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**Indices of Style in Free Jazz: Towards an Intersubjective
Performance Framework**

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Abstract

Drawing on Keith Sawyer's 2003 model of creativity that theorises the way musicians draw on their influences to generate content during the performance of improvised music, this project analyses the *intersubjectivity* of a group of musicians. A referentialist framework entitled *indices of style* is developed, drawing on the concepts of *indexicality* as identified in Peirce's (1935) semiotic theory and *emergence* as described in Mead's (1939) social behaviourist theory. The 'indices of style' framework enables the identification of the stylistic characteristics of the embodied music. The study focuses on my work with *Omelette*, a collective of improvising jazz musicians. After a series of targeted pre-performance exercises that aimed to isolate various performance mechanisms, a folio of three examples of our work are analysed in terms of how (or if) intersubjectivity was developed. By adopting a referentialist structure that draws on both analytical and interpretative approaches, with each of the works analysed subjectively in ethnographic accounts, it provides insight into the processes of free improvised music as dynamically intersubjective.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Improvising music, it appears, is best envisioned as an artistic forum rather than an artistic form; a social and sonic space in which to explore various cooperative and conflicting interactive strategies. - David Borgo (2005).

1.1 Overview

This research project examines an approach to free jazz performance, whereby communication between performers is based on stylistic indices evident in the music. This research investigates three key interrelated concepts: indexicality, emergence, and intersubjectivity, and draws from R. Keith Sawyer's (2003) model of group creativity for improvising groups. The research tests for these concepts' existence and effect via a mixed-method research methodology consisting of research-led, practice-led and ethnographic methods. As a performer and researcher, the analysis situates me as the central listener from which my perspectives will be drawn. I do not propose to speak on behalf of my co-performers or assume my observations mirror their intentions but instead draw conclusions from extensive social and musical interactions.

As in any creative social context, free jazz improvisation requires a comprehensive system of processes to maintain its productivity, some of which are genre-specific while others are universal. Genre-specificity includes the accommodation of stylistic characteristics in improvised content. I argue that in signifying a style of music through improvised content, particular sources are implied from which additional improvised content can be generated. I refer to these musical signals as 'indices of style.' This research will explicate how indices of style incorporate indexicality, emergence, and intersubjectivity in the context of free jazz improvisation. I argue that these three concepts, together informing indices of style, govern my free improvisation approach.

Arguably, free jazz performance has largely eschewed fixed structures or predefined idiomatic syntax. Instead, the interplay between performers responds to musical stimuli created in the moment of performance. As such, the inherent subjective nature of

meaning in free jazz music challenges communication in this context. For practitioners, the collaborative experience and challenge of the unknown are, at times, exhilarating and inspires the performance. However, free jazz is a dynamic social context in which individual musicians interact to create a common product. The creation of the aforementioned common product signals the end of the context.

While each of the three concepts framing this research has been applied to various disciplines, this study examines how they separately and collectively contribute to a performance framework towards free jazz improvisation. Instances drawn from a folio of works recorded on two CDs created over five years accompany the exegesis and illustrate each point. The concepts refer to and build on existing scholarship, and the musical instances used to exemplify them are drawn from two particular contexts, related primarily through the fact that they are both recordings of a group in which I perform. Although, in both cases, the musicians were free to (indeed, encouraged to) contribute their ideas, the musical context-setting was organised primarily by myself. Notably, the two recordings differ in physical setting and personnel, which provides the opportunity for indices of style to be rigorously scrutinised. The first CD, *On This Day* (Omelette, 2013), is a studio recording featuring myself (trombone), Ronny Ferella (drum set, percussion), Stephen Magnusson (electric guitar, effects), and Mark Shepherd (acoustic bass). The second CD, *Live at the JazzLab* (Omelette, 2017), is a live recording featuring myself (trombone), Ronny Fenella (drum set, percussion), Luke Howard (piano), and Javier Fredes (percussion). Both recordings include numerous free improvisations. The selected folio works for analysis are listed below.

Recording Title	<i>Esteban</i>
Date	December 19 th , 2013
Recording URL Link	Click here
Location	Pughouse Studios, Melbourne
Live or studio recording	Studio
Edits	Mixed and mastered at Pughouse studios
Preparation	Four monthly sessions of improvisation exercises
Take Number	1/1
Performers	Mark Shepherd (bass), Stephen Magnusson (guitar), Ronny Ferella (drums), Jordan Murray (trombone)

Recording Title	<i>Doxa</i>
Date	September 5 th , 2017
Recording URL Link	Click here (also video link here)
Location	Jazz Lab jazz club, Melbourne
Live or studio recording	Live recording
Edits	Mixed and mastered by Phillip Rex
Preparation	Four monthly sessions of improvisation exercises
Take Number	1/1
Performers	Javier Fredes (percussion), Luke Howard (piano), Ronny Ferella (drums), Jordan Murray (trombone)

Recording Title	<i>One for Four</i>
Date	December 19 th , 2013
Recording URL Link	Click here
Location	Pughouse Studios, Melbourne
Live or studio recording	Studio recording
Edits	Mixed and mastered at Pughouse studios
Preparation	Four monthly sessions of improvisation exercises
Take Number	1/1
Performers	Mark Shepherd (bass), Stephen Magnusson (guitar), Ronny Ferella (drums), Jordan Murray (trombone)

Figure 1. List of folio works and production notes

Furthermore, this study foregrounds instances where the concepts of indexicality, emergence, and intersubjectivity interactively contribute to the development of musical ideas proposed by individual musicians, hypothesising that the framework of an improvised performance provides a generative core to the music. This exegesis examines

how 'indices of style' are used in facilitating free jazz improvisation by analysing the effect of improvisatory exercises on the intersubjectivity of the improvisatory process as indicated by two particular aspects: emergence and indexicality.

Research-led practice and practice-led research are the principal methodologies engaged in this project. Research-led practice includes studying theories underpinning concepts applied to this research that has led to my concept of 'indices of style' and thus applied to my practice. Resultantly, my practice observations inform a theoretical framework that underscores the creation and execution of a series of improvisation exercises. In turn, these improvisation exercises examine the concept of indices of style by adopting constraints that reveal the participants' idiosyncratic traits and predispositions. Consequently, such attributes have informed an intersubjective knowledge base that is realized in performance and exhibited in the folio of recordings.

To effectively communicate and document my findings, the methodology also adopts first-person ethnographic accounts of my free jazz performance with *Omelette*. The subsequent analysis of these accounts illustrates the interconnection of indexicality, emergence, and intersubjectivity as articulated through style indices.

1.2 Definition of Terms

The key terms used in this research require a clear definition, as the meaning of some terms can change between knowledge domains. Clarity is essential, where terminology is more generally associated with disciplines other than jazz music.

1.2.1 Improvisation, Free Jazz and Free Improvisation

Ernst Ferrand's definition of improvisation as "the creation of music in the course of performance" (Ferrand, 1956: 76) has been one of the most recognised in academia. Since Ferrand, definitions of improvisation have emphasised either a product-focused approach (resulting in a final object or outcome) or an approach more oriented towards the improvisation process. Paul Berliner distinguishes process-oriented improvisation from product-focused improvisation in the following statement:

When players use improvisation as a noun, referring to improvisation as artistic products, they typically focus on the products' precise relationship to the original models that inspired them. When artists use improvisation as a verb, however, they focus not only on the degree to which old models are transformed and new ideas created but on the dynamic conditions and precise process underlying their transformation and creation. (Berliner, 1994: 12)

Following Berliner's delineation, Bruno Nettl's (1974) ethnomusicological perspective of improvisation emphasises a product-focused approach within particular cultures, where the amount of improvisation can vary depending on its independence from a given musical model reflective of the culture (1974: 54). Within these models, improvisers collectively reproduce and rearrange various 'building blocks' or 'formulas' in accordance with genre specifications. Alternatively, Willi Apel's (1969: 404) definition of improvisation as "the art of performing music spontaneously without the aid of manuscript, sketches or memory" takes a process-oriented position in its suggested distancing from preconceived materials. Regarding a definition of free jazz, both Nettl's and Apel's definitions of improvisation could speak to the various product or process-based approaches that fall under the categorisation of free jazz. Questions arise as to what is 'free' in free jazz and how it influences the making of music? The earliest

credited recorded free jazz improvisations by pianist Lennie Tristano and later saxophonist Ornette Coleman are renowned for the abandonment of harmonic structure during improvisation. However, upon closer examination, both examples feature preconceived elements. Therefore, for music to be entirely free, Onsman and Burke point out that "it becomes difficult to argue that it is jazz, and if music is recognizable as jazz, it cannot be entirely free" (2019; 6). Critical to this research project is the concept of recognizing musical style to inform the improvisation process in a performance format in which freedom arises from an absence of preconceived materials. As such, "freedom lies, first and foremost, in the opportunity to make a conscious choice from boundless material." (Jost, 1994: 83 cited in Onsman and Burke (2019; 9). Such choices are made mainly in the context of performance and in free jazz are,

delivered with a 'jazz sensibility': a loose set of defining characteristics that, while not universally or strictly adhered to, gives it an overall common identity. The set includes as basic identifiers:

- Transgression of predetermined harmony and form structures
- Use of overtones, microtones, multi-phonics and clustered tones
- Transgression of regular tempos, pulse, predetermined phrasing and meter
- Abandonment of the assumption that the roles of the musicians and structures of the music are fixed
- Preference for in-the-moment improvisation and experimentation (Onsman and Burke 2019; 10)

A jazz sensibility in which Onsman and Burke's (2019) identifiers are presented is characterized and identified through what guitarist Derek Bailey (1992) refers to as 'idiomatic' practices. While idiosyncratic jazz phrasing, harmony, rhythm, melody, and instrumentation characterize the jazz genre, the "notion of a jazz sensibility" operates "as a musical function rather than an exclusionary characteristic" (Burke and Onsman, 2019;

38). Alternatively, free jazz can be distinguished from free improvisation through what Bailey (1992) refers to as ‘non-idiomatic’ practices in free improvisation. In avoiding stylistic reference, free improvisation is a method rather than a genre. This research aligns its view of free jazz with Onsman and Burke’s (2019) notion of a free jazz sensibility “where “free” refers to a freedom to move in any direction that has the capacity to fulfil the ambitions of the musician and “jazz sensibility” refers to the direction from whence it came and what it brings with it (or has chosen to discard)” (Onsman and Burke, 2019; 45). Furthermore, vital to the music-making process in this research project is that musical style embodied within a free jazz sensibility is intentionally translated by the musician into the music being created so it can be recognized and responded to. Rather than seen as formless, Omelette approach the improvisatory process as form-making, "moving beyond matters of expressive detail to matters of collective structure” (Borgo, 2002, 167). Perhaps best articulating my approach to free jazz with Omelette is by musician Ann Farber who states:

Our aim is to play together with the greatest possible freedom – which, far from meaning without constraint, actually means to play together with the sufficient skill and communication to be able to select proper constraints in the course of the piece, rather than being dependent on precisely chosen ones (Borgo, 2002; 167).

A key component in guiding my selection of constraints that, in turn, govern my improvisatory choices is the concept of indexicality. Indexicality underpins my conception of musical style and provides materials that inform my improvisation in relation to the moment of performance rather than preconceived notions.

1.2.2 Indexicality

Indexicality originates from the semiotic theories of philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1934). Semiotics is the study of signs and the "nature and fundamental varieties of possible semiosis" (Peirce, 1934: 488). According to Peirce, semiosis is "an action, an influence which is, or involves, a cooperation of three subjects, such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant" (1934: 484). These subjects are not human objects but instead "abstract semiotic entities" unaffected by "concrete communicative behavior" (see Umberto Eco, 1979: 15). According to Peirce, a sign is "something which stands to somebody for something in some respects or capacity" (1934: 228). A sign can stand for something else to somebody only because an interpretant mediates this 'standing-for' relation. Philosopher and semiotician Umberto Eco (1979) concurs with Peirce's thinking of the interpretant "as a psychological event in the mind of a possible interpreter" (1979: 15). Similarly, violinist and music theorist Naomi Cumming defines the interpretant as a thinking that distinguishes between the information communicated by the sign and how it is understood (Cumming, 2000: 74). Therefore, Eco defines a sign "as everything that, on the grounds of a previously established social convention, can be taken as something standing for something else" (1979: 16). Eco's mentions of "previously established social conventions" highlight the reliance on intersubjectivity underscoring communication in this context, which will be elaborated later. While Peirce's trichotomy of sign-object-interpretant does not require a human emitter, "the human addressee in the methodological (and not the empirical) guarantee of the existence of a signification, that is of a sign-function established by a code" (1979: 16). Again, Eco's notion of communication in an abstract context supported by "code" signifies a required intersubjectivity to exist.

Peirce's sign categories include three sign types; index, symbol, and icon (Cumming, 2000: 75). The defining feature of the index, upon what indexicality is based, is that it 'points' to the object it signifies through a causal relationship established through context (Coker, 1972: 90). The most common example of an indexical relationship is 'smoke equals fire' (Cumming, 2000: 75). Similarly, a siren demands one's attention due to the associated danger established through social conventions. Additionally, the ability to distinguish between the siren of police, fire, ambulance, or various evacuation sirens highlights the variation in meanings associated with each. In this regard, and pertinent to the concept of indices of style (that I acknowledge biases my perspective and stylistic preconception), the sound of a distorted electric guitar, at the initial semiosis, signifies the guitar as the object from which the sound is emitted via the interpretant. Based on Eco's (1979) notion of coded social conventions, a further level of semiosis permits interpretation of the distorted guitar sound as rock; and to the aficionado, perhaps even a sub-genre of rock signified by the type of distortion or tone associated with a particular practitioner such as Hendrix or Van Halen. Interpretation is based on what Eco refers to as a sub-code, resulting from a more stable denotational coding convention that produces a secondary connotative sign-function (Eco 1979: 56).

However, hearing a distorted guitar sound primarily as a connotation of rock and not merely a distorted guitar sound is explained by Eco (1979: 56) when he states,

So the difference between denotation and connotations is only due to a coding convention irrespective of the fact that connotations are frequently less stable than denotations: the stability concerns the force and duration of the coding convention but once the convention has been established, the connotation is the stable function of the sign-function of which the underlying function is another sign-function.

This concept of signs and their embodied meanings has been applied to linguistics and elaborated through the writings of Jakobson (1960; 1971), Keenan (1971), Levinson (1983), and Silverstein (1976, 1979, 1984, 1993). Sawyer's application of this linguistic analogy of indexicality to his group creativity model for improvisers has provided the basis for the theoretical foundations of the concept of indices of style. While conceptually challenging, the following linguistic theory is important in underscoring its relationship to musical style interpretation and how style interpretation facilitates communication within improvised music. As such, musical correlations will be intertwined with this theory to illustrate the relationship. The following will also define key terms that will clarify the analysis in Chapter Four.

In linguistics, the branch of pragmatics sees the use of deictics; expressions that only make sense in the context of their use. For example, the personal pronoun 'you' only makes sense in the company of those to which the word is directed. To further this concept, the tone or pitch in which the pronoun 'you' is articulated can indicate the person (object) of reference has been identified as 'you' and thus are themselves indexical of the pronoun. Linguist Michael Silverstein (1976: 36, 42) refers to this phenomenon as 'indexical presupposition.' Applying this concept to a musical context, the distorted sound quality(sign) of a guitar, representative of the tonal (timbral) form of the above pronoun example, presupposes the rock style's signification by the distorted sound quality itself being indexical of rock music. While this theory, via linguistic analogy, has so far illustrated that sounds are interpreted through coded social conventions that, in turn, inform presuppositions, it also proposes how meanings beyond the denotational elements of a sign are manifested.

The personal pronoun 'you' is understood through its denotation of the person of reference within the context of its application. Alternatively, some pronouns, such as mister or master, can presuppose the relationship between the speaker and addressee and thus encourage a conversational style that, in turn, constrains the speaker in order for communication to proceed within the social conventions of the context. As such, stylistic constraints resulting from presuppositions usually encourage speakers to draw upon connotational aspects to expand on matters pertaining to the conversation beyond the denotational level to further the conversation. In drawing upon connotational aspects to develop the conversation, a future direction is proposed, which Silverstein referred to as indexical entailment (Silverstein, 1976; 1993).

In music, an improvisation that exhibits a classical sensibility reflects the participants' indexical presuppositions of classical music. This index establishes a potential future stylistic context; thus, improvised content to follow could be considered entailing of the index. As such, indexical presuppositions pertaining to the classical style constrain improvisers if remaining coherent with the classical context; however, they may also encourage improvisers to draw upon connotational aspects to create new content. Bailey (1992) acknowledges a similar 'forward-looking imagination which will prepare for later possibilities' while mainly concerned with the moment' (Bailey, 1992: 111). Similarly, musicologist and improviser Edward Sarath highlights the temporal awareness of improvisers when he states that the improviser "must be aware of the associated reflexivity when drawing upon his or her repertoire of pre-learned material and its relationship to the moment, whilst taking into account past activity and future projections" (Sarath, 1996: 8).

Furthermore, adding character and mood to a musical style via timbral manipulation looks at the concept of affect indices, a sub-branch of non-referential indices, that explores the encoding of emotions in speech. Non-referential indices are labelled as such due to their inability to refer at a semantic level; however, they still contribute to context. They encode speech with variations that serve to imbue dialogue with several levels of pragmatic meaning earning the label 'metapragmatics' (Silverstein, 1976). Affect indices, a type of non-referential index, involve the encoding of speech events with the speaker's emotions (Besnier, 1990) and, like personal pronouns, recognisable through indexical presuppositions. In applying the concept of affect indices to music, variations in timbre, articulation, and dynamics combined with harmonic and melodic content can be interpreted as affect indices that communicate particular emotions and thus indexically presuppose non-denotational aspects of the context" (Sawyer, 2003: 83).

In summary, a musical style (referred to in linguistics as an object) has an index of characteristics (signs) that are discernible to those familiar with a style to interpret its signs. Interpretant knowledge of indices of style manifests at both denotational and connotational levels. The stylistic characteristics of an improvised sound denote a style to a listener through his or her knowledge of evident stylistic qualities. On an interactional level, an improvised sound is an event or phenomenon in a specific context to which one reacts connotationally, allowing one to contribute to the development of the improvisation within the boundaries of the inferred style.

Based on the theories discussed above, the concept of 'indices of style' is proposed as a method of initiating social interaction based on coded social conventions associated with and responded to in the moment of performance, and therefore operates functionally as a

socially creative act. This notion is confirmed by Silverstein's (1979) assertion that "the give and take of actual interaction depend on the constantly-shifting communicative negotiation and ratification on indexical presupposition vs. indexical creativity" (1979: 207). How these interactions are ratified, while based on indexical presuppositions, looks to the concepts of intersubjectivity and Mead's emergence.

1.2.3 Style

In defining musical style, a distinction from musical genre is required as the two are often misconstrued or used as a synonym for each other. Fabbri (1999) describes musical genre as encompassing a set of 'rules' within a given community or culture in which musical and music-related practices are situated. Fabbri writes, "Rules that define a genre can relate to any of the codes involved in a musical event – including rules of behavior,...proxemics and kinesic codes, business practices, etc." (Fabbri, 1999; 8-9). It would appear that Fabbri sees genre as a composition of cultural and musical values from which particular rules define and exemplify the genre. Fabbri (1999:8-9) makes a distinction from genre by defining style as 'a recurring arrangement of features in *musical* events which is typical for an individual (composer, performer), a group of musicians, a genre, a place, a period of time." As such, style could be viewed based on a set of musical-structural rules situated under the broader genre umbrella of cultural and musical rules. Tagg (2013) importantly points out that styles are not subsets of genre. For example, a composer's or performer's style can often be readily identified when working within contrasting musical genres.

This research examines how codified rules signifying a particular musical style provide intersubjective materials that can be developed through shared experiences within a

group to inform free jazz improvisation.

1.2.4 Emergence

The concept of emergence originates from the theories of philosopher George Henry Lewes (1879) and philosopher, sociologist, and psychologist George Herbert Mead (1932). Lewes first described emergence as follows:

Every resultant is either a sum or a difference of the co-operant forces; their sum, when their directions are the same - their difference, when their directions are contrary. The emergent is unlike its components insofar as these are incommensurable, and it cannot be reduced to their sum or their difference (Lewes, 1875: 412).

Emergence is generally defined as the process underlying what results or emerges from the interactivity of (the mutual, dynamic and on-going affect by and on) the components of an event or phenomenon. For example, the sound of a jazz rhythm section of piano, bass and drum generates characteristics that are different from those created by its individual instruments.

Sawyer (2003) combines the concepts of indexicality and emergence to create a model of creativity for improvising groups that view the improvising ensemble as a complex system where "the global behaviour of the entire system is said to emerge from the interactions among the individual parts" (Sawyer, 2003: 12). Sawyer bases this model "on the nature of semiotic mediation of the interaction" (Mertz and Parmentier, 1985: 86). He states that interaction in group-based creativity is constrained by the immediacy of the moment, mediated through musical signs and "coincident with the moment of

reception and interpretation by other participants” (Sawyer, 2003: 86). According to Sawyer, a variety of “interactional forces” influence each performance act:

[...] the performer of the act, who contributes something new to the flow of interaction through indexical entailment; the other participants in the interaction; the definition and constraints of the performance genre; the independent constraining force operating on the act which derives from the prior interaction, and constitutes the indexical presupposition of the act (2003: 86).

Sawyer (2003) adopts Mead’s (1934) concept to describe the structuring of improvised content through these series of performance acts as the ‘emergent’. The series of performance acts are collective contributions that “results in the creation of a shared creative product” (Sawyer, 2003: 87) through what Sawyer refers to in small groups as ‘collaborative emergence’ (2003: 12).

This process is illustrated in *Figure 2* below. The above horizontal arrow represents time and indicates the various stages of the emergent (circled). The model illustrates from the point of view of one performer interaction with other performers indicated by the lower arrow consistent with the emergent and timeline. The indexical presuppositions are positioned before the performer indicating its assumed nature, while the indexical entailments filter through the other performers (lower arrow) before entering the emergent.

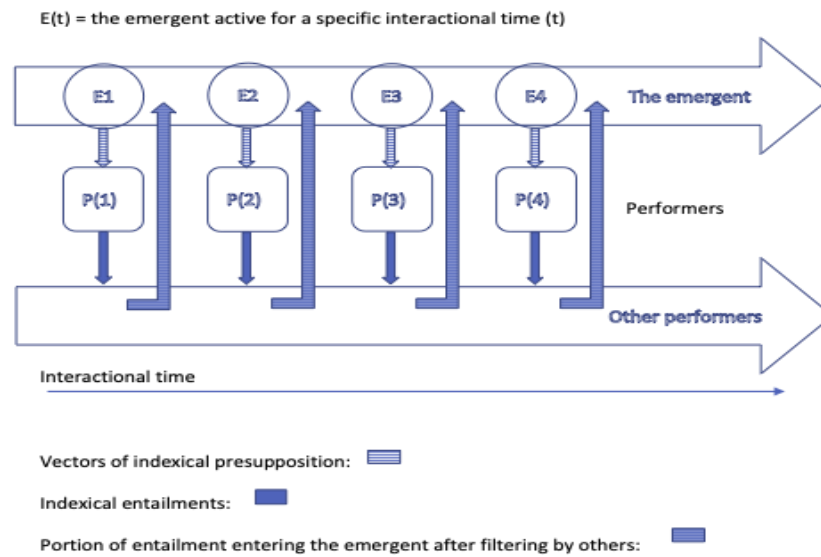


Figure 2: Keith Sawyer's model of group creativity (2003).

Sawyer (2003) elaborates on the emergent by stating:

The emergent is structured but ephemeral, changes with each performance act, and emerges from the indexical presuppositions accumulated through the prior collective interaction. It is an emergent social fact; it is not determined by any single performer, and only partially constrained by the genre definition. For the interaction to continue as an intersubjective shared activity, the performers must work together in creating the emergent (Sawyer 2003: 87).

While basing his model on semiotic mediation and drawing from linguistic parallels, Sawyer acknowledges that in improvised music, "unlike conversation, there is not turn-taking behavior; all participants perform continually" (Sawyer, 2003: 93). However, as in conversation, variations in idiosyncratic interpretations of emergent topics, including sociointeractional influences, are also apparent in the performance of improvised music. Thus, to maintain coherence with the emergent musical context, the "requirements of intersubjectivity" (Sawyer, 2003: 88) further constrain improvisers. He explains how the emergent constrains the performance process as follows:

Performers are loosely constrained to operate within the performance genre. A given act is more strongly constrained by the emergent. The nature of this constraint is unique and specific to the performance and the moment of interaction; at some moments, the emergent is highly constraining and leaves only a small range of possible actions, whereas at other moments, the emergent is weakly constraining and performers have a wide range of possible actions (Sawyer, 2003: 88).

The performance process is illustrated in *Figure 3*. Consider this image as an end-on view of the image in *Figure 2*. The emergent (and time) located at the top, depending on its characteristics, issues either a weak or strong emergent (indicated by the arrow size) to the performer(s). A weak emergent (left) results in a wide range of possible actions (indicated by the wide span of the arrows) or indexical entailments, while the strong emergent issues a narrower range of options. Like the previous image, these indexical entailments filter through the performers and re-enter the emergent. While this is a linear representation, it fails to represent the simultaneous multiplicity of events accurately.

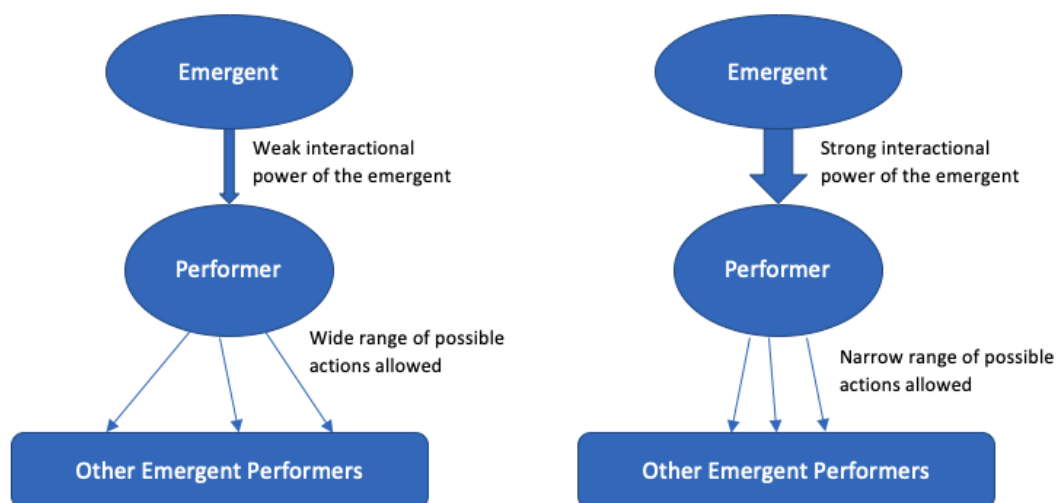


Figure 3. Keith Sawyer's model exhibiting different levels of emergent constraints (2003).

Finally, the term ‘evolving emergent’ (2003) is used by Sawyer to describe the ephemeral nature of the emergent that is subject to unforeseen changes and the constraints that arise from each performance act. How unforeseen changes and competing constraints are negotiated and ratified in free jazz improvisation is the basis of intersubjectivity.

1.2.5 Intersubjectivity

Covering a range of understandings of influential social and cultural factors, most definitions of the term intersubjectivity lack, as might be expected, objectivity. At its most basic, the term refers to the "sharing of subjective states by two or more individuals" (Scheff et al. 2006). However, when intersubjectivity is used in the more specific context of free jazz, it refers to a more dynamic and generative concept; one where improvisers coordinate their actions with others through shared perspectives of improvised content to create music that has never existed before but yet is recognisable as music. Alex Gillespie and Flora Cornish offer a more appropriate definition:

We conceptualise intersubjectivity as the variety of relations between perspectives. Those perspectives can belong to individuals, groups or traditions and discourses, and they can manifest as both implicit (or taken for granted) and explicit (or reflected upon). (Gillespie & Cornish, 2009: 18-9)

While musical experiences are considered subjective, Gillespie & Cornish (2009) conceptualisation of intersubjectivity explains the existence of musical taste, music festivals, radio shows, or the effects of film music. It suggests recognition of musical style occurs by reconciling the idiosyncratic (and at times contrasting) mental representations in the production of a coherent performance, a process that includes

cognitive, affective, and aesthetic functioning. Arguing against definitions of intersubjectivity that focus on symmetry as the end-point of the process, Eugene Matusov (1996:26) proposes that it “is more usefully defined as a process of coordination of individual participation in joint sociocultural activity rather than as a relationship of correspondence of individuals' actions to each other”. Based on his observations of children at play, he sees intersubjectivity as “a process of coordination of individual contributions to joint activity rather than a state or agreement” (Matusov, 2010: 25). Bearing these definitions in mind, Matusov’s view of intersubjectivity appears to be most suited to improvised music based on the following two related points. First, intersubjectivity does not necessarily equate with agreement among the participants but refers to the process of coordination of participants' contributions to the joint activity. Second, intersubjectivity is a function of the joint activity rather than tied individual perspectives or functions.

Gillespie and Cornish argue that such contributions to joint activity stem from unconscious behavioural orientation towards others based on assumptions made about other participants (Gillespie and Cornish, 2010: 40). Such 'taken-for-granted' assumptions about others' backgrounds presume that what is assumed about the other is, in fact, correct. Furthermore, one's behaviour towards another is arguably based on how that behaviour will be perceived and influence another, built on a mutual understanding of the context. In the context of improvised music, such automatic behaviour arguably results from intersubjective perceptions of co-performers' musical identities. Therefore, it is arguable that impressions of and assumptions about musical identities shape intersubjectivity during the performance of improvised music.

Existing research suggests musical identity is “a constantly evolving socially and culturally influenced construction of one’s ideals and values in relation to music phenomena” (MacDonald, Hargreaves and Miell, 2016: 3). Characteristics that constitute one’s identity are the foundations of free improvisation according to Bailey when he states that “[t]he characteristics of freely improvised music are established only by the sonic musical identities of the person or persons playing it” (Bailey, 1992: 83). Borgo provides further detail by specifying musical elements relating to one’s identity when he states, “identities include traditional notions of melodic and rhythmic motives, but more often involve gestural identities of shape, articulation, timbre, or a combination of these and other elements” (Borgo, 2002). Borgo's statement supports the notion that identities play a prominent role in the communication of stylistic indices, illustrating how improvisers' backgrounds and evident stylistic characteristics play an essential role in the formation of intersubjectivity.

While arguable intersubjectivity provides performers with a shared knowledge base from which creative ideas can be drawn, the question remains as to where these ideas come from? Improvising trumpeter Edward Sarath claims that individual responses to collective situations may stem from what he calls the "internal reservoir; an internal repository of concepts, techniques and tendencies underlying all artistic and other behaviour" (Sarath, 1996: 7). Musician and psychologist Jeff Pressing (1998) refers to a similar pool of information that drives improvisation as the 'knowledge base'. According to Pressing, the knowledge base includes "musical materials and excerpts, sub-skills, perceptual strategies, problem-solving routines, hierarchical memory structures and schemas, generalised motor programs and more" (Pressing, 1998: 53). Similarly, from a collective and semiotic standpoint, Phillip Tagg (2013: 174) refers to a metaphoric body

of information that informs musical communication called the "store of signs and sociocultural norms". As part of Tagg's model of music communication (2013: 174), the store of signs and sociocultural norms is a "constellation of culturally specific values and activities" that inform the transmission and reception of musical information. The intersubjective nature of the store of signs and sociocultural norms is highlighted in Tagg's model in its labelling "common to the transmitter and receiver" (Tagg, 2013: 174), as illustrated below in *Figure 4*.

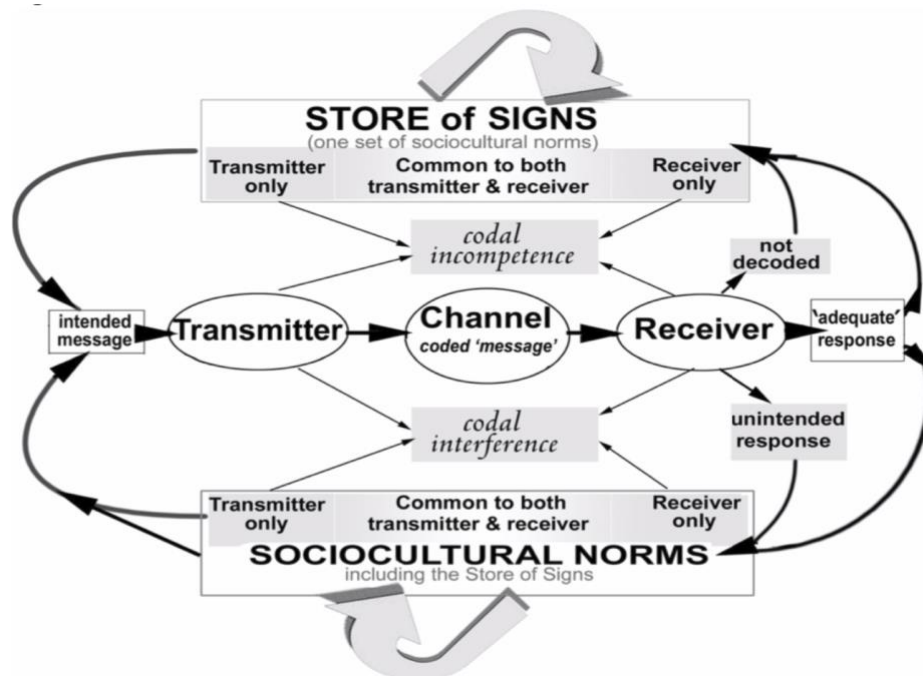


Figure 4. Philip Tagg's Musical communication model in a sociocultural framework (Tagg, 2013: 174).

According to Tagg (2013), the 'store of signs is a subset of sociocultural norms' that:

[...] contains all the social conventions of what constitutes the music in the relevant culture, as well as the socially negotiated norms about which elements of music have which connotations and are suited to which purposes, etc. (Tagg 2013: 174).

For the purpose of this research, Tagg's communication model depicts the store of signs as a subset of sociocultural norms from which intended messages, in the form of improvised content, are transmitted and received via indices of style. I argue that the quality of communication depends on intersubjectivity. Tagg asserts that the intention and meaning attributed to transmitted sounds are ultimately influenced by symbolic and behavioural conventions pertaining to the store of signs and sociocultural norms. As a result, as depicted by the diagram, the cycle never completes but is continually adapting and resetting to a 'central starting point' from which further meaning can be garnered (Tagg, 2013: 175). Similarly, the evolutionary and 'resetting' nature of this model draws parallels to Sawyer's evolving emergent concept.

I hypothesise that improvisation exercises will refine the knowledge base located in the store of signs and sociocultural norms by fostering intersubjectivity to improve the identification of stylistic indices. For communication to occur, let alone improve, improvised content arguably relies on similar codes to develop intersubjectivity. Eco defines code as “the link between a signifier and its signified, the ‘something’ that gives meaning to semiosis” (Eco, 1979: 3). He explains:

[T]o make his text communicative, the author has to assume that the ensemble of codes he relies upon is the same as that shared by his possible reader. The author has thus to foresee a model of the possible reader... supposedly able to deal

interpretatively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them (Eco, 1979: 8).

Eco's insistence of a 'model of the possible reader' implies an impression of the identity of the 'reader' is required for code to be understood, while 'dealing with expressions' in the same way implies intersubjectivity is required in knowing what type of code to use. In this regard, the concept of indices of style could be considered fundamental in accessing intersubjective code to inform communication.

The inherently subjective nature of intersubjectivity provides it with a dynamic, sometimes volatile mechanism for progress: intersubjective interpretation is functional, consensual, and at times, incorrect. It has long been established that in improvisation because musical stimuli are responded to subjectively, intersubjectivity also incorporates misinterpretations (Laing, Philipson and Lee, 1966). Nevertheless, rather than a disadvantage, a perspective that includes misunderstanding is "precisely this error and miscommunication that allows for the generation and transformation of new musical meaning" (Walton, Richardson and Chemero, 2014: 16).

All forms of communication are not without miscommunication, especially so in improvised music, where participants do not share a common syntax. Tagg describes this musical miscommunication as 'codal incompetence' and 'codal interference' (Tagg, 2013: 178). Codal incompetence arises when parties at transmitting and receiving ends do not share a basic store of signs. Codal interference refers to the instance in which transmitting and receiving parties share a similar store of signs; however, diverge in sociocultural norms (values, beliefs, and ideals) and obstruct communication (Tagg, 2013: 178). Since *Omelette* share a basic store of signs and sociocultural norms, these

terms are not applicable. Instead, I will refer to miscommunication in *Omelette*'s music as codal misinterpretation.

While this research argues that the shared codes fundamental to intersubjectivity assist the interpretation of indices of style, the application of semiotic theories to musical interpretation is often considered problematic due to the confusion over the relationship between signs and the objects they refer to. Cumming argues that the problem with musical semiotics "occurs due to the difference between language and music and the way that they convey an object of thought" (Cumming, 2000: 74). In linguistics, an object is generally thought of as something concrete, but in music, an object can also refer to a quality of a transmitted sound - often described metaphorically. However, Cumming proposes that beyond only metaphorical labelling of sounds, Peirce's theory of semiotic interpretants provides a link between a sound and its contextualised meaning: in an ensemble setting, both the sound and its meaning are recognised and responded to (Cumming, 200: 75).

The ability of some sounds to embody particular qualities is ingrained within a community of discourse. For example, fanfare trumpets from the Western canon and heard in film scores are part of an extensive range of musical descriptors within a broader musical community and society. Cumming states that these descriptors function as interpretants informed by the music inhabiting a community and thus promote how sounds, by and large, are interpreted and enacted upon recognition. While these descriptors are helpful and may assist intersubjectivity, more recent research into group improvisation looks to a more experientialist approach of indexicality than a merely conceptual-symbolic approach.

In defining the terms identity, internal reservoir, store of signs and sociocultural norms, code, codal misinterpretation, and outlining their relationship to intersubjectivity, I have highlighted how improvisers draw on shared pools of information to contribute to the joint activity of free jazz improvisation. How these contributions are negotiated and structured when subject to various constraints in the context of performance looks to the concept of emergence.

Indexicality has provided a theory that underscores how indices of style facilitate the interpretation and creation of improvised content in relation to a given context. How contexts are interpreted according to social and stylistic conventions looks to the theory of intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity supports the theory of emergence by establishing social and stylistic guidelines from which improvised content is collectively filtered and organised to become the group sound, as illustrated in *Figure 7*.

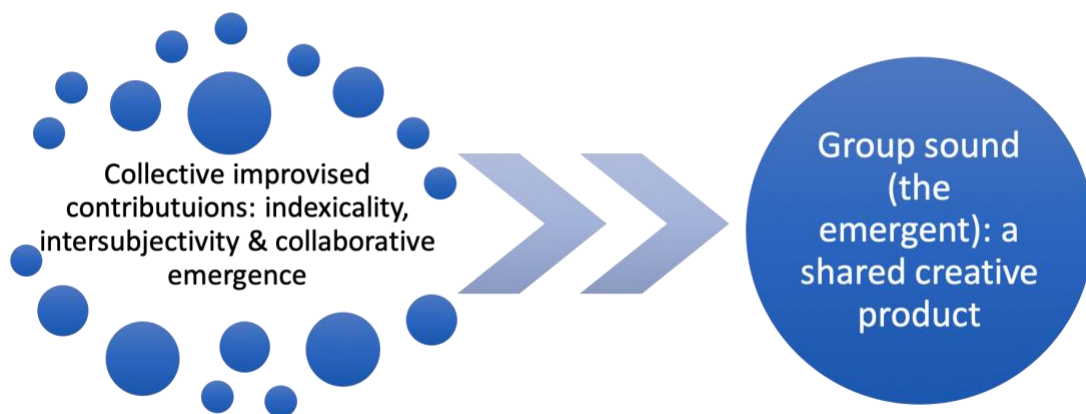


Figure 5: The Emergent Process

Omelette's process is undertaken by musicians with a background in jazz performance, playing instruments associated with jazz, in renowned jazz venues, and as part of a

broader jazz community. As such, *Omelette*'s music generally exhibits a jazz sensibility (Onsman and Burke, 2019: 10); however, the performance approach is not predetermined and thus incorporates elements of free and improvised music.

1.2.6 Indices of Style

Wilson Coker views the salient points of musical motifs or phrases as musical indices. In his book *Music and Meaning*, Coker (1972: 91) provides the following description of musical indices:

Musical index signs outline the boundaries of musical space-time in which motion takes place. Arguably, indices are the signposts along the pathway of a gestures sonorous motion. They provide the performer and the listener with a coherent map of the aesthetic experience as they undergo it. They help the listener notice, to perceive and heed, what is important. The index signs guide one's observations, giving him cues to the qualities and relations he should savour and scrutinize. They assist in analytic discovery and discrimination of the moment. Thus, on a here-and-now, the this-and-that basis of signification, the musical index plays a structural role in forming musical gestures and syntax.

I have adapted Coker's theory of musical indices to view stylistic attributes of improvised sounds as the 'signposts' that both 'map' and guide the aesthetic experience by structuring the musical 'syntax' of the event. I refer to these attributes as 'indices of style', accommodating Peirce's theory of the interpretant and the link between a sound and its recognised quality within a particular musical group (Cumming, 2000: 75). However, while stylistic attributes function as interpretants in that they are recognised and acted on within an improvising ensemble, more recent research into group improvisation looks to a more experientialist approach to musical indices than merely a conceptual-symbolic

approach (Reybrouck, 2017). As such, this research asks how musical indices operate as causative agents rather than only what they symbolically represent.

In practical terms, a musician's index of styles results from a history of dynamic affective and cognitive responses to a myriad of inputs, with one (at times contradictory) influence superimposed on another. Also, how indices of style are brought to bear on the immediate context further impacts each new musical environment, thus generating more stylistic indices. What is vital in the first instance is that the index, regardless of how mutable, exists and provides a foundation for musical decision-making in improvisation.

For clarity, I have divided musical influences into referential or representative.

Referential influences exhibit stylistic traits that are assimilated by either conscious or subconscious emulation, into a musician's index of style, to the point where they signify specific stylistic or characteristic intentions. For example, I may refer to trombonist Ray Anderson's plunger mute style to signify a raucous, bluesy intention or the purity of trumpeter Arve Henriksen's tone and sparse phrasings to imply minimalist characteristics. On the other hand, representative influences refer to perceived characteristics of particular approaches to improvisational interaction in specific contexts. For example, an ostinato or drone may represent *The Necks* and imply a particular way of approaching the improvisation and asserting stylistic implications that accompany the approach.

Therefore, representative influences can be considered processual indices, while referential influences can be thought of as stylistic indices. Furthermore, referential and representative influences are not mutually exclusive. While referential influences broadly

tend towards the individual, representative influences broadly tend towards the process of improvisation. However, both have agency in personal and intersubjective emergence and, more specifically, how the music is structured or organised. I acknowledge this model may appear a simplification of a process in which potential variables in perception are significant, however, it provides a basis for processual clarification and a way of examining free jazz improvisation.

1.3 Background to the Research

The following section provides background to this research project by first explaining how my participation in free jazz led to devising a method that guides my improvisation process in free contexts. It illustrates how my background has led to the development of the concept of indices of style that continues to inform my practice.

1.3.1 Early Free Improvisation Experiences

I was initially a classically trained musician, but I developed an interest in jazz during my teenage years. I pursued tertiary music jazz studies, including study at Berklee College of Music in Boston, USA. Upon returning to Australia, I relocated to Melbourne, where I became immersed in a musical community as a freelance trombonist. I performed as part of a free jazz quintet called *IshIsh*, who performed repertoire by, amongst others, free jazz luminaries Ornette Coleman, Don Cherry, Ed Blackwell, Dewey Redman, African roots music and pianist Randy Weston and original compositions by *IshIsh* group leader Ronny Ferella. I became increasingly interested in how this music worked, soon realizing ‘free’ did not mean one was free to play whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted. My improvisations in *IshIsh* were primarily refashioned bebop-inspired vocabulary that capitalised on motif development and

through-composed¹ improvisatory techniques. In contrast to the premeditated structures and stylistic conventions of bebop, my free improvisations relied on intersubjectivity governed by the emergent conditions created in the moment of performance.

Furthermore, intersubjectivity experienced during my free improvisation performances tended to vary depending on whom I was playing with. Thus, I began to examine the concept of musical identity, especially in terms of how my musical behaviour altered in response to others' responses. MacDonald (et al. 2012: 2) suggests that such deep reflection stems from a perception of one's self as a musician, "a socially and culturally defined concept" that contributes to the construction of one's musical identity (2012: 2).

IshIsh eventually disbanded, however, Ferella, Shepherd, and I wanted to continue to explore the musical relationships we had developed in *IshIsh* with other improvisers. After numerous performances with a range of guests, Stephen Magnusson joined *Omelette* permanently. In playing with *Omelette* and the various guest improvisers who would join the group at each performance, it became apparent that indices of style, including the traits of well-known musicians associated with particular stylistic indices, was a way to access and make public what Edward Sarath refers to as musicians' "internal reservoirs"; an internal repository of concepts, techniques and tendencies underlying all artistic and other behaviour" (Sarath, 1996: 7). Naturally, I found myself aligning with the concepts, techniques and tendencies of others congruent with my internal reservoir. I thus began to build an intersubjective knowledge base through understanding idiosyncratic approaches of co-performers, which consequently revealed why some musical materials during performances were favoured over others. It became

¹ Crook (2006:38) states that the term 'through-composed' in an improvisatory context can "be used to describe any aspect of music in which there is little or no repetition of materials (i.e., in which the degree of contrast causes the difference to be stronger than the similarities)."

apparent that free improvisations are primarily contingent on content arising from integrating performers' identities and internal reservoirs communicated through indices of style. This realisation prompted me to ask the question, would a clearer understanding of improviser's identities develop intersubjectivity and assist interactive processes informing free improvisation?

1.3.2 Devising a Method

In the study of jazz improvisation, deriving clarity on a given musical topic had been informed in my jazz education through Hal Crook's (1991) concept of the 'target approach'. The 'target approach' determines a specific goal within a task and adopts constraints to reduce the improvisational variables to focus attention on the task at hand. Crook's concept of constraints led my interest in improvisation exercises as a means of scrutinising the internal reservoirs of improvisers and the way indices of style are engaged to develop intersubjectivity. To some degree, at least, the proposition that stylistic constraints can have a positive effect on the processes underlying improvisation ignited my interest in and research of group interaction and creativity.

The notion that improvisation exercises could function both as unifiers and creative disrupters for free jazz improvisation raised questions about the malleability of the processes informing group improvisation. I found myself asking, what would improvisation exercises reveal about a particular process underlying group improvisation? In what ways would such revelations influence performance practices? In undertaking this research, I hypothesise that reliance on indices of style to carry out the prescribes tasks associated with these exercises will reveal idiosyncratic traits and generate materials that can be creatively exploited in performance scenarios.

My curiosity to access indices of style as a foundational process underlying the performance for free improvisation has arisen not only from the rich and diverse musical identities of my *Omelette* co-performers but also from their willingness to experiment beyond the safety net of referent-based improvisation with integrity and passion.

1.3.3 *Omelette* Performance Framework

Originating in 2004, *Omelette* is a quartet consisting of myself (trombone), Stephen Magnusson (guitar), Mark Shepherd (double bass), and Ronny Ferella (drums). *Omelette* saw the inclusion of percussionist Javier Fredes and pianist Luke Howard on various performances and recording projects. Between 2004-2020, *Omelette* has recorded three CDs, created a series of videos, and performed as part of live radio broadcasts and numerous concerts and music festivals around Australia.

Omelette's repertoire consists of original compositions (of which improvisation plays a key role) compositions from free jazz and African traditional folk music sources (referred to as 'covers') and free improvisations. While *Omelette*'s members' musical backgrounds and performance styles are varied, collaborations on projects outside of *Omelette* have arguably developed a musical rapport within the group. Shared experiences in varied external musical contexts have contributed to the broad stylistic influences evident in *Omelette*'s music and contribute to an intersubjective knowledge base that actively informs its performances.

While this exegesis focuses on my perspective of collaborations with my *Omelette* co-performers, I acknowledge that their individual, interconnected collaborations also have agency in the performativity of the group improvisations. Furthermore, I acknowledge that *Omelette*'s approach to repertoire has, to some degree, informed my

conceptualisation of a free improvisation performance framework. *Omelette*'s early repertoire of original compositions and covers created a sound world based on sonic memory² from which free improvisations draw from and on which an aesthetic is based. *Omelette*'s repertoire was once mostly open-ended; some basic instructions were provided, but the pieces were essentially vehicles for improvisation.

In an attempt to vary compositions at each performance, *Omelette* began to improvise introductions to compositions based on the characteristics of a composition's existing template. Introductions often began as solos that developed into group improvisations, eventually arriving at the melodic statement. Introductions took the surprising twist of developing into set-long stand-alone improvisations, never stating the melody but instead based on the sonic memory and stylistic indices associated with the original composition. It was this concept that inspired *Omelette* to pursue entirely improvised performances.

1.3.4 Works in This Study

This research focuses on three particular tracks drawn from two of *Omelette*'s albums. They are, *One for Four* and *Esteban* from *On This Day* (2013) and *Doxa*, from *Omelette: Live at the JazzLab* (2017).

Recording Title	<i>Esteban</i>
Date	December 19 th , 2013
Recording URL Link	Click here
Location	Pughouse Studios, Melbourne
Live or studio recording	Studio
Edits	Mixed and mastered at Pughouse studios
Preparation	Four monthly sessions of improvisation exercises
Take Number	1/1
Performers	Mark Shepherd (bass), Stephen Magnusson (guitar), Ronny Ferella (drums), Jordan Murray (trombone)

² Angus Carlyle (2017: 66) states that "Sound is memory, too, in its capacity to recall the characteristics of the world it has travelled through".

Recording Title	<i>Doxa</i>
Date	September 5 th , 2017
Recording URL Link	Click here (also video link here)
Location	Jazz Lab jazz club, Melbourne
Live or studio recording	Live recording
Edits	Mixed and mastered by Phillip Rex
Preparation	Four monthly sessions of improvisation exercises
Take Number	1/1
Performers	Javier Fredes (percussion), Luke Howard (piano), Ronny Ferella (drums), Jordan Murray (trombone)

Recording Title	<i>One for Four</i>
Date	December 19 th , 2013
Recording URL Link	Click here
Location	Pughouse Studios, Melbourne
Live or studio recording	Studio recording
Edits	Mixed and mastered at Pughouse studios
Preparation	Four monthly sessions of improvisation exercises
Take Number	1/1
Performers	Mark Shepherd (bass), Stephen Magnusson (guitar), Ronny Ferella (drums), Jordan Murray (trombone)

Figure 6. List of folio works and production notes

Although these albums were released under the name *Omelette*, they were made with different personnel and in different contexts. The distinction is important because it allows me to focus primarily on my contribution to the music; rather than recording the development of four musicians over a period of time, it now functions as the data source for an analysis of how indices of style impact the intersubjectivity of the performance, regardless of the personnel. Moreover, these specific tracks were chosen as they evidence specific aspects of the concept of indices of style in practice.

To some degree, the interpretation of sounds in a particular performance context refers to an intersubjective understanding (i.e., not only how an individual musician has indexed

his or her understanding of a style but also how that musician understands how other musicians have indexed that style) of the stylistic traits of the music from influential practitioners. The following section identifies these practitioners and discusses how their music has been influential.

1.3.5 Musical Influences on my Indices of Style

This section examines the characteristics and music from four key sources whose work has been influential to my practice with *Omelette*. It defines their innovative contributions to the field and reveals how their music has influenced the development of an application of indices of style to free jazz improvisation.

The Necks

Music of *The Necks*³ demonstrates elements of minimalism and ambient electronica. It features ostinatos and layered textural washes of sound that have earned them the stylistic label of 'trance jazz'. The Necks have been described as having "unique ensemble syntax and sound" (Whiteoak, 2004). According to Gailbraith (2012: 11), this syntax and sound is generated from a hybrid of "world fusion jazz and free jazz" genres. Notably, they are also renowned for their incrementally building improvisation that lasts between 40 to 60 minutes.

Stylistically, *The Necks* distinctive minimalist, ostinato-based, hybrid genre references and slowly evolving nature have been particularly influential to my work with *Omelette*.

³ The improvising trio *The Necks* are Chris Abrahams (piano, Hammond organ, Lloyd Swanton (bass) and Tony Buck (drums, percussion, electric guitar).

This influence can be heard on *Omelette*'s recording *Focus*⁴ (*Omelette*, 2018) and *LTC 3*⁵ (*Omelette*, 2018).

Recording Title	<i>Focus</i>
Date	August 3rd, 2018
Recording URL Link	Click here
Location	Monash University Lunchtime Concert
Live or studio recording	Live recording
Edits	Mixed and mastered by Ben Grayson
Preparation	None
Take Number	1/1
Performers	Javier Fredes (percussion), Stephen Magnusson (guitar), Ronny Ferella (drums), Jordan Murray (trombone)

Recording Title	<i>LTC 3</i>
Date	August 3rd, 2018
Recording URL Link	Click here
Location	Monash University Lunchtime Concert
Live or studio recording	Live recording
Edits	Mixed and mastered by Ben Grayson
Preparation	None
Take Number	1/1
Performers	Javier Fredes (percussion), Stephen Magnusson (guitar), Ronny Ferella (drums), Jordan Murray (trombone)

Figure 7: Supplementary folio works

Ethnomusicologist Michael Tenzer (2006) draws parallels between the process of music-making underlying both *The Necks* and *Omelette* when he states that “it is in music’s nature to fuse, recombine and proliferate like genes” and that “musicians and composers, witting or unwitting, acting independently or constrained by beliefs and institutions, are the matchmakers in these reproductive sonic trysts” (Tenzer, 2006: 17). Tenzer's

⁴ <https://doi.org/10.26180/13180640>

⁵ <https://doi.org/10.26180/13180151>

implications resonate with my performance practice within *Omelette*; my practice is continually searching for ways of weaving together contrasting and alike stylistic elements.

The Necks' influence on my practice with *Omelette* tends towards the process of improvisation rather than a specific style of music. In some instances, a processual mechanism such as an ostinato or drone can be ambiguous in its stylistic implication, and therefore process supersedes style in terms of indexicality. A priority on process tends to place greater emphasis on the intersubjectivity that underlies emergent processes.

Stylistic indices, therefore, serve emergence⁶ to a greater degree.

Omelette's intersubjectivity pertaining to knowledge of *The Necks* music underpins underlying processes as several members of *Omelette* cite *The Necks* as influential to their approach to free jazz improvisation.

Food

Similar to *The Necks*, the electro-acoustic duo *Food*⁷ adopts a hybrid of genres, fusing elements of minimalist, ambient, rock, electronica, and jazz. *Food*'s work combines composed and free improvised music that generates changing sound-worlds with the introduction of guest improvisers with each project. One particular example of this multiplicity of stylistic indices can be heard on *Food*'s recording *This is Not a Miracle*⁸ (2015).

⁶ It should be noted that the phenomenon of emergence is constantly in a state of flux as processual and stylistic indices result from introduced improvised content and are ratified by intersubjectivity pertaining to these indices.

⁷ *Food* are UK woodwind instrumentalist Ian Bellamy and Norwegian drummer and percussionist Thomas Strønen.

⁸ https://open.spotify.com/album/5exyftoVEaMHZkU7mlknbl?si=S_glKGKDTN2YguCS6vwFpQ

The processes underlying *Food*'s approach to free improvisation and the sonic similarities with *Omelette* have made them a representative influence in my practice. Sounds generated by *Omelette* that reference *Food*'s recordings evoke a way of playing based on my recollection and interpretation of these recordings. While *The Necks* will often adopt a sound concept that will mostly remain consistent across an entire album, *Food* will incorporate a greater variety of hybrid genres between tracks. This range of varying styles on *Food*'s recording *Molecular Gastronomy*⁹ (*Food*, 2007) is comparable to the diversity of stylistic influences on *Omelette*'s recording *On This Day* (2013). *Omelette* shares some striking sonic similarities with *Food*, evidenced by Magnusson's loops and effects in conjunction with Ferella's and Fredes' percussive grooves and textures.

In contrast to minimalist introductions and ambient qualities, *Food*, like *Omelette*, also create improvisations that begin simultaneously and lean towards influences from European avant-garde jazz and free improvisation styles. This similarity can be heard on *Food*'s 2007 album *Molecular Gastronomy* particularly on the tracks *Spherification*¹⁰ and *Heston*¹¹. Despite the apparent electronica influence and differing sound production, these recordings exhibit textures similar to *Omelette*'s recording *On This Day* (2013), particularly on the tracks *There You Have It*¹² (*Omelette*, 2013) and *Temporal Slave*¹³ (*Omelette*, 2013).

Arve Henriksen

⁹ <https://open.spotify.com/album/0KspqV65UKK5ek5DqOytUB?si=gnn0eeK7TiWLprqNc6XFog>

¹⁰ <https://open.spotify.com/track/6tFBwhWBBuxZp47TykqvYz?si=IXnaya-OQOKHmt2B8if7Jg>

¹¹ <https://open.spotify.com/track/13Rf3I9X2UfQ4Us03jiQvZ?si=pMurkc2yQdmrFAIggRmQXw>

¹² <https://doi.org/10.26180/13181276>

¹³ <https://doi.org/10.26180/13181258>

Trumpeter Arve Henriksen is an increasingly prominent figure in improvised music throughout Europe, working across diverse musical projects. He has a unique shakuhachi-inspired trumpet tone and a soprano singing voice. Henriksen features on various *Food* recordings, including their eponymous debut album *Last Supper*¹⁴ (2004) and *Mercurial Balm*¹⁵ (2012). Henriksen's work takes on more amorphous forms using electronic instrumentation, including synthesisers and loop pedals.

Henriksen is both a referential and representative influence on my work with *Omelette*. His purity of tone, lyrical folk-like melodic concepts, sustained and spacious phrasing are characteristic traits I have assimilated into my own index of style. I often refer sonically to Henriksen to communicate a minimalist aesthetic in performance. His unique tone blends with the sonic environment in ways that creates uniquely composite sounds; sounds I have been pursuing with *Omelette*, particularly when blending with Magnusson's timbral qualities. Furthermore, I have consciously emulated Henriksen's sustained complimentary background playing behind foreground content.

Henriksen's music is also influential because the processes underlying its creation influence my practice. The spacious rubato style improvisations that begin many of his recordings establish a conversational style with ambient, atmospheric sustained string or electronically produced pads. Such examples can be heard on *Blå Veg*¹⁶ (Henriksen, 2014), *Adhān*¹⁷ and *The Sacristan*¹⁸ (Henriksen, 2013). I have used similar approaches

¹⁴ <https://open.spotify.com/album/2LmA8NFDDa5jSi0Fv9BTOx?si=TwCpjLv2RiyBqWVMfg8sKw>

¹⁵ <https://open.spotify.com/album/4kjAhnHDIUlgjLBZAODLn8?si=r18p7-acQKaiQULw4HqsJA>

¹⁶ https://open.spotify.com/track/5mkyUAUvDliCMzI0Ou8DmE?si=weJW6P1eRA-oU0m9FOa_0Q

¹⁷ https://open.spotify.com/track/6z73wjcf9actsqCh729UVr?si=F-cGE2mBSFGqG7MUigz_TQ

¹⁸ <https://open.spotify.com/track/2qpYQYAcYIQSxJjAs11fty?si=K9NZ6BxURo-ewcUhc3OFug>

on *Omelette* recordings *Paris-Texas-Coburg*¹⁹, *Astral*²⁰ (*Omelette*, 2013) and *Doxa*²¹ (*Omelette*, 2017).

Henriksen's music shares the minimalist attributes of *The Necks* and *Food* and evokes a similar way in which I approach these stylistic indices. For example, the opening moments of the *Omelette* recording *Focus*²² (*Omelette*, 2018) features Ferella's cymbal washes, Fredes' rustling hand percussion and Magnusson's swelling sustained guitar chords superimposed over a drone. To me, these combined sounds exhibit elements that are indexical of the sound-worlds of Henriksen, *The Necks* and *Food*. Sharing characteristics of a single line melodic brass instrument, Henriksen provides me with a model to assimilate to the emergent constraints and thus emulate his dynamic sensitivity, phrasing and melodic concept.

Ray Anderson

As an exponent of avant-garde and free jazz genres through his associations with musicians such as Anthony Braxton, Barry Altschul and David Murray, trombonist Ray Anderson draws extensively from early jazz elements within free contexts. Such stylistic traits are evident in his display of nuances such as 'ripps', glissandi, trills and a rejection of traditional bebop-based language. His virtuosic technique includes an extensive scope of timbral variation with and without the plunger mute, flutter tongue, 'growling' technique that incorporates vocalisation to distort the tone.

¹⁹ <https://doi.org/10.26180/13181291>

²⁰ <https://doi.org/10.26180/13181297>

²¹ <https://doi.org/10.26180/13175918>

²² <https://doi.org/10.26180/13180640>

Anderson produces guttural sounds with a plunger mute in the extreme lower register, as well as high-pitched buzzing sounds generated by sealing the bell shut with the plunger mute. He also experiments with humorous sounds that emulate whimpering or laughing created through a rapid opening of the plunger mute. Examples of Anderson's timbral variations can be heard on *Blues Bred in the Bone*²³ (Anderson, 1988).

I have assimilated Anderson's stylistic traits into my index of style through emulation, and they now signify specific stylistic or characteristic intentions. Furthermore, I have adopted their melodic conception in free contexts that avoids overt reference to the bebop tradition. Both Anderson's and Henriksen's phrases tend to be shorter to those exhibited in the jazz tradition, in order to negotiate and react to the unpredictable emergent constraints in free contexts. In adopting a more fragmented approach to phrasing in free contexts, I too seek to navigate the ephemeral nature of free improvised contexts as well as intending to create more space and encourage more significant collaborative interaction. Examples of Anderson's influence on my performance can be heard on the recordings *One for Four*²⁴, *Jimmy Can Jump*²⁵ and *Temporal Slave*²⁶ and *Omelette: Live at the Jazz Lab* on the tracks *Doxa*²⁷ and *Utforske*²⁸

1.3.6 Indices of Style apparent in the other members of *Omelette*

The concept of indices of style that informs my improvisatory approach to *Omelette* adopts techniques and stylistic traits from influential practitioners. How these techniques and stylistic traits inform my approach is two-fold. On one level, I incorporate these

²³ <https://open.spotify.com/album/0yqGLK8SSP1895FVadqA05?si=Bb8Ovx--T1CXWutqnAzXOw>

²⁴ <https://doi.org/10.26180/13175921>

²⁵ <https://doi.org/10.26180/13181237>

²⁶ <https://doi.org/10.26180/13181258>

²⁷ [10.26180/13175918](https://doi.org/10.26180/13175918)

²⁸ <https://doi.org/10.26180/13181285>

techniques into my performance through emulation of sound or process. On another level, evident stylistic traits (indices of style) of influential practitioners present in my co-performers' improvisations instigate a process for me that seeks to create improvised content compatible with the context established by sources implied by my co-performers.

Omelette's improvisational approach is dependent on intersubjective interpretations of style. I argue that musical stimuli representative of particular musical styles, index sound-worlds that generate particular idiomatic roles, especially when participants choose to remain coherent with the emergent constraints of the improvisation.

Bearing in mind the difficulties inherent in asking musicians to reflect on their internal machinations, it is nonetheless beneficial (if not essential) for each performer to have an understanding of a co-performers' indices of style. In terms of further developing intersubjective knowledge within *Omelette*, I have engaged in conversations, sharing of recordings and attending performances by my co-performers' external to *Omelette*. Such activities aim to obtain a more detailed understanding of the sources that influence my co-performers' practice and investigate the music they claim as being influential, and to be able to identify these characteristics in my co-performers' improvisations. *Figure 3* illustrates an overview of sources each member has cited as influential to their practice when performing with *Omelette*. While acknowledging that there is considerable overlap between and splintering of styles, the most significant style is listed alongside each influential source as a general guide:

<i>Omelette's</i> musical influences
Jordan Murray (trombone)
<i>IshIsh</i> (AU) - free jazz
<i>The Necks</i> (AU) - contemporary jazz/minimalist
Arve Henriksen (NO) - minimalist/contemporary jazz
Ray Anderson (US) - contemporary jazz/free jazz
Stephen Magnusson (guitar)
Bill Frisell (US) - contemporary jazz/Americana country folk
John Scofield (US) - contemporary jazz
Pat Metheny (US) - contemporary jazz
J.S. Bach (DE) - classical
<i>The Police</i> (UK) - rock/reggae
Ronny Ferella (drum set and percussion)
<i>IshIsh</i> (AU) - free jazz
Randy Weston and the Splendid Master Gnawa Musicians of Morocco (US and MA) - contemporary jazz and African traditional folk music
<i>Old and New Dreams</i> (US) - free jazz
Oumou Sangare Oumou (ML) - African traditional folk music
<i>Band of Five Names</i> (AU) - contemporary jazz/minimalist
<i>The Necks</i> (AU) - contemporary jazz/minimalist
Mark Shepherd (bass)
<i>IshIsh</i> (AU) - free jazz
<i>The Necks</i> (AU) - contemporary jazz/minimalist
<i>Boren and der Club of Gore</i> (DE) - doom jazz/minimalist
<i>Ronald Shannon Jackson & the Decoding Society</i> (US) - free jazz/jazz fusion

Luke Howard (piano)
<i>Bing and Ruth</i> (US) - minimalist
Paul Bley (US) - contemporary jazz
John Taylor (UK) - contemporary jazz
Brad Mehldau (US) - contemporary jazz
Keith Jarrett (US) - contemporary jazz
Javier Fredes (Bata, congas, hand percussion)
Changuito (CU) – salsa
Salsa Bands - <i>Los Van Van, Irakere</i> (CU) – salsa
Music of Santeria (CU) - Cuban traditional folk music

Figure 8: *Omelette*'s musical influences

The various sources that influence each *Omelette* member provide some stylistic parameters (albeit rough) when we improvise as a group. Individually, we understand the significance of the stylistic characteristics of this music. Therefore, it is not merely the reference to a specific sound, but rather the understanding of what that sound connotes in the context in which it is made. As such, the meaning of the sound may be abstracted, transmuted and assigned a different function in emerging improvisation, but it will nonetheless retain its original agency within our indices of style. Practically, indices of style provide a broad pool from which improvised content can be drawn and further contextualised.

1.4 Research Questions and Aims

In drawing on examples from the folio of works, the research aims to analyse how (or if) the concept of indices of style impacts the performance processes underlying free jazz

improvisation. It argues “indices of style” plays a meaningful role in free jazz improvisation. To evidence its effect, the musicians engaged in a series of exercises designed to challenge habituated performance practices by creating awareness through enhanced intersubjective listening.

Evidence of the impact of the intervention is analysed in terms of indexicality, emergence and intersubjectivity according to the following factors. First, Indexicality; considering the dual-level operations (denotational and connotational) of indices of style, what signs are made manifest in the music and what styles or objects do they denote, refer to or stand for? Second, Intersubjectivity; What are the indexical presuppositions generating the interpretant thinking that recognises and responds positively to the emergent music being created and what role does intersubjectivity play in this process? Third and finally, Emergence; How does this interpretant thinking inform the creation of improvised content (indexical entailment) in relation to the emergent musical constraints?

1.5 Limitations of the Research

While research on the influence of social and cultural factors from other knowledge domains correlates with that on the production of group improvised music (see Sawyer 2003, 13), it is not central to the argument made here. Instead, the discussion in this exegesis will be limited to illustrating the semiotic process underpinning the creation of the folio of works. To that end, the research does not attempt to redefine music semiotics or group creativity but instead borrows from these fields to explore how existing research can help articulate a unique approach to free jazz performance.

This research was limited to the first-person perspective of the author-performer and did not include interviews with other members of the ensemble *Omelette*. As such, the analyses are also exclusively from the first-person perspective of the author-performer.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The literature review positions this research by focusing on two interrelated themes. First, a scan of work done in the field of free jazz improvisation focusing on group interaction and pertaining to how indices of style are reflected in the concepts of indexicality, emergence and intersubjectivity. Second, a review of methodological approaches to the use of ethnographic accounts of improvised music, focusing primarily on the creation and application of improvisation exercises.

Over the past fifteen years, increasing research in improvisation has seen the significant output of literature examining the processes that inform its performance. Spurring this interest are claims by practitioners such as Bailey who states, “improvisation enjoys the curious distinction of being both the most widely practiced of all musical activities and the least acknowledged and understood” (Bailey, 1992: ix). The most common examples examining improvisation processes are often drawn from jazz due to its assumed, almost inseparable relationship with improvisation. As such, cognitive research on improvisation often focuses on performance and argues that limitations in technical facility pertaining to stylistic conventions constrain performers. Jazz-based research has often drawn parallels with language (see Monson, 1996) while acknowledging that improvisation, unlike conversation, is simultaneous and not always based on turn-taking (Wilson and MacDonald, 2016: 2). Distinction from conversation is arguably more apparent in free improvisation contexts where structure and traditional roles are less defined. The overarching question of 'how do improvisers do what they do', has received considerable attention in the field of jazz. However, its siblings, free jazz and to a lesser extent, free improvisation, have been less fully explored.

Interest in the field of improvisation sees expanding interest with researchers looking beyond the field of psychology, to methods from sociology, communication and organisational behaviour, in order to develop a more complete understanding of processes underlying free jazz improvisation. This study aims to make a small but significant contribution to that endeavour.

2.2 Improvