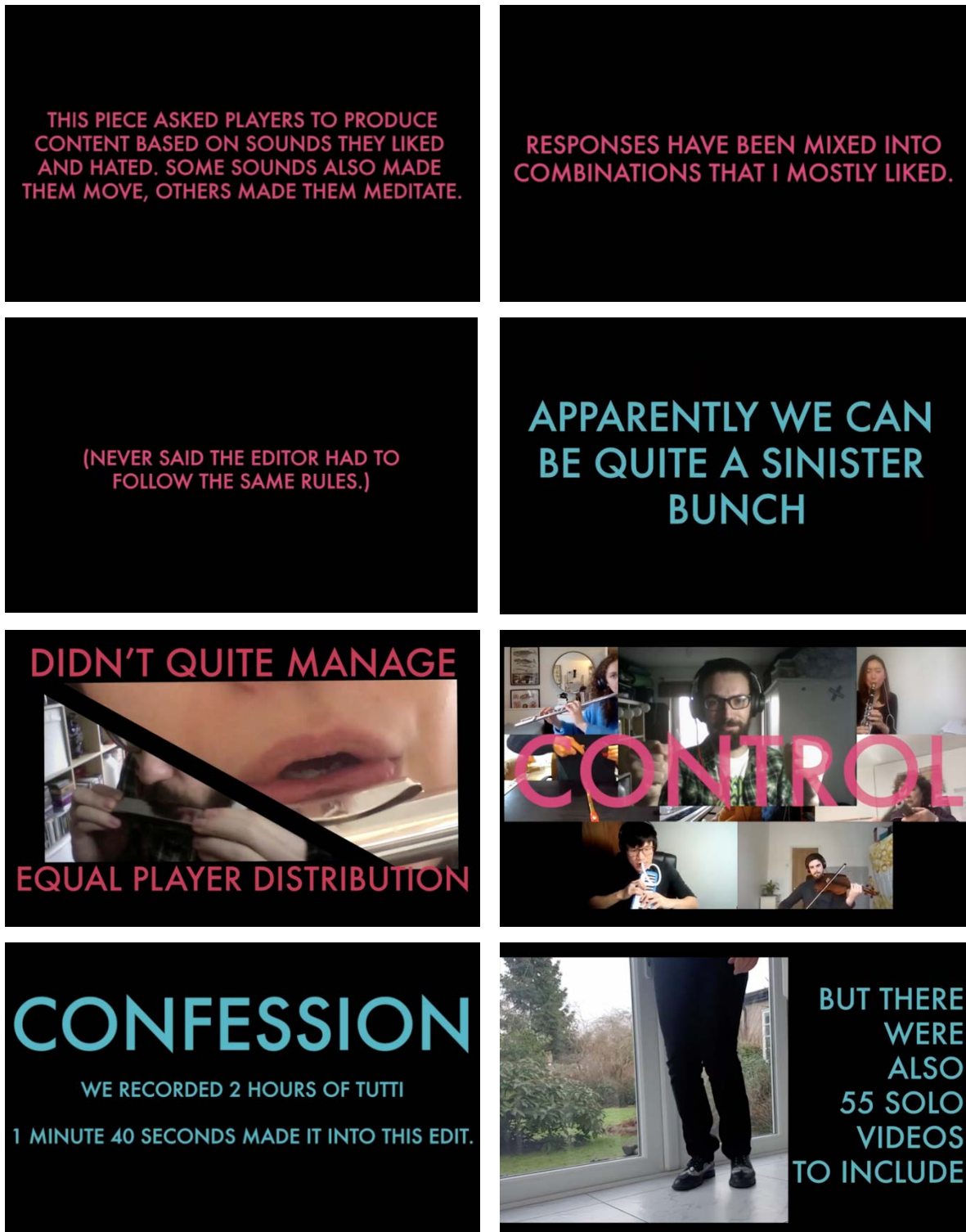
Figure 18: Screenshots from the film 'Song for CoMA' showing some of the narrative text – the reflexive voice.

Chapter 4: Improvisation and composition

See Portfolio, *5a. You may own us score* and *5b. You may own us recording*
See Portfolio, *6a. To find myself staring back score* and *6b. To find myself staring*
back recording
See Portfolio, *7a. Lost in your whole world score* and *7b. Lost in your whole world*
recording
See Portfolio, *8a. WHAT IT TAKES score* and *8b. WHAT IT TAKES recording*

In this thesis so far I have discussed how wrangling with my position in this research, and the ways intimacy could be used in collaboration, have impacted my compositional aesthetics and the ways I built knowledge about a performer's identity. Having touched on how I had fostered liveness and documentary in Chapter 3, this chapter considers these ideas as they relate to concepts of improvisation and composition, a common bifurcation that had so far been unravelling through my developing methods towards collaboration. In this chapter I present four pieces that were created in a more traditional commissioning model, an intentional move I made in order to test the transferability and applicability of some of my methods to potentially shorter-term models, where the privilege of long-term collaboration, and of dialogic music making, is highly contingent. This chapter discusses scores I made for Weston Olencki, Ensemble Recherche, House of Bedlam and Sarah Watts from 2021-2022 (see Figure 1, p.31) and considers my RQ4 in this context further: How am I positioned as a composer in a body of work that emphasises "betweenness" and "hybridity"?

4.1. Divergence

In this project, it has often been nonsensical to distinguish composition from improvisation where nearly all of the materials so far have emerged from performance. It is no coincidence that there is also no score of the final piece in any of these works thus far, apart from *Conversation Piece*, which is a transcription of a part I had developed on my flute along to the backing track. In this context, it is

perhaps odd that in the pieces I will discuss now, I conceptualised composition and improvisation as separate practices, with separate methods for developing these spaces within my scores. If arguably I had displaced my compositional identity beforehand, it returned here where I was desperate to write something using the gestural languages I had discovered through this research so far.

4.1.1. *You may own us but we are going to inform on you*

You may own us… is a piece for contrabass clarinet and electronics that I developed alongside clarinettist Sarah Watts over several months in 2021, where in a playful subversion of the 'informer' role in this research – one who observes and describes the behaviours of the subject and who inherently censors those behaviours that she takes for granted (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 18) – embodied performative behaviours were analysed as sound materials by an artificial intelligence algorithm; PRiSM SampleRNN.

PRiSM SampleRNN is a recurrent neural network that works by analysing across an audio-based dataset to find patterns (or characteristics that it can generalise), in order to generate samples with those characteristics. The analytical process is periodic, meaning that it reads across the entire dataset repeatedly, creating training files at each stage of this cumulative process. This can then be read (as statistical data), or listened to (as audio files) by a human user in order to understand whether the process is creating a *desirable* reading of the dataset, which acts as a sort of trial and error process before the human user asks the algorithm to generate new audio samples.[23] When the human user is happy with the audio being produced in the training files (which is very subjective), they use the algorithm to generate new audio samples based on this analytical data.

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[23] This desirability is very subjective, although users might be looking out for whether the analysis is overfitting or underfitting – if it is overfitting the analysis may be recreating the original audio files nearly exactly (and no generalisation across the dataset is happening) and if it is undersetting the analysis may not be generalising the material 'enough'.

As stated previously, I wanted to use this opportunity to develop some of the gestural materials that had emerged throughout this wide research project – in particular, the fricative articulations that had emerged as part of my own investigations in the mirrored studio. Having worked with Sarah before and being familiar with her work on multiphonics for the bass clarinet (Watts, 2015), I also used this space to develop a multiphonic language for the contrabass clarinet. I conceived that working with 'performer behaviour and identity' in this project with Sarah meant exploring our embodied approaches to creating, manipulating and transforming these sounds or actions. Diverging from my previous approach of observing this entirely through *performance*, I conceived that my approaches were embodied in a new score I wrote for Sarah, and Sarah's were embodied within her improvisations on these gestures. The 'observation' of our embodied approaches was done by PRiSM SampleRNN (and software engineer Christopher Melen), which analysed a dataset created from recordings Sarah made from my score, and of her improvisations.

I hoped to filter the knowledge we were building about each other's gestural approach to fricative articulations and multiphonics from other creative decisions that are made in any composition or improvisation. In this vein, for my initial composition (Appendix D), I 'outsourced' other material decisions to serial procedures so that I had no control over the outcome of certain compositional decisions, using Boulez's multiplication technique to determine the pitch sets I would use in the piece (then ordering them into sections by ear) and initially serialising the nature of the rhythmic materials before creating a set of intervention rules that would "interrupt" these processes. This "interruption" including scrubbing out large sections of the serialised grid (to be replaced with rests or spectral material/phonetic articulations) and creating an alternative spectral/phonetic grid through chance

procedures that would layer over the top of the original grid (and used at any time).[24] I tried to remove myself from as many compositional decisions (other than the shaping of fricative articulations or multiphonics) as I could. I wanted to focus my embodied decision-making on these latter elements.

To focus Sarah's decisions similarly, I created an open score for her to improvise from. This specified that Sarah was to use the same spectral and phonetic materials that I had also been exploring in my score and specified the expressive parameters this material might be explored within (e.g. see Figure 19 to Figure 21). Other harmonic, tonal, organisational, visual and gestural decisions were filtered from Sarah's embodied decision making in order that subtle differences in our approach to multiphonic or fricative materials might be observed.

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[24] I provocatively borrow the term 'outsourced' from Johannes Kreidler's composition *Fremdarbeit* (2009) and discussion surrounding this. Kreidler claimed to have 'outsourced' 'the composition of the work to India and China' (Iddon, 2015, p. 36) and critics debate over the extent to which this composition was 'nothing but exploitation' (audience member, in Iddon, 2015, p.41) or whether it was 'an art that acknowledges the… norms of artistic encounter and the frameworks that sanction most varieties and strata of artistic experience' (Kim-Cohen, in Iddon, 2015, p.42). In many ways, Kreidler's role as moderator in the piece is similar to some of the reflexive positions I have highlighted through the inclusion of my voice in my work (*Song for CoMA*, *Lost in your whole world*). However, using this term to describe this part of my compositional process in *You may own us* is absurd – the real 'outsourcing' happened when Chris Melen sat listening to my generated training files to determine which model should produce my final audio, but I hope this draws attention to the complex network of labour that went into, and goes into, music being written for the concert hall.

Open Invitation #2 for Sarah

Duration: 5 to 10 minutes
To be recorded at least a metre away from microphone.

01 This realisation invites you to explore a combination of air tones and half tones (rarely full tones) and different phonetic articulations (rarely ordinary tonguing, see specifics in box) through Type 1 multiphonics. The entire realisation could be played on up to three multiphonics (defined below), which can be transformed through breath pressure and embouchure, or venting and loading (or a combination of both) to explore both monophonic and polyphonic textures in the qualities above. You can also use the fundamental pitch on it's own.

In the following sections (2-6) are information that you can use to inform your realisation. This is intended to be considered simultaneously (unless stated otherwise).

02 The air content and articulations mentioned could be used as follows:

Used most often ←————————————————————————→ *Used least often*

Air content:	Completely air/ no pitch	half tones		full tones
Articulation:	No tongue	'Sh'/ 'h'	'k'	'Th'/ 'Ch'	't'
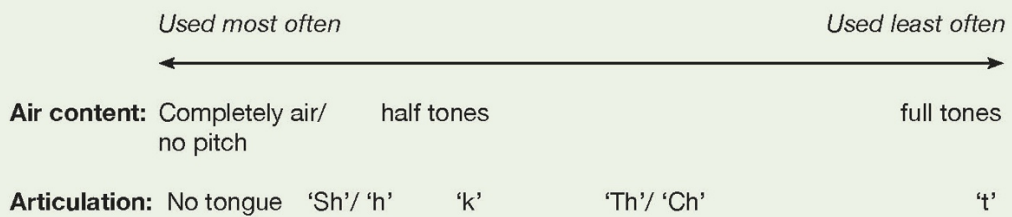
03 Suggested multiphonics

Used most often ←————————————————————————→ *Used least often*

Air direction:	Outbreath		In-breath
Multiphonic fingering*:	E	C#	C
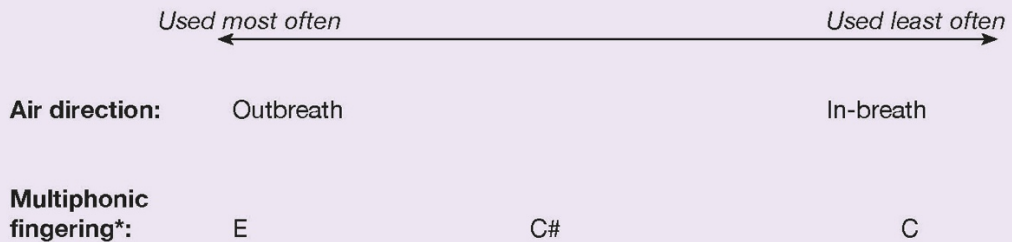
*These can be further transformed through venting/ loading and breath pressure/ embouchure.

Figure 19: Page 1 of the open score showing the intended gestures and the parameters of decision making

04 This is a list of 'performative' behaviours/ identities/ decisions. From these, form an 'alter ego' to transform more 'passive' explorations of the multiphonics. You can add behaviours as time goes on. You can add your own behaviours too.

mutters to self, is
cross and bustling

breathes slowly,
mediatively

breathes
quickly, almost
hyperventilating

vicious, spitting

sighs

extremely taut,
stressed

interjects with
uncertainty

interjects with
excitement

hesitates

sounds are sudden
and shortlived,
they almost
surprise you

loud and
unapologetic

happy to take time,
make audience
wait. Cheeky.

quiet but certain

_____
(add own)

_____
(add own)

_____
(add own)

_____
(add own)

_____
(add own)

NB All behaviours should be transformed through instrument. Some behaviours lend themselves to certain sonic vocabularies than others e.g. breathing- based behaviours lend themselves to air-based sounds.

All behaviours might happen on top of a continuous wash of exploring the sonic possibilities in the multiphonics you have chosen.

Figure 20: Page 2 of the open score showing the different behaviours that Sarah could use to shape her sound

05 The trajectory of your improvisation might look like any of these three options:

Performative   Passive

06 At some point in the improvisation you may also explore phonetic qualities (sh, ch, th etc.) through ordinary pitches (not multiphonics). You can use the fundamental pitch from your multiphonics and other pitches too. Any sections that do this should be distinct from the rest of the material. You can use this picture to inform this/ these sections.

Photo by Pascal Van de Vendel on Unsplash

Figure 21: Page 3 of the open score showing the structural parameters of Sarah's improvisation

The recordings of this content (in which our behaviours can arguably be read) formed the dataset from which Christopher Melen trained PRiSM SampleRNN, using the epoch files the model generated to tune various sonic qualities, before generating new wav files that I conceptualised as cyborg observations of mine and Sarah's musical identities. The cyborg, a machine-human hybrid that is embodied in both Chris Melen and PRiSM SampleRNN, cannot be untangled to understand the limits of objectivism-subjectivism, however displacing my own observational power within this process had to some extent removed the bias with which I had been reading identity. Indeed, this new material emphasised spectral qualities that I completely overlooked (or didn't hear) when listening back to our raw recordings.[25] For the final piece, I layered samples over one another to create new gestural envelopes, which were to be triggered antagonistically against Sarah's live performance of a new version of my original score.[26] "Liveness" became an important feature again, where the fragile interaction between soloist and electronics seems tangible in the live performance.

4.1.2. To find myself staring back

While with Sarah I used open scores to tease out and intervene within one moment of the iterative interactions of our collaboration, with Ensemble Recherche I began to consider how I could create performative, or improvisatory, spaces, within the final performance itself, through the score. *To find myself staring back* (henceforth *To find myself*) is for oboe, clarinet, piano and percussion, written over 12 months in consultation with Ensemble Recherche, and performed by them in December 2021. While I had workshops with Ensemble Recherche in months 2 and 8 of the project, which took place over Zoom, I had no other contact with the ensemble – conditions

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[25] Ongoing research by myself, Drs Emily Howard, Bofan Ma and Sam Salem shows that PRiSM SampleRNN has its own biases towards the qualities in the materials it observes.

[26] In peculiar and exciting ways, these new materials were the only non-performative materials that emerged as materials in the course of this research – where no-one was involved in the live generation of sound – however, evoking the uncanny valley, they sound performative.

which made a dialogue-led process unlikely. Due to this, I began to consider how I might use the final score to open up the epistemological space with these collaborators, using an approach to integrating composition and improvisation that is reminiscent of Richard Barrett's *Blattwerk* (2002), where improvisatory spaces are left open within through-composed sections of notated music.[27]

For the notated music in this piece, as in *You may own* us, I wanted to use the opportunity to develop some of the fricative gestural language I had encountered previously, but I also wanted to develop some of the emotive expression I had encountered in this research and explore how this could be translated/ transmitted to other performers. The fully notated Section A was designed to be highly theatrical, conceptualised as an expressive reconstruction of my experiences that were documented in *as in mirrors*, where exertion, angularity and disgust where prominent forces within this mirrored studio. I translated these into a gritty, dirty aesthetic, using inharmonic timbral sound worlds for the percussion and piano and using 'careful' or 'forceful' instructions to recreate the psychological experience of sustaining new sounds in my embouchure. I translated my physiological experience of an "unfamiliar", "disturbed" embouchure into the oboe and gave the clarinet the fricative articulations that I had been exploring on the flute.

To find myself is just one of the pieces in this portfolio where I aimed to code this embodied experience into the score and arguably other scoring methods I used did this far more successfully. In *WHAT IT TAKES*, for trombone and electronics, I approached this differently, isolating one sound from my 'mirrored studio' – the unvoiced 'th' (θ) (created by forming the flute embouchure around the phonetic 'th', then forcing the sound through this. This leads to unstable clicks and pops as sound

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[27] Barrett says of his notation: 'the 'silent' bars marked with ∞… are lacunae in which improvisation may take place, in response to the samples and processed sounds from computer 1, not necessarily filling the available duration, which may even be left silent… the high degree of discontinuity of the notated music is intended to create structural/ expressive "questions" which can only be answered (if at all) by improvisatory actions (Barrett, Blattwerk, 2002, p. 2).

escapes). I translated this physical language (rather than musical or emotive language) onto the trombone; firstly, I asked Weston Olencki to 'create resistance in [his] throat so that any sound events we do hear are those that have 'broken through' (see Figure 22). Second, I gave an exercise for embodying the concept of exertion, asking Weston to listen to sound recordings of 'people pushing, pulling and grinding heavy objects against other heavy or immovable objects.'

Performance notes:

1. This piece is all about exertion. It is about pushing, pulling, or grinding against something very heavy.

2. The score embeds a dialogue between the composer and the performer. It contains suggestions for how to perform things, it asks questions, it leaves space for you to answer. I'll explain how this works below.

3. There are four types of material in the score (and four ways of playing this material). These can be distinguished by their dynamic marking:

ppp - This material is incredibly intricate, and made up mostly of percussive clicks and pops, with some sound coming through. This is notated using a pitch and a speech rhythm. In addition to playing the speech rhythm, use the phonetic material within the text to shape the internal qualities of the sound. Do this by translating consonants within the word to percussive effects formed at the lips or tongue. E.g. "what" has three internal shapes – 'wh', 'a' and 't'. "Wh' and 't' can be translated to intricate pops and clicks, and the 'a' might be where the sound breaks through. NB any 'speech rhythm' given like >this< should just be used to shape the internal qualities of the sound, not also the rhythm of the event (where duration/ rhythm is notated traditionally).

pp - This is the central and most important material in the piece. It is about creating resistance within your embouchure that stops sound coming through, so that any sound events we do hear are those that have 'broken through'. The visuals in this material are as important as the audible qualities. This material is notated with black curving graphics and faded traditional notation. (A note about the three lined stave is found overleaf).

For this material, it is important that you <u>embody experiences of exertion</u>. Here's how:

In this folder (<u>https://tinyurl.com/y2s45ny9</u>) are a number of sound recordings that I have downloaded from freesound.com. They are the sounds of people pushing, pulling and grinding heavy objects against other heavy or immovable objects.

Imagine you were the one moving these heavy objects. They are heavier than you can manage easily. Imagine that the black curving graphics represent you pushing against something heavy. You move the object in bursts, inch by inch. These micromovements are where the sound comes through in the *pp* material. I have given a suggested rhythm for these micromovements, but by far the most important quality here is *translating these experiences of exertion into the intention behind your playing*. I'd imagined that your breath is the pushing, your lips (closed) are the resistant force. You might prefer to do this in another way.

There are several ways this material develops throughout the piece:
i. You'll notice that in addition to this notation I have given faded text behind. These are most often hesitant phrases, like 'er, um, urm'. This might help you shape the sound events that do break through - they have a hesitant quality about them.
ii. From page two, certain words start to feature within this background text. These denote speech, which you should say when you meet an X notehead in the material. Stems up = playing. Stems down = speech. NB 'ARGH' (p.2) is a 'vocal exertion' sound.
iii. From page 5, the material includes red gliss arrows. Slide up to 1st position, now translating embodied exertion into your sliding arm (=jagged, uneven).

Figure 22: Page 2 of an initial sketch I wrote for Weston Olencki

Where the methods used to execute sound and gesture in *WHAT IT TAKES* can be traced from my adoption of Spatz' 'laboratorial space' (see 1.3, p.23, or Spatz, 2020, p.33) to the 'mirrored studio', then to the exploratory invitations in the open scores I wrote for Song for CoMA and Sarah Watts, I arguably digressed from these methods in *To find myself*. Unlike the other collaborations in this portfolio, I communicated with Ensemble Recherche almost entirely through my scores and therefore unlike in other pieces, my notation alone had to capture the ways in which I aimed musicians would explore, play with, reflect on and develop their gestural language within the piece (where usually I would aid this process by facilitating conversations and workshops towards this aim). Despite this, my performance directions, particularly for piano and percussion, focus on prescribing exact actions for the players to execute on their instruments. For example, I write 'move deliberately slowly' with mallets across a drum skin (page viii), or 'push against the piano strings [with a rubber tube] in the specified range' (page x). This in in comparison to the instructions I gave to the wind players: in the clarinet part I write that 'guttural' sounds should 'be strained and forced… they should feel dry… they should feel as if they are coming from the back of the throat' (see page vii of the score). These instructions invite the player to reflect upon and consider the relationship between their body and instrument, inviting an exploratory, playful approach to creating gesture in the piece.

This is not to say that my percussion and piano parts do not include any invitation to explore and create gesture (though this is introduced at a later point that in my parts for oboe and clarinet). Here, I experimented with other methods to do this and at the same time fix my experience of the mirrored studio in *as in mirrors* into the score for Ensemble Recherche (where I was experimenting with my own positionality in a collaboration with a very different dialogic structure). I used photographs I had taken in my mirrored studio as improvisatory windows (see bars 58, 108, 115, 130 and 141-142). Although players knew where these photos had originated from (and I additionally gave poetic descriptions of my experience of this space on pages 1-3 of the score to build their knowledge about me) I did not indicate how these photographs should be used, instead providing them for the players to respond to freely. I extended these 'windows' in section C, where players are directly instructed

(through text) to reflect and improvise on the different relationships they have with gestures on their instrument (see No.3 in Table 4, p.95 and 06:50 in the recording) and further, in section D players must verbally discuss these same gestures in front of the audience (although the Ensemble decide how this is executed – in the premiere in December 2021, the players chose to talk over each other in German, Spanish and Japanese – the audience could only discern snippets of what was said).

The score for *To find myself* is the result of a struggle I had, between wanting to accelerate the process of developing a joint inquiry over the performers' experiential relationships with their instruments, and wanting to give the players creative freedom to shape the meaning of the piece themselves. The result of this is a tracing from players simply being revealed in the piece – first in free improvisation (using the photos as graphic scores that translated my physical experience of the mirrored studio) – to players being active agents in constructing the meaning of the piece, or even the identity they might show on stage. In the latter stages of the piece, I asked the players to play gestures that they had a positive/ negative experience with, then asked them to verbally describe these positive/negative experiences to the audience. The players had control over exactly what was said and done in these spaces (see 06:48 in the recording). In subsequent pieces, I gave players much longer to explore these various performative-reflective-improvisatory spaces in concert, but here these free improvisation windows (particularly in sections A and B) were fleeting. [28] This, and my reluctance to tell players how to use the graphics, led to the improvisations in sections A and B being slightly inconsequential as moments where performer identity or behaviour might be 'revealed' to an audience or as moments where the players had creative freedom to shape any meaning, but I contend this has

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[28] This was something we discussed in rehearsals, considering whether the durations I had specified for the improvisatory windows (e.g. bar 113) were problematic if the musicians would engage sincerely with my intended approach to how they would create gesture. We agreed to keep the brevity of these improvisations, where to me the sense of interruption was an important part of the expression of the piece (and written into other moments too, for example in section C, or even the opening oboe phrase (bar 2), which should sound as if the piece had already started).

only enhanced the meaning-making moments later in the piece. Sections C and D, in this context, are very indulgent – the pace and tone of each player's individual reflection completely recontextualises everything that has happened before, making 06:48 a structural turning point in the piece. The Ensemble carefully shaped this moment which "rewrote" the meaning of the entire piece before it.[29]

Despite these structural successes, I contend that some of my scoring decisions here may limit the potential for gestural interpretation within the piece. It is incredibly important that to sincerely realise the improvisatory windows, players should explore gesture as this pertains to their instrument-body relationship (by reflecting on and playing with different gestures as they felt both physically and psychologically (evoked most clearly in section C). However as discussed above, the performance directions (particularly in the percussion and piano parts) did not prioritise this highly exploratory approach and this, which perhaps together with my choice to use an extended conventional stave which prioritises pitch and rhythm, created a real risk that the musicians would misread these priorities, focusing instead on the other wealth of information to decipher and internalise in the score.

It is perhaps no coincidence that my notation better serves wind players here than it does a percussionist or a pianist. After my investigations in *as in mirrors,* I had a nuanced understanding of my own body-instrument relationship as this pertained to different gestures on the flute (for example how they might impact the feeling of breath or breathlessness, the feeling of the air on the throat or in the mouth, the force of air behind the lips or the tightness of certain muscles), and therefore was more thoroughly equipped to translate this to other wind players (and also to invite them to conduct their own investigations). This is apparent in the performance directions I gave to these players (pages iv or vii of the score) where it is possible to read the wind instruments as 'bodily prostheses' which both 'extend bodies and

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[29] I often aim for a moment that does this in my pieces – that in some way turns the tide on the energy and expression of the music that has come before it. This moment happens in section F of *You may own us*, and again, was up to Sarah to shape.

permeate them' (Wilson, 2017, p.137) and where 'one comes to know, to feel what a body is insofar as it is prosthetic – through exploring instrumental and sonic extensions that are exterior to or intersect with it… through losing one's body into its extensions, one paradoxically discovers what bodies are, and what they might do' (ibid., p.138). In my work with the flute (which I have extended with Jenni Hogan, and to other wind instruments including trombone with Weston Olencki and clarinet with Sarah Watts), I feel I am inherently more familiar with 'practices that seek to investigate and defamiliarize the relation between the human and the nonhuman in composition' (ibid., p.138) and 'negate more habituated patterns [of performance] and as such encourages more creative approaches on the part of the performer' (ibid., p.144). While this has equipped me to manage notation with wind players in a more nuanced way, this is most significant where I am able to facilitate pointed conversations and exploration around psychological or physiological understandings of gesture, inviting performers from various improvisatory backgrounds into the exploratory space needed to realise my music. This creative space is an important contribution to knowledge in this research, and has marked where I might potentially conduct further research with non-wind instruments.

You may own us and *To find myself* were both experiments in how I, as a composer, could position myself in a body of work that emphasises betweenness and hybridity, but that also follows the conventions of a scored practice, and where I was not part of the final performance. Further, these pieces were experiments in how to accelerate or even dictate the interactions between composer and performer so that we could reach a position of betweenness or shared understanding even where time and financial implications meant we could only work together, in the same room, sparingly. The use of a recurrent-neural-network (PRiSM SampleRNN), as a method for artificially recreating the performative interactions between composer and performer, is potentially something that could be researched further as a model for integrating composition and improvisation practices, or for artificially synthesising the different gestural languages of two creative individuals with different skill sets. Interestingly, this can bypass what I have come to enjoy most about collaborating – performing and improvising/composing in the same room with my partner – but this

is potentially a model for collaboration when creatives are not able to overcome the barriers of having been trained in different methods of creative communication (reductively – the composer through the score, the performer through their instrument).

4.2. Convergence

Questions over my positionality, over improvisation and agency, evolved in a piece I wrote for House of Bedlam in July to October 2022, where I again considered my own performative presence in the final work, as well as how to curate performative spaces for the players in concert. *Lost in your whole world* is for speaker, flute, saxophone and cello. Through this piece, performer memories of 'mirrored studios' are recreated live for the audience, framed within a narrative in which I appear on stage as myself. In this spoken part, I reflect on my actions as composer in the piece and on my own experiences of the 'mirrored studios' which the players were re-enacting.

The piece began as a collection of open scores (see Appendix E). These were produced for a workshop in August 2022 and were designed so that I could read identity through House of Bedlam's embodied relationships with their instruments. Specifically, I would "observe" instrumental improvisation, guided by my open scores, removing the need for dialogue or the revelation of deeply personal information. As with *Song for CoMA* and *To find myself*, I filtered this investigation by asking players to reflect (through musical gesture) on their experience of playing, however this time I developed the 'gestures you like' and 'gestures you don't like' invitation (the development of which is traced in Table 4 below) and asked players to reflect on 'gestures that are uncomfortable' and then how this discomfort might be 'resolved'. This focus on 'discomfort' became significant in my research and is something I will discuss at length in Chapter 5.

1.   Ensemble Recherche performative behaviour invitation – workshop 1, December 2020

sense   improvise a phrase using sounds and gestures that excite you. The same sound making means should not be used next to each other but can be used multiple times in the phrase.

nonsense   improvise a phrase using sounds and gestures that you are not excited by or that you have a bad relationship with. Exaggerate these as far as possible. Use the same gestures next to each other as many times as you like (or don't like!)

movement   improvise a phrase using gestures that either make your body change position rapidly or make you feel like your body is changing position rapidly.

meditation   In sequence, explore familiar gestures that you might make if trying not to be heard by anyone.

2.   Song for CoMA performative behaviour invitation, January 2021

STAGE 1: REMOTE STAGE - each player records one or more clip(s) of each of the following 4 behaviours on any instrument or object.

EXCITE! Play a sound or phrase* that excites you!

GET IT OVER WITH. Play a sound or phrase** that does not excite you, or that you have a bad relationship with. Exaggerate this as far as possible.

MOVEMENT! Play a phrase** using gestures that either make your body change position rapidly or make you feel like your body is changing position rapidly.

MEDITATION. Play a familiar gesture that you might make if trying not to be heard by anyone.

* The same gesture should not be heard consecutively
** Use the same gesture consecutively as many times as you like (or don't like!)

> When recording your clips, be playful with the camera angle. Perhaps we see your whole body or perhaps we see an extreme close up. Does this effect what you play? Different angles for each clip are welcome but not necessary.

3. **Ensemble Recherche performative behaviour invitation – Final score, December 2021**

INSERT PAGE
CY interrupts CX*

all interruptions are approx. 1-2"

CY1 LIKE

Ob.

Cl.

Play a sound or gesture that you like, or that you have a good relationship with. Perhaps there is a story behind this, as I have shared in the score. The sound/ phrase should make you move in a way that you feel completely comfortable with, or in a way that feels natural to you. Over emphasise these qualities, be quite dramatic and over the top.

Lavish in it, show it off, embrace it!

Pno.

CY2 MOVE

Play a sound or gesture that makes your body move in a way that either looks or feels dramatic, completely over the top, slightly comical, and a little bit slapstick. Don't take yourself seriously. Don't be afraid to momentarily leave your seat or standing position. How much space can you take up in 1-2 seconds. Don't look at what the others are doing. Become distanced from the moment for a second, as if this is a different, room, a different place, a different piece.

CY3 MEDITATE

Play a sound or phrase that feels meditative, or as if no-one else is in the room. Keep it close to your chest. It's just you and your sound expanding into the un-known

CY4 DISLIKE

Ob.

Cl.

Play a sound or phrase that you absolutely hate. This doesn't have to be rational, but you cannot stand this sound and you hate how it feels at your hands. There might be good reason for it, or it might be personal, but play it with passion.

Pno.

CY5 MEDITATE

Play a sound or phrase that feels meditative, or as if no-one else is in the room. Keep it close to your chest. It's just you and your sound expanding into the un-know n

After CY5, go immediately to D1 (cued by piano)

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4.   House of Bedlam performative behaviour invitation – Open score, August 2022

Independently, each bar lasts 2-7 seconds

intervallic relationships between players should embody relative levels of comfort/ discomfort

as many 1. times as needed

A
a gesture that is physiologically, physically, socially or sonically uncomfortable

B
a gesture where the discomfort feels close to or in a state of resolve

choosing a new starting point each time, repeat until you can think of no more gestures, or until time runs out.

on each repeat, make minute changes to gradually transform the gesture

optional, at any time

C
a sound that provides some light relief

I invited House of Bedlam for a workshop in August 2022, and made recordings of the ensemble performing each open score (a selection of these are found in Appendix F). More than any other response to an open score that I've discussed in my research so far, these guided improvisations stood up to performances that I would happily present in a concert, without further intervention. By this point in the project I had developed my approach to open scores, and how they might function with different groups and workshop scenarios, which had become a significant enquiry in this research: how to compose for improvisers. In this instance, I had consciously engineered that the materials produced in this space would display an assortment of textures and ensemble interactions. To this end, each score was designed to elicit a different method for ensemble coordination. Open Score 1 (Internal Dialogue) was designed to be a largely individual process (where each player would transform gestures in their own time, creating a kaleidoscopic interaction). Open Score 2 (Tutti Dialogue) was designed so that players would cue each other in and out of gestural phrases (represented by each square), but within each cue, a player could play multiple gestures in their own time (represented by moving from triangle to triangle). Open Score 4 (Ensemble Dialogue) was designed so that players would unilaterally create global shapes through material, but that any individual could influence the speed with which material changed. Open Score 3 (Chorale) was written to deliberately elicit contrasting textures to those that I expected to be produced through the other open scores. It was also written to ensure that the piece would make full "use" of the timbral and blending possibilities between alto and C flutes, and alto saxophone.[30]

If I had continued developing a collaborative process with House of Bedlam, we could have worked together to structure these guided improvisations into a full performance. In Chapter 5 I will discuss this model in reference to my long-term

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[30] I organised the following combinations into a narrative: alto saxophone above the C flute, in wide, inconsistent intervals; C flute above the saxophone in wide, consistent intervals; narrow intervals in the lower registers (alto flute and alto saxophone); C flute and saxophone in extremities of upper register.

collaboration with Amy Jolly. I took a different direction here though and instead used these recordings as materials to develop into another piece of music.

In preparing the final score for *Lost in your whole world*, I instead asked the players to 're-enact' what had happened in the mirrored studio (the open score session), live in concert. To do this in sections A and C (where there were specific behaviours I wanted the performers to 'cite') I asked the players to choose whether they played from a transcription I had made of the recordings of these moments; recreate their improvisatory behaviours from memory (a process which could include listening back to the recordings, which I provided); or navigate their own path between these two processes (see Figure 23).[31] These sections were tangibly different to other sections in the piece where I had typeset a transcription of a behaviour directly into the score (for example, bars 3-5 of section B). This process caused a lot of discussion in rehearsals, where the notation was extremely complicated for what I was asking players to do. It couldn't be sightread and required the performers to engage sincerely with the process of citation, or re-enactment of an improvisatory space (or a performative space). It wasn't possible to "make something up" and "fake" what had happened in the mirrored studio, as it had been in *Song for CoMA* and *To find myself* (other pieces that invited performers to reflect on or cite behaviours they had exhibited previously).

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[31] The tension of a 'citation' within a performative space is discussed by John McGrath, using Derrida (1982) to unpack what is unique about 'surveillance space': 'the iterability, the citational frame of surveillance culture consists not primarily of what surveillance shows, but of the ways in which it fails to show. That is to say, surveillance space is not constructed simply, or even primarily, from the scenes and bodies that it seems to reproduce, but from the context of unreproducible moments, obscured events and significant exclusions in relation to which it is structured' (McGrath, 2001, pp. 155-156).

Figure 23: Extract from the performance directions of Lost in your whole world

These methods blurred the boundaries between the bifurcated practices of composition and improvisation, which also blurred the boundaries of authorship in this piece. I compounded this further when in bars 1-2 of section C in the cello, for example, I wrote material that was a development of Steph's improvised material (transcribed in bars 3-5 of B). I retained the gestural intent of the material by using the same contour, double stop and initial rhythmic relationships, but developed intervallic relationships and shortened the phrase. In other moments, I only loosely transcribed material before developing it, for example at bars 22-37 of section C – this material is taken from Kathryn's improvisations, developed into a new flute and saxophone part which is overlaid with new material in the cello part. I used a similar technique at section G.

4.3. Discussion

Lost in your whole world, and *To find myself* are projects which shine a light on the differences between (and possibilities of entangling) concepts of documentary and "liveness". In both works, this latter concept is in play when performative spaces are opened or subverted within the piece. However, each work *documents* the behaviours produced in these spaces too – *Lost in your whole world* asks players to "cite" behaviours they had previously exhibited; *To find myself* inscribes my own behaviours and experiences into the notated score. In this former use of

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documentation – using the performance to cite behaviours previously exhibited – it became impossible to draw any line between composition and improvisation as separate practices (as it had been possible in *You may own us*).

Earlier, I conflated performativity and improvisation as abstract spaces where identity is formed (when performers interact with each other, their instruments and with me) but this conflation may reveal the limitations of this concept in my research. When critiquing Erika Fischer-Lichte and Peggy Phelan's readings on performativity, Spatz calls to attention that 'the apparent ephemerality of performance is an artifact of spectatorship' (2015, p. 58) and that 'the privileging of the spectatorial perspective colludes with the fetishization of technology to make the relative stability of material objects… appear as the rule rather than the exception' (ibid.). Spatz points out that 'all practice is ephemeral in that it is bound to a specific time and place and can never be exactly repeated' and significantly is structured by 'years of even decades of training in specialised technique' (p.58-59). In much of my research I had wanted to capture ephemerality and is this why an audiovisual tracing of these moments, fixing them in time, became such a valued material to me. Spatz is right though, that these moments were only available to me as an observer through the development and repetition of years of embodied technique. This is undeniably true in the case of instrumental improvisation (even with CoMA, where some members have only been improvising since we formed in 2020). In this sense improvisation (as structured by repeatable technique) and performativity (as ephemeral) cannot be so easily conflated but this does reveal something of the type of improvisation I wanted to capture in my work. I searched for my co-constructed aesthetic *beyond* technique, pushing for ephemerality.

In this vein, *rehearsing* a piece that had windows of performative moments in it (or that was entirely improvised) had become problematic – when a performer repeated individual behaviours in various run throughs, the characteristic of these behaviours (as something arguably new, and ephemeral) was lost, where behaviours were no longer performative, but fixed inscriptions of a moment in time. This caused a lot of discussion in the Ensemble Recherche rehearsals – a player might have an

experiential relationship to a certain gesture on their instrument, but as soon as this is reflected upon, there is the potential for this relationship to be transformed. Does the player then cite this original gesture in the next performance, or repeat this process of reflection to find a new gesture? If the former, are they now acting and have they left the performative space? This was rarely a problem across my research, where most of my pieces fixed performative behaviour in time, but was an interesting problem to have in my practice that was concerned with composing for improvisors.

At this point in my research, my compositional practice was seemingly defined by fixing "moments" in time, whether through my notation (as in *Lost in your whole world*) or in audiovisual tracings. Notions of movement, and arrest, were a key part of how I was coming to understand the differences between improvisation and composition in my practice. These conceptions can be extended more broadly beyond my work, when once again looking at improvisation and composition through the lenses of subject formation. In a passage that seems to have parallels with Spatz's critique above, Butler stresses the continuously moving processes and foldings that occur in identity formation. She says that any sense of "I" is embedded within a complex relational framework of 'simultaneous[ly]' 'being acted on [by norms] and acting (2015, p. 12)... 'acting does not liberate any of us from our formations... our formation does not suddenly fall away after certain breaks or ruptures... I am not formed once and definitively, but continuously or repeatedly' (ibid., pp. 12-13). Looking at improvisation through this lens, where repetition, citation (and by extension, technique) are as much a part of this space as newness, ephemerality and liveness, improvisation can be formulated as a practice of continuous (often agential) movement through time. Composition is when this movement stops, becomes fixed in time, where documentation or citation fixes an individual or their practice to a

particular moment. Improvisation therefore *became* composition in *Lost in your whole world* where I forced this "arrest" upon performer behaviour.[32]

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[32] In this way, and others, time had become an important but unexpected part of this research. On beginning this research, I had hypothesised that the longer I spent collaborating with my performers, the more in-depth my knowledge of their behaviour and identity would be. While this was true, it was also true that my most profound collaborations were with those for whom I structured individual reflection time within the creative process. This did not happen simply by engaging in long-term collaboration itself but this interaction needed to be demarcated so that performers could tend to this process sincerely (and the durational demands of this were different in each project). This time was not structured into the collaborations with Ensemble Recherche (or Darren Gallacher – see Chapter 3) making it challenging to reach the same depth in the creative enquiries of these pieces.

Chapter 5: Notating identity

See Portfolio, 9a. On being watched score and 9b. On being watched recording

See Portfolio 10a. Living things, toxic air & cuticles i set of parts and 10b. Living

things, toxic air & cuticles i recording

In the projects discussed so far, my positionality as a composer/performer and researcher has shifted quite dramatically – as a participant within epistemological spaces (*as in mirrors, Conversation Piece, Song for CoMA, You may own us*), as represented in the score (*You may own us, To find myself, Lost in your whole world*), and as a performer in a finished piece (*as in mirrors, Song for CoMA, Lost in your whole world*). These shifts have in part been led by my own transformative investigation into the relationship I have with performing, which can be traced through each of the pieces in this portfolio, but have also happened within the context of my experiments in notational practice. In Chapter 3, I discussed my use of open scores as a method to elicit behaviours, sounds, interactions and dialogues from performers; in Chapter 4 I touched upon my through-composed notation as a method for documenting the observations I had made of my own or others' gestural behaviour. In this Chapter, I will critique my approach to notation in this project through the lens of two final pieces in this portfolio: *On being watched*, written with Amy Jolly, and *Living things, toxic air & cuticles*, written with Ella Taylor, Darren Gallacher, Ben Evans and Amy Jolly for CoMA Manchester.

5.1. On being watched

While the relationship I had with Amy Jolly initially emerged from a more traditional composer-performer commissioning relationship, this has evolved over three years into a shared practice where: we are no longer thinking about creativity in terms of autonomy; we have developed performances rather than works; both of us take on tasks associated with composition and performance – we both participate in the production, notation, arrangement and performance of our work. *On being watched* is a performance that we developed between August 2021 and April 2023, premiered

in May 2023. This performance emerged from a long dialogue between us around the politics of spectatorship (defined in Chapter 3), specifically on how this relates to gender identity.[33]

During this two year process, Amy and I had long and indulgent conversations discussing our bodies on stage. Initial conversations were organic but as this developed into a joint enquiry, we began having these conversations in front of cameras and audio recorders – formalising our dialogue into "confessions" or "interviews" (just as Darren and I had for *Flect*). Simultaneous to this dialogic collaboration, Amy and I began exploring technologies (for example a contact microphone and DAWs/ video editing software) and techniques for the cello (for example new left hand shapes), that were new to both of us. As time passed, this technical discovery, and the conversations that emerged from it, became intertwined – using the contact microphone led us to explore intimate activations of sound on the tailpiece, which led us to discuss how we felt about being watched on stage, which led us to discuss discomfort, which led us to explore uncomfortable gestures on the cello, and so on.

Each performance of *On being watched* draws from the documentation of this long process (for example video recordings of confessions and interviews, audio recordings of the explorations with the contact microphone, and photographs of new hand shapes). Each performance can also integrate 'improvisation' from the various performance materials we developed (including open scores, see Appendix G for examples). In Autumn 2023, this remains an ongoing process and each performance will evolve as we continue to develop materials within this enquiry. As such, there is no fixed score and each performance is documented in a transcript (which serves only as a reminder of which materials we chose to use and how we arranged them in

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[33] 'Looking and feeling oneself to be looked at are key to the construction of one's own gender identity and the gender identity of others.' (Butler, 2016 in (Laing & Willson, 2020, p. 8)).

the rehearsal process in days before the performance).[34] Appendix G holds a selection of these materials but for the purposes of this Chapter, I will discuss one set of performance materials as a case study. These were developed during this shared enquiry and have been used in each iteration of this performance so far. These are reproduced in Figure 24 to Figure 25.

5.1.1. Case study of performance materials for *On being watched*

As previously alluded to, partway through this enquiry Amy and I embarked on an exploration of discomfort in cello hand shapes. Clearly, this was an extension of the work I had been developing throughout this entire research project (see Table 4, p.95), where since I had created *as in mirrors* in June 2020, much of my research had been concerned with how to access this privileged epistemological space/mirrored studio with my collaborators again. However, where until now this investigation had largely been conducted, with other performers at least, through "in the moment" gestural responses to my open scores, Amy and I used the concept of discomfort to open a rich documentation of uncomfortable hand shapes and choreographies at the cello, then used these to develop choreographed musical phrases. Figure 26 shows the various hand shape sequences I theorised at the beginning of this process, annotated during a workshop with Amy where we labelled hand shapes by how uncomfortable they were – where 1 is completely comfortable and 5 is completely uncomfortable (0 is impossible).

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[34] A previous iteration of this performance was called '*The Dirtying Intention': poignancy, puerility and performance*, and was conceived of as a lecture-recital for performance at the 2023 Eavesdropping Symposium in March 2023. The recording and a transcript for this performance are found at Appendix H and Appendix I. 'The Dirtying Intention' is a taken from a chapter of the same name in Dominic Johnson's book *Unlimited Action* (2019, p.90).

*Figure 24: Gestural fragments distilled - page 1*

*Figure 25: Gestural fragments distilled - page 2*

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Figure 26: Annotated document of uncomfortable hand shapes

This process of developing the material seen in Figure 26 to developing the material seen previously in Figure 24 and Figure 25 was incredibly convoluted. After the workshop described above, we worked to create sequences from our various hand shapes. Together, developed sequences that seemed choreographically fluid and choreographically awkward, using 'pivots' to support smoother transitions (where one finger stayed in position and others moved down or up the fingerboard) and large 'jumps' for more awkward transitions (where the cellist must accurately and immediately place their fingers in position without an intermediary reference point, which becomes more awkward where pitches get closer together on the fingerboard in the upper ranges of each string). From here, I typeset five of these sequences into tablature in order to detach the choreography from any rhythmic qualities (which are implied within the WAM stave (see Figure 27)), then over the next months, Amy improvised intricate gestural material using these 'Maps' (where gestural refers here to interlocking defined rhythmic, melodic, expressive, kinaesthetic and timbral qualities within the way a performer plays a passage on their instrument). In each workshop, we documented which gestures worked well in our fluid/ awkward framework *and* excited us in their harmonic/ textural/ melodic language. Over time, we detached ourselves from the precisions of pitch implied in the Maps – developing these in order to suit the aesthetic framework we had now developed together.
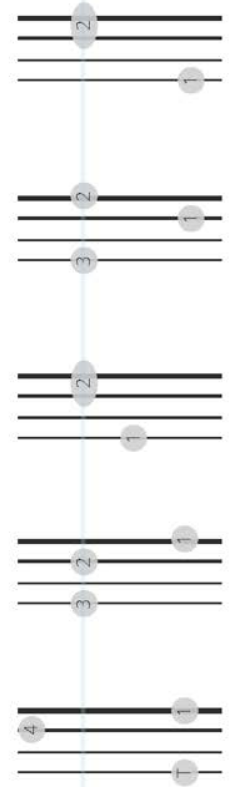
Figure 27: Page 1 of '5 Maps for Amy' - a choreography of hand shapes typeset into tablature

Once we were intimately familiar with the gestural possibilities afforded by these choreographies, Amy notated five sequences of hand positions back into traditional WAM notation (Table 5). I then developed each sequence rhythmically (inscribing some gestural content that Amy had improvised in our workshops, and developing my own) and harmonically (using the sequences as fixed hand positions that could be transposed by shifting them up or down the fingerboard) to create a set of fragments. I conceptualised that these could be arranged to create an improvisation (by selecting, discarding and rearranging materials). Amy chose which of these fragments were efficient enough to be worth learning, the results of which are documented in Figure 24 and Figure 25, p.107-108.

Table 5: Amy's notated sequences of hand positions. Top: from developing page 1 of Maps. Second: from developing page 2 of Maps. Third: from developing page 3 of Maps. Bottom: From developing page 4 of Maps. NB The notation from page 5 of Maps is missing.
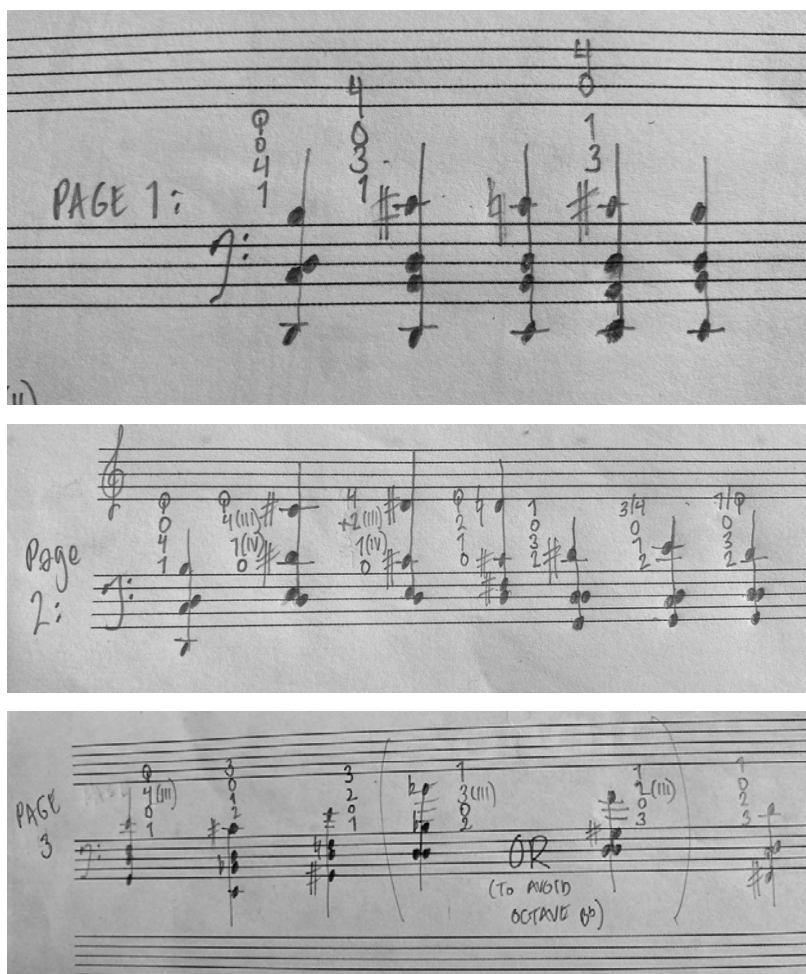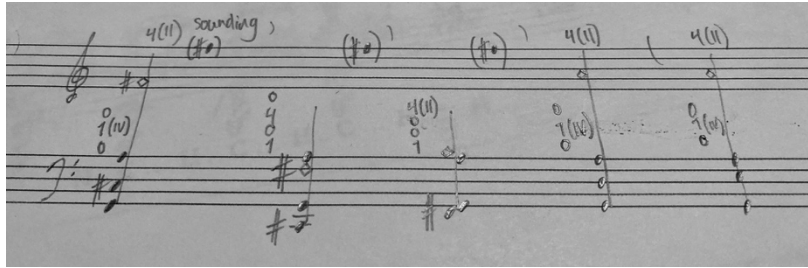
The process of developing these materials for performance is emblematic of some of the scoring practices I have used across this research, where although I have deconstructed the creative process in order to tease out different interactions between myself and the performer, or in order to provoke various (but focused) outcomes in the performer's gestural language, the notation for the final work has remained quite traditional. This can be observed in *You may own us, To find myself* and *Lost in your whole world,* as well as in the performance materials analysed through the above case study (although in this case, this is only one element that Amy and I might include in a performance). While none of these final scores could exist without the previous iterative interventions (which have often been open scores), it could be argued that the final scores of these works are ultimately unnecessary in my aim to observe and harness performer identity and behaviour – this had arguably already been achieved, and conceivably my works might even reveal "more of" the performer to the audience if the composition process had ended earlier in the iterative cycle and performers could play from the open scores I had developed during a final performance.

However, as I will discuss through the final work in this portfolio, to end an observation of identity and behaviour at the point which the performer principally constructs their own performative and creative space (which my open scores invite), is to miss the opportunity to observe how behaviour and identity are formed within the more directional and fixed relationships between a composer and performer, embodied within scores. This is interesting to me in the context of collaboration between composers and performers; asking questions about identity is easy in any process that hands identity construction over – as an open score does. Constructing

identity together, and fixing these decisions in notation, reveals additional layers of information about individuals around their agency, creativity and autonomy within more fixed and rigid power structures. My project, which entangles open spaces with subversions of autonomy, and fixes behaviours on the page while asking performers to cite their own contributions from previous interactions, presents music-making and participation to the performer in quite unconventional ways. This is a unique space to observe behaviour and identity, and one that I contend is tangible in the ephemerality of my music.

This proposal – of reading the identity and behaviour of musicians through the way in which performers interact with both unfixed and fixed materials for performance – is significant for this research which aims to understand the methods by which a composer can investigate the behaviours of a performer (RQ1). Here, performers must navigate their own "auto-mythology" between fixed materials and memories of previously unfixed behaviours, which I contend creates a unique and tangible relationship between the score and performer that impacts on the "liveness" of the performance.

The positionality of the performer is important here and might contribute to philosophical debate on what the body is and where it is located in postmodern readings of society. Samuel Wilson states different readings on the body in this context, first; 'there is not more single-minded certainty or consensus about what the body actually is…. Modernity is…the age of simultaneous inflationary overexposure and yet absence of consensus as to the embodied, material nature of the subject' (Braidotti, 2011, p. 192-193 in Wilson, 2017, p.142). Then, 'others emphasise the body's multiple nature – that it does not exist as such but rather lies in a multiplicity of performative utterances' (ibid.). Wilson then considers; 'in a time when it is unclear what constitutes the body, one may paradoxically locate the body through gestures of dislocation, whereby one poses an extended body beyond oneself –'out there' in the world – that one may find it again, and determine what a body now is' (ibid.).

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These 'gestures of dislocation' describe the mode of engagement that is needed to realise my music and the relationship a performer might have with my scores. They are akin to those Ferneyhough has described in his performance directions for *Unity Capsule*: 'the title is intended to suggest both a desire to integrate the concept of efficiency as applied to the relationship between the performer, notation and realisation more explicitly into the fabric of the material and its organisation than is perhaps customary' (Ferneyhough, 1979, in Wilson, 2017, p.143). Wilson posits that it is possible for music to contribute to knowledge on 'what sensible bodies are' (2017, p.142) and I believe the work in my portfolio contributes valuable knowledge to this discussion.

5.2. Living things, toxic air & cuticles

The final piece in this portfolio, *Living things, toxic air & cuticles* (hereafter *Living things*), was developed with CoMA Manchester, Ella Taylor, Amy Jolly, Darren Gallacher and Ben Evans over several months in 2023. This brought together my longest-term collaborators – CoMA Manchester (whom at this point I had directed for three years) and Amy – with Darren, Ben and Ella, whom I had worked with at the start of this research enquiry, but not since 2020. Although my practice with each of these individuals had developed in different directions, with different sentiments, relationships, hierarchies and labours, I conceived that I would bring all of these players together through my open score practice. Therefore, as with many other pieces in this portfolio, *Living things* was created through an iterative process where I relied on open scores to segment and direct the interactions I had with players, and where I documented the results of these interactions in order to make observations about the behaviour and identity of players. Ultimately, it was my intention to create a second open score that fixed these strategies for interaction within it, so that other ensembles could pick this up and recreate this piece without my having to be involved as editor. This meant that I needed to find ways in which performers could investigate their embodied relationship with their instrument or body without my input.

This project was undoubtedly part of my ongoing enquiry that used 'comfort' and 'discomfort' as stimuli to explore gestural behaviour and identity but in this project I wanted my collaborators to suggest other stimuli and participate in this part of the process. Until now I had largely retained control of this. In the first stage of this project, I wrote an open score for each Amy, Ella, Darren and Ben (see Figure 28 and Figure 29) that invited each of them to contribute their own 'behaviour words' to a palette of explorative stimuli. Each performer made these decisions within a one-to-one workshop I conducted with each of them, and I replaced my own words with their contributions before the next workshop (Amy's words became part of Ella's score, and so on). Unlike with House of Bedlam, the open scores I created for Amy, Ella, Darren and Ben also offered information about pitch and technique that the performers could develop their gestures from, if they wanted to. I had always worked through traditional WAM notation with Ella; and with each Darren, Ben and Amy we had often started with pitch or technical information then expanded outwards from this – I therefore gave this information as a choice within the open score. This was variously taken up by the four performers.

Set B, for Ella Taylor (internal dialogues)

I - Behaviour words

Perform any sound, gesture or action that:

- is vulnerable
- is uncomfortable
- is resistant
- is powerful
- is pure
- embodies exertion
- embodies movement
- ...(Ella defined 1)
- ...(Ella defined 2)
- ...(Ella defined 3)

Or, use the behaviour words to shape* gestures within the following parameters. Gestures can use long or short sounds, and several parameters can be combined to create a complex gesture.

*Shaping the gestures does not have to happen linearly. The information in each of the cells below can be used non-linearly too.

Perform behaviour words in any order as 10 seperate events in the following time brackets:

- 2 minutes
- 3 minutes
- 5 minutes

Figure 28: Page 3 of open score for Ella

Set D, for Ben Evans (internal dialogues)

I - Behaviour words

Using sustained activation only (e.g. bowed or scraped with pick/credit card), perform a sound, gesture or action that...

• is vulnerable
• is uncomfortable
• is resistant
• is pure
• is careful
• is present
• embodies movement
• ...(Ben defined 1)
• ...(Ben defined 2)
• ...(Ben defined 3)

You can use the behaviour words to shape* gestures within the following parameters. Gestures can use long or short sounds, and several parameters should be combined to create a complex gesture.

Perform behaviour words in any order as 10 seperate events in the following time brackets:

• 2 minutes
• 3 minutes
• 5 minutes

Figure 29: Page 3 of open score for Ben

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Where each performer used the score variously across these workshops, I participated variously, too. With Ella I was fairly passive, doing little to shape their contributions and simply answered questions they had about the technical information in the score. Amy and I fell into the relationship we had built over the previous three years – shaping sounds together in an excited back-and-forth, directing each others' attention toward different qualities in sound or technique. With Ben and Darren I first took on the role of passive listener, but in the second half of each workshop took on a more directorial role to guide different techniques that I was interested in them each exploring. In both cases, I was trying to encourage these players to move beyond techniques and modes of playing that were familiar and comfortable to them, and to explore techniques that were more unfamiliar to them. I contend that this encourages a deeper embodied engagement with the 'behaviour words' (e.g. uncomfortable, vulnerable, resistant) in the open score.

At the end of this first phase, I had recorded a huge array of material, documenting how each player engaged with the behaviour words in their score. Time and money allowing, I would have liked to retain a more non-hierarchical ensemble structure in the next phase and bring the soloists together again to explore how to combine and arrange these gestural materials into different textures and interactions. Instead, I carried out this process entirely alone, performing the recordings within my DAW in order to decide how players would interact (see Figure 30). I fixed these decisions for the next stage of the project, creating a new score by loosely transcribing the start of each gestural improvisation, so that players would have enough information to cite their previous contributions in the next rehearsal (within the texture and structure I had decided (see Figure 31)). This process also allowed me to imagine how CoMA might fit with the soloists' material (or vice versa). Having directed the group for three years by this point, I was intimately familiar with the improvisatory language the group rely on to blend the mixed ability collective of (in 2023) melodicas, flute, clarinets, trumpets, and bass guitar. I used this knowledge to develop an open score that would utilise this language, push it in new directions and enhance the piece that was developing between the soloists' contributions.
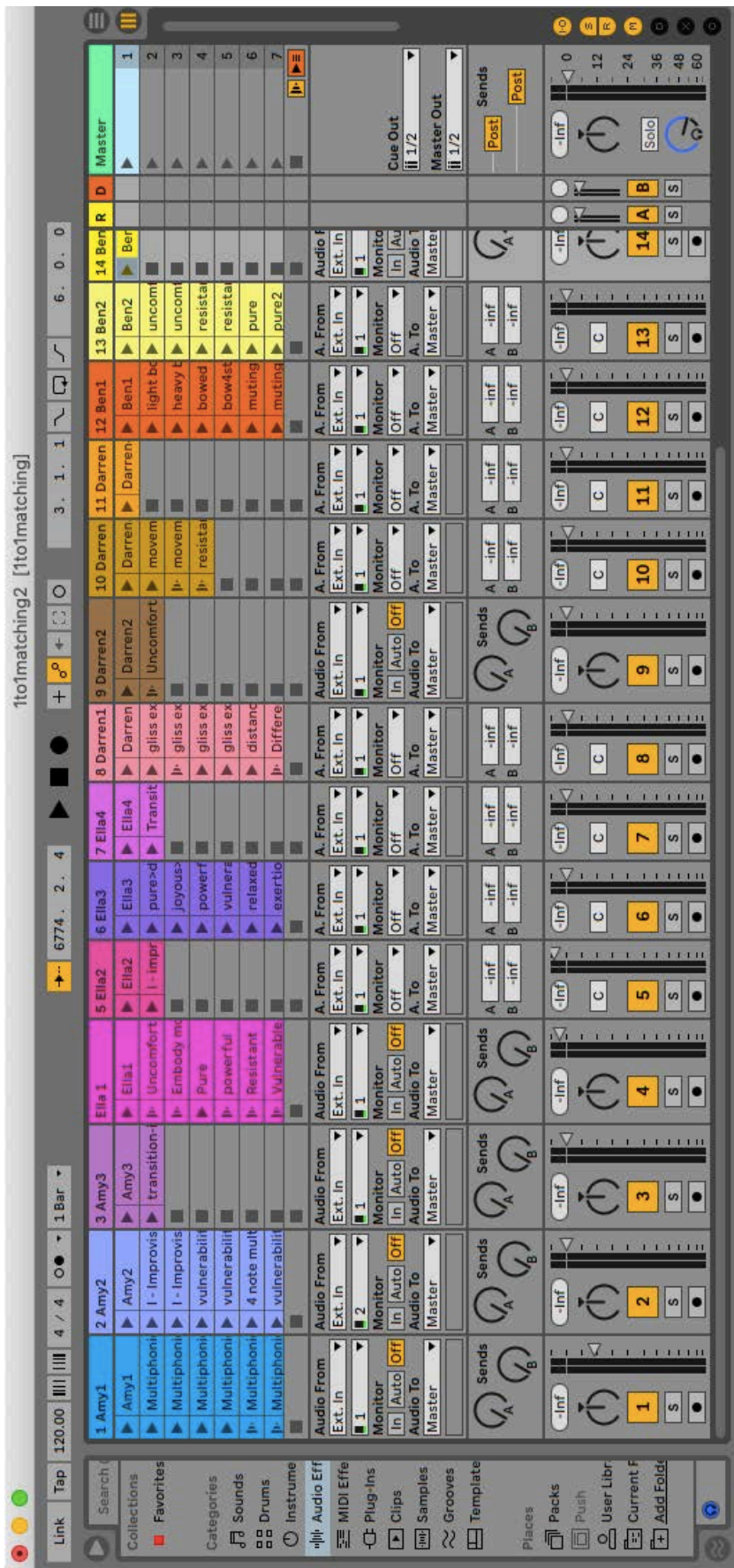
*Figure 30: A screenshot of the DAW file that I used to find new ensemble textures*

Figure 31: Page 4 of workshop score for June 2023

The final notation of *Living things* exists in two forms. *Living things, toxic air & cuticles i* is a set of parts for Ella, Darren, Amy and CoMA Manchester specifically. This documents the realisation that we created as an ensemble in 2023 through the process of the one-to-one sessions, and through dialogic rehearsals with CoMA Manchester which shaped the 'Mass' parts. *Living things, toxic air & cuticles ii* is a score and parts designed for other ensembles to use and details how to recreate the process of making this piece (see Appendix J). This document *fixes* my continuous and moving strategies for composition and collaboration and requires the ensemble (who might even use a Facilitator) to enter the reflective, dialogic and creative spaces I curated, and which are fixed in the score. Both versions contain moments for the ensemble to decide upon the meaning of the piece in much the same way as in *To find myself* – players contribute verbal commentary on the behaviours they have chosen to exhibit in the piece – but again, this happens within the textural and harmonic structures I have determined in advance. While in the latter version the ensemble decides upon the material they will use and the behaviour words they will use to elicit this, it is significant that this freer process still does not include making decisions over the interaction, structure or harmonic language within the piece.

Of course, it would have been possible to leave these decisions to the players – particularly in *Living things ii* for other ensembles, where restrictions on timing (and where time is needed to make these decisions as a group) and the financial implications of this are none of my concern. Previous concerns around the accessibility of my score (i.e. whether CoMA members could access the instructive language), and concerns around asking players to reflect on relations with their instrument, had led me to give players choices around *how* they engaged with the reflection. Again, this is arguably none of my concern in *Living things ii*, but I have kept these options here (see Figure 32). These characteristics, of determining the interactions between players, the harmonic and tonal world they inhabit, and of giving players perhaps superficial choices over how to engage with the score, are characteristic of many of my pieces. This is part of a wider observation about the

performance materials I give to players, which offer more information, and more options, than might be needed for this research enquiry.

Important: During the final performance, all players will use the Behaviour words determined above to shape their improvisations.

The soloists will use the Behaviour words to re-enact or cite their Improvisations from Part 1.

The Mass might use the words in three ways:
- as indicators for the rhythmic, harmonic, dynamic, timbral etc language of your material;
- as performance directions to impact the expressive or theatrical interpretation of your improvisation;
- to shape your sound and gesture (perhaps reflecting on, for example, what is an uncomfortable sound, or an impure sound?). This final option encourages you to think about extending the palette of your instrument beyond your ordinary use (think about what options are available to you e.g. new sounds from experimenting with your breath, tonguing, fingering (spectral/ reed groups), LH/ RH pressure, proximity to the bridge, RH mode of playing (strings) etc.

Figure 32: Extract from page ix of Living things…ii *(Appendix J)*

However, on this observation, I make two points. The first is that I very rarely assume performers will be equipped with the confidence and skillset to improvise freely without certain pitch or technical information. To engage with open scores that demand this requires a certain performance practice (that we have spent years fostering in CoMA Manchester). Further to this, I rarely assume that players will be happy to engage deeply in reflecting on sounds in terms of discomfort or concepts that are vulnerable in similar ways. This has led me to give players various options for engaging with my scores and these qualities – of giving various points of access, or of providing a scaffolding on which to be creative within. This is perhaps characteristic of my work as director for CoMA Manchester, or my work with high school pupils outside of this research. In all of these areas, I am driven by providing various entry points in order for individuals with different skillsets to engage with the task at hand.

The second is that, by providing scaffolding in these ways, I have been able to make observations about performer identity and behaviour that otherwise would have been missed. I developed knowledge about how individuals wanted to engage with the score (which I observed in this piece when performers chose how to use the behaviour words).[35] I also built knowledge about how performers responded to, and exhibited agency within, a space that is largely constructed for them – with all the implications this has for the power structures and norms holding this space intact. In *Living things i*, I was thrilled when players decided to use the behaviour words to reflect on their experience of performing the piece, at that moment. Their spoken improvisations described when they were uncomfortable, or felt safe, or felt powerful. This performance captured how performers were experiencing the constructed world of the piece, with all the interactions, and harmonic tensions fixed in time.

5.3. Discussion

Creating *Living things i*, like many other pieces across this research, was an iterative process which included (but was by no means exclusive to) exploring the different behaviours an individual can exhibit on their instrument, as determined by their experiential relationship to it. In many of my pieces, these explorations were segmented into different parts of the wider process, where each of these segmented interactions was supported with a score. Short of discussing these composer-score-performer interactions in terms of the hierarchical or non-hierarchical relationship they promoted (where even if a composer hands over all of the decision-making to the performer, I now contend that neither can escape from a systemically embedded hierarchy) the directional qualities in each of these segmented interactions were continuously in flux. For example, in the open scores I created with Amy, for *Lost in your whole world*, *Song for CoMA*, and *Living things* (where only the open score – not

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[35] I also observed this in *Lost in your whole world,* when players chose how to cite the behaviours they have previously exhibited – by reproducing these from memory, using a transcription, or some path using both.

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necessarily the material produced from it, was mine), players could exhibit behaviour that might complement, or run away from, my imagined expectations of their production in that space. Across my research, both scenarios were possible and this led to a huge diversification in the sonic and gestural languages heard in my music.

It remained important to me that players retained directional power in the open scores that guided them through a reflection of the sounds and gestures they produce on their instrument, and how they experience them. Reflection, or reflexivity, as a method for generating sound and gesture, is a crucial way in which the performers in this research have shaped the pieces we created, and is something that can be done as both an isolated, private task, voiced only through the instrument, or in a shared dialogue with me and other players. This has been a method where – even in projects when the iterative process has eventually moved away from a collaborative endeavour (arguably in any piece where I took on the role of editor) – segmented moments in the process were opened up to players.

The project with Amy is arguably the only one in this research where the iterative process of working together was "bi-directional" in enough of its stages for me to characterise it as wholly collaborative. This is in comparison to other pieces in my research which, although were collaborative (or bi-directional) in various stages of the process, became directional at *significant* moments in the process (e.g. when taking on the role of editor). Bi-directionality, to me, means engaging in a healthy back-and-forth in a workshop or rehearsal, or distributing creative decision-making across a composer-score-performer interaction (e.g. balancing any directional qualities in a score with decision-making space for the performer upon realisation of that score). This does not begin to answer how composers and performers can overcome systemic hierarchies, but begins to unpack how some of these power relations might be addressed.

For Amy and I, bi-directional interactions were largely possible when structuring our piece (and even setting this into notation) because we were both intimately familiar with the materials we had generated throughout the collaboration and therefore

could both suggest places to cite these in the final performance (either on the cello, through the live electronics – or later, on the flute). We made these decisions together in a workshop and only documented them later into a score. As composer-performers, or composer-improvisors in this space, we drew from the rich language of gestures we had developed and perfected throughout the course of our two-year process. Unlike in other pieces, the notation here served to document the identity we had constructed together, rather than constructing an architecture that Amy would have to navigate – which, as discussed previously had led to other layers of behaviour and identity being observable in the final performance.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

At the beginning of this thesis, I described the music I was writing before embarking on this research, including my approach to scoring, and how this was intertwined with the ways I worked with performers. I described my desire to make a change in the ways I approached collaboration, and move from thinking about compositional materials as afforded by an instrument, to materials as afforded by the unique personage of a performer (which I broadly defined within a holistic conception of their behaviour and identity, as I observed it within a creative collaboration). I began looking for methods that I could use as a composer, that would enable me to observe these qualities in the performers I worked with (RQ1) and how I could use this knowledge to construct identities for the stage (RQ2). In this final chapter and conclusion, I will trace how this research has transformed my practice (RQ5), evaluating the methodological success of this wide project. I will contextualise this transformation against the activities of other composers in the field working towards similar aims, making some final conclusions around collaboration between composers and performers (RQ3) and around my role as a composer-performer in workshops, in the score, and on stage (RQ4).[36]

As explored in Chapter 1, there are many composers who consciously or unconsciously "use" the unique identity or behaviour of performers as compositional materials in works. These glimpses of the unique people behind voices and instruments might be incorporated into a work to construct a story, or might intentionally or coincidentally be revealed to enhance the warmth, sadness, comedy or other expressive qualities in a piece of music. For some creative teams, the entire piece might be untetherable from those who made it. These works might require a particular voice, body (with certain strength and fitness) or story in order to convincingly accomplish their intended expression. My work has aimed to contribute to the field of composers who *knowingly* integrate the performer into their work,

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[36] My research questions are given in full on page 27.

attending to the qualities of a performer's unique personage as a central material within a compositional process (not as a biproduct of a performance).

Throughout this research, my methods have included configuring improvisation as an abstract space in which ephemeral behaviours – produced in the moment as a product of the performer's unconscious/ conscious navigation of norms and power structures, and their agency within this space – could be observed. Throughout this research I have referred to "behaviours" as any gestural action exhibited/performed by a player (in musical and non-musical spaces), but as this project has progressed, "performer behaviour" has come to specifically describe the detailed, thoughtful, reflexive and most significantly, intentional musical and verbal expressions contributed by my collaborators within dialogues about their relationships to performing (in musical and non-musical spaces). These expressions are contributed by performers who know I am observing and/or documenting them. I have found ways to intertwine these behaviours within fixed compositions through a variety of methods that have included developing an audiovisual strain within my work that draws from the documentation I made of these behaviours; or asking players to 'cite' or 're-enact' behaviours they previously performed; then *composing* with these now fixed materials. The later works – *On being watched* and *Living things* – follow this process to "fix" behaviours within the score, but then open this process up again so that performers can continue to shape the identity that is presented of them in a 'permanently unclosed' process (Haraway, 2016, p. 21).

6.1. "Fixing" relationships

As introduced in Chapters 2 and 3, I rigorously critiqued my position as a composer in the ways in which I handled and developed behaviour, or expressions of identity, particularly in dialogues with performers which included asking questions about

negative relationships to performing.[37] To me, many of the works in this portfolio are gentle, or tender, in their expression, which I contend has developed where I have conducted my interactions with performers (whether dialogically or through a score) with great care, sometimes cautiously. At various points in the project, this extended to becoming hyper-aware of the directional nature of my composer-performer relationships (which in shorter-term engagements, was contingent on a wide range of factors). The reflexive way in which I integrated a critique of this directionality, or tried to subvert this in my compositional acts (for example in *Lost in your whole world*, *Song for CoMA* and *On being watched*) has resulted in pieces that were entirely wrapped around the *relationship* that I experienced with each collaborator. This expounded my original aims which were to write pieces wrapped around the *behaviour* of individuals.

When I started this research, I had expected that the relationships I had with my collaborators would develop hugely over the course of the project and that this would be tangible in the pieces we produced together. At the time I conceived this was because I would have increased knowledge about my performers' identity, which would change the materials I was working with in composition (rather than the *relationships* themselves would become the compositional material). This is evident in *Conversation Piece*, as discussed in Chapter 3, and my work with CoMA Manchester, where the changing relationship I have had with the group is tangible across the pieces produced with them (*Song for CoMA* and *Living things*). *Song for CoMA* was written in early 2021, nine months after I began conducting the group and we were still meeting for rehearsals online during the pandemic. At this point, my role as Music Director was much more directive than it is now, where in 2023: the rehearsal process is extremely dialogic; nearly all members direct decisions over how to interpret scores and shape our music; and nearly every member of the group has recently brought a piece to develop for it. It is possible to observe the differences in

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[37] Composer Fernando Aoki Navarro has asked similar questions in her artistic practice: 'I studied the types of movement that my body would "prefer" [on the bass], which moves were easy, difficult, comfortable, uncomfortable, necessary, unexpected etc. (Aoki Navarro, 2019, pp. 6-7).

my relationship with the group when comparing *Song for CoMA* to *Living things*. In the former, I have (electronically) shaped the contributions of each member of the ensemble; the directive nature of my relationship to the group has bled into music I have composed for it but where this has made me uncomfortable, I have drawn attention to my positionality through the text in the piece. My intention for the latter piece was that I would become more removed from a directorial compositional process, and that players would make decisions at an individual and global level over the expression of the piece. This reflects the ways in which I am now positioned in the group as Music Director.

Living things, which handed much more of the decision making to the ensemble, was partly an exercise in trust. I also knew the group so well that I could predict the gestural behaviours they might draw from in their improvisations. Interestingly, the longest-term of my collaborations had resulted in a situation where escaping our normative but shared gestural language had become desirable to me. I contend that bringing Ella, Darren, Amy and Ben into the creative process was perhaps necessary to do this. By working with these soloists to develop gestural languages in advance of improvising with CoMA Manchester, each soloist effectively became a composer who brought new material into the group and forced it outside of its comfort zone – a beautiful moment when this happened during the first rehearsal. This was conceivably not something I could have achieved so effectively alone, where my compositional relationship with the group is completely intertwined with what I know they can and can't do, and how I might normally advise or shape material in any other improvisation. My compositional voice has become folded with that of mine as a group director and member. As improvisors with a shared language, we work with other composers all the time to get outside of this, and working with Ella, Darren, Amy and Ben was an extension of this. In many ways I find it strange that after years of aiming to reach a state of shared practice with performers, upon getting there I hoped to push us outside of this again. However, this drawing together and apart, of finding new ways to unravel then come together is extremely appealing to me, and something I had in fact been practicing subtly throughout this entire project.

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Developing "newness" within what had become a completely shared practice was thrilling and I often asked players to explore sounds and gestures that were entirely new to them – an inherently vulnerable experience for a performer, but one that added to the delicate aesthetic quality of many of the works in this portfolio. Composer Henrik Frisk reflects on 'amateurism' as a mode of engaging with music that has been lost in WAM alone, and cites Trevor Wishart to argue that the focus on the virtuoso engagement with a technical score has led to 'a kind of musical composition which is entirely divorced from any relationship to intuitive gestural experience' ((Wishart, 1985, p.35) in Frisk, 2017). My project sought to invert 'virtuosity' in many ways, where it was the personal and unique gestures observable in individuals, served by their intuitions and reactions to, or resistance to and intervention over, normative or provocative musical instructions and invitations (as embodied by performers or directed by composers) that I was interested in. This led me to move the creative enquiry away from the reliable, repeatable techniques embodied within a trained performer, and instead nurture ephemeral qualities within performer improvisation (discussed in Chapter 2).

6.2. Unfixing "the work"

Over the course of this research, my conception of the ontology of a piece of music has expanded significantly – from something I considered as existing exclusively within demarcated objects (demarcated by the physicality of a score or single performance), to existing more ephemerally, spanning across time, across the individuals and instruments involved in making it. I consider that the piece exists within a dialogue between the musicians, audiences, instruments and scores involved in its production. The piece is produced in moments of performance when musicians use their "language" (musical or otherwise) to accomplish their expressive

intentions within this dialogue. [38] In my body of work, I consider each of the interviews I filmed with Amy and Darren, each of the videos I made for Jenni (or she made for me), each of the poems I wrote for *as in mirrors* as much a part of the piece as any final performance – these were all instances where we performed (acted out) moments within one on-going dialogue (to each other, through speech, through writing, through improvisation).

Conceiving of music in this way paints the collaborative process as a seamless, unbroken weave, where the creative products produced from within it are borne from folds of conversation, gathered around certain interest points. However, this picture hides the "breaks" and "ruptures" I experienced within this project and with my collaborators, in particular when the pieces produced at the end of the project were not part of one unified conversation. This happened with House of Bedlam, where after an extremely fruitful first workshop using the open scores, I composed/constructed *Lost in your whole world* (as discussed in Chapter 4), a process that severed the dialogue I had begun with players, and begun a new one (thus producing a new piece). When the ensemble came to prepare my final score, the audience-performer-score-composer dialogue was nearly unrecognisable from our previous interactions and therefore although *Lost in your whole world* was the end result of a cumulative process, our initial dialogue (and the beginning of our shared piece) was abandoned. While this led to new dialogues, this was an inherently uncollaborative act, which stands out to me in comparison to the similar decisions taken collectively in my other projects.

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[38] Here, I invoke J.L. Austin's first theorisation of the performative utterance – where language can be used 'not to describe my doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it' (1962, p. 6). I posit that music itself can be performative, and in a passage borrowed from Andrew Chung, whose dissertation is concerned with 'music's communicative actions and efficacies (rather than in material consequences and psychological, affective, emotional, or cognitive effects)' (2019, p. 39): 'what would it mean to say that in making music we are using it to *do things?* And how, in *doing things* does music mean?' (ibid.).

On the surface, similar breaks can be observed within *Conversation Piece* – where the videos that I composed with were created within one on-going dialogue with the Jenni, and the final score seemingly proposed another, using different modes of expression and a curated narrative that smoothed over the more difficult moments in our dialogue.[39] However, in these instances, Jenni was deeply informed of, and had helped me to shape, this dialogic transformation. This break was expected within our dialogue and consequently the piece was transformed, rather than being a completely different conception altogether.

In many ways, these breaks (however minor) also demarcate how ownership is formulated in this research project. If the piece is produced in *any* moment of performance when musicians use their language (musical or otherwise) to accomplish their expressive intentions within the ongoing dialogue, then many materials in this research can be ascribed shared ownership, produced within or between our interactions. However, when a break occurs and a piece is made by one person in the absence of shared decision making, this shared ownership is potentially changed into something more singular.

These breaks are useful moments to observe how the methods used and interrogated through this research have transformed the practices of collaborative participants (RQ5). In this thesis I have often done this by talking about the pieces I have created from shared dialogues (including my own breaks or ruptures from the shared dialogue, as well as pieces made from within one unified dialogue), but it is interesting to reflect on this in a project where minor breaks and ruptures were (and

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[39] *Conversation Piece* and *Flect* share a tendency to present the collaborative relationship within a neat and tidy package that smooth over the tricker moments in the collaboration. Unlike *Song for CoMA*, *Lost in your whole world* and *On being watched* (which present the relationship through a critical lens) these pieces 'invok[e] a sense of wholesomeness and nostalgia, albeit for a past never experienced, a more perfect past' and present an empathetic world formed through 'niceness' and care to the audience (Whyman, 2014, n.p.).

continue to be) extremely frequent, and where my collaborative partners initiated these breaks.

It is possible to reflect on the ways that the 'space of practice' I have created with CoMA Manchester members has possibly transformed the practices of our members, observed here when there is a break in our shared dialogue and members develop their own pieces and scores for the group. While the methods of our shared practice are much harder to capture than in the examples I have given with Amy or Jenni (see Chapters 3 and 5) where as they are largely amorphous (we we meet every two weeks and look at lots of different music together) and are constantly impacted where membership changes, they are structured in two significant ways. This includes the dialogic and co-directional culture with which we create music together, and the familiarity we have with each other's own relationship to their instrument (impacting how we support each other verbally and musically).

It is perhaps inevitable that when our own members write for the group, they maintain this space of practice within their own notation and facilitation of the piece. Often though, this extends when these composers invite the group to direct and shape the gestural language of the piece itself too. These invitations often come in the form of open scores (rather than fixed notation) and leave room for the aesthetic world we have created as a group over four years to emerge through group decision making, collective dialogue, and musical conversation that includes some gestural languages we have previously developed together (or are familiar with in each other's playing).[40] Currently, I observe this aesthetic world as one that is playfully theatrical (conceivably held within particular personalities of the group and developed through rehearsing pieces including Jennifer Walshe's *Zusammen i* (2014), or Uri Agnon's *MARCH* (2023), or my own *Song for CoMA*) and at the same time possessing an unadorned tranquillity (developed through rehearsing pieces including

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[40] I refer to 'open scores' here as I described them in 3.3.1, p.70. This is distinguished from the 'open scoring' approach defined on the Contemporary Music for All webpages, see Contemporary Music for All (n.d.).

Amber Priestley's *We can't find our piano* (2015), James Saunders *on bare trees* (2014*), or my *Living Things*)*. It has been a highlight of directing the group to see the ways that (as I believe) our members have captured or invited these CoMA Manchester qualities in their own pieces and transformed them within their own aesthetic tendencies and compositional methods to create extremely effective, and affecting, new pieces.[41] This has perhaps been most rewarding to observe when these have been the first pieces some members have composed at all (their "Opus 1").

It is not possible to directly take a measurement on the ways the methods and practices in this research (and embodied within my approach to directing/ facilitating the group) have transformed the practices of CoMA members, including because collecting and including composer reflections has been beyond the scope of this written thesis; all of this transformation is completely reciprocal and intertwined; and transformation is also impacted by the other activities the members undertake in their practice outside of the arguably limited contact time we share in CoMA Manchester. Despite this, I am confident of the transformation we have undergone as a group, and of how this is maintained, shaped and developed when members write pieces for us. I celebrate the various new pieces that have been composed through, for and out of our shared practice and aesthetic.

These observations are in no way made to argue that CoMA Manchester has any claim over the ownership of these pieces. In fact, the ruptures from our shared dialogue are almost always big enough to clearly demarcate the ownership of these pieces (and produced when composers singularly transform our shared practice with their own aesthetic tendencies and compositional methods). However, the complex nature of ascribing ownership, which is expressed throughout these last paragraphs as something which can be both stretched across ongoing dialogues and creative

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[41] This includes recent pieces by members Sam Longbottom, Natalie Summers and Jane Fletcher, in which I observed these qualities were present in our most recent concert 'Of a world that travels' (March 2024), during which these pieces were performed.

acts, but can break or rupture when composers leave this shared dialogue to make singular decisions, is played out in CoMA Manchester (and in ensembles everywhere and music-making all over the world). Ownership is not something easily bifurcated as singular or shared but is a complex weave that continuously transforms. Ultimately, and certainly in this project, ownership (seen in the names given on my scores) is something negotiated between myself and my collaborators as we have untangled this complex weave together (or indeed made every effort to avoid it rupturing).

6.3. "Fixing" the score

Although no two final scores in this project look or function in the same way, connections exist in the ways I have curated decision-making processes for performers, often a convoluted process. As discussed in Chapter 5, all of my scores (in their final form, and their transient open forms) provide a number of routes in which the performer might engage with the piece. This has been another method by which I have observed performer behaviour, but is not something I revealed to the audience. Many of my scores give a surplus of information to performers and I made this decision so that players could choose routes into the piece that suited them (for me this was an extension of the interactions I have tried to foster with my collaborators, particularly in my aims to break down traditional composer-performer hierarchies). Much of this information will simply be reviewed and then discarded by an individual player for a performance, as will the surplus of material often created from realising the score (and which doesn't make it past the editing/ arranging process). However, I contend this process, causing a surplus, crucially impacted upon how the performer might sincerely and earnestly engage with the reflection I wanted them to achieve.

Before I started this research, my compositional language had been described by others as having 'complexist' elements and overloading the performer with information was something I crafted in my work. It is hard to pin down my language

at all now, embodied as it is within the various collaborations I have chartered, but I contend that this "overloading" or providing a "surplus" of information remains a part of my score-work (although engaging with technicity in a changed way). While Ferneyhough employs technicity and virtuosity in completely different ways to me, he also arguably uses a surplus of information to focus similar questions about performer identity within his score-work. He says about his piece *Unity Capsule*:

> '[this] is a work, which encounters its own reality on the boundary between worlds. As in Cassandra's Dream Song (1970) the role of the performer is to redraw each boundary anew in terms of his own boundaries. Theodor Adorno (in a different context) once formulated the concept of 'musical prose'. In applying the term in a new definition to the significance of this particular piece I would like to direct the attention of the listener to the projection of a very specific processual methodology onto the 'inside' of the instrument/performer relationship in and through which the flute is made to 'speak' and, in speaking, to mediate between worlds in the creation of an auto-mythology'. (Ferneyhough (1976) in Vanoeveren (2016, p. 72)).

Although I invite my performers to draw different boundaries to those offered by Ferneyhough and other New Complexists, I contend that like them, my notation requires the performer to find ways of accessing and building the piece from its labyrinth of notational layers. This was done so that performers would sincerely engage with processes of reflection, reflexion and identity formation (as defined by them). In words borrowed from New Complexist composer Mahnkopf, my scores seek to 'deconstruct' (2004, p.9) performance practice and understand the performing body virtually, as having the potential for 'multi-levelled… physicality which… present[s] not the mere rhythmic outlines of gestures, but dense, complexly altered and fully physical gestures' (ibid., p. 10). Of course, my works settle within compositional spaces that call for a 'multisensory, instead of a merely auditory perception' (Voithofer, 2020, p. 6) and where 'music… is no longer autonomous, it is

interdependent with the other arts [for example theatre, film, video and literature] and defiantly so' (ibid., p.7).

6.4. "Unfixing" me

As discussed throughout this thesis, my position as a composer and performer, as a Music Director and scoremaker has transformed hugely across this research. At various points, I have retained more control than I expected to in this project framed by composer-performer collaboration (particularly in the shorter-term projects discussed in Chapter 4), but found ways to lessen the impact of traditional hierarchical structures in longer-term relationships as discussed in Chapter 5. In particular, Amy Jolly and I found ways to traverse hierarchical structures by both participating as improvisors, directors, filmmakers, and "subjects" throughout the creative process. We broke down boundaries between composer and performer, sharing decisions over which materials would become fixed (in audiovisual documentation, scores and performances) and which materials would remain under development in an unclosed, ongoing process of improvisatory development. This fluid positionality was achieved within various interactions in other parts of this research, for example with Darren Gallacher, or in the video-making process with Jenni Hogan. These were freeing moments, where my own role was flexible and our identities within the collaboration itself were able to be defined together.

In her 2016 manifesto-like Borealis entry, Jennifer Walshe discusses that in the New Discipline, composers take on the role of an auteur when they use the 'tools of the director or choreographer to bear on compositional problems, on problems of musical performance' (2016, p.2) – conjuring an image of an individual who uses extreme precision in their prescription of the bodies and behaviours of those they are directing on stage. In some projects across this research, this describes my position – perhaps most pertinent when I took on the role of audiovisual editor alone. Walshe though, and perhaps deliberately, is non-specific about what she means by the term 'auteur' or exactly what 'compositional problems, or the problems of

musical performance' might refer to. This has led me to critique this term in relation to my own work, in order to further critique my own positionality across this research.

As suggested by Walshe, 'auteur' might refer to the role a composer adopts in order to develop 'new compositional or performative tools' (2016, p.2). Equally, as suggested by film critic Andrew Sarris, 'auteur' might refer to the 'distinguishable personality of the director as a criterion of value… the way a film [or in this case the music] looks and moves should have some relationship to the way a director thinks and feels' (Sarris, 2008, p.43). In Walshe's scores, this might be apparent from the conversational manner and colloquial tone she uses in her text – some of which might be similarly readable in my scores. However, across my research this is perhaps most pertinent where I have let my own relationship with the flute (and the enquiry I created around this) bleed into my collaborations and scores at every level. This included the gestural language I developed through this personal enquiry and the ways in which I cautiously proceeded with probing similar topics with my collaborators. The role of 'auteur' in this research has not simply been about control, but about a transformation in my own practice that has influenced my entire aesthetic.

Since *as in mirrors,* this entire project can conceivably be read as a personal enquiry that I embarked on to *re-access* the creative space I had found in that first piece. This had been the furthest I had "pushed" conceptions of identity, and the furthest I had "pushed" any collaborator (which in this instance was myself) out of their comfort zone. My notions of authenticity, and my own identity, were challenged in this piece and to this day, I do not know how to relate to the identity that I constructed for myself in that piece.

This sense of disorientation is perhaps borne from the entanglement of theatrical, or acted, behaviour in this piece, and behaviours that were more organic (and only "fixed" where I had filmed my time in the mirrored studio). "Authentic" identity is hard to read in this context, where 'the character is defined by what is brought forth

by the sum of performative acts which in turn constitute the actors' own physicality' and 'no dramatic character exists beyond individual physicalities of the actors' and 'the category of the dramatic character has not become obsolete: it only underwent… redefinition' (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p. 86). In other words, claiming that there *are* boundaries between 'acted' and 'organic' behaviours is non-sensical.

Despite not knowing how to relate to my own identity in this work, it has been thrilling to explore my limits within the creative spaces of this project and to try on different versions of myself (which I experienced most strongly in *as in mirrors*, *Lost in your whole world*, and *On being watched*). This work has highlighted the empowering act of constructing performance identities, and future work might investigate the applicability of my methodologies in projects that target creative participation for improving wellbeing and selfhood. Donna Haraway asks 'what kind of politics could embrace partial, contradictory, permanently unclosed constructions of personal and collective selves and still be faithful, effective – and, ironically, socialist-feminist?' (Haraway, 2016, p. 21). I contend my collaborative and compositional practice – which critically curates improvisatory spaces for performers to explore newness, ephemerality, vulnerability, politics and power, while temporarily constructing a narrative identity – begins to offer that space.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Candidate 3 score

Appendix B

Candidate 3 recording

Appendix C

Song for CoMA individual videos and tutti realisations

Appendix D

Original score for Sarah Watts

Appendix E

Open score for House of Bedlam

Appendix F

House of Bedlam selected workshop recordings

Appendix G

Selection of Bonjour Claude performance materials

Appendix H

'The Dirtying Intention' transcript score

Appendix I

'The Dirtying Intention' recording (April 2023, Café Oto, London)

Appendix J

'Living things, toxic air & cuticles ii' – legacy score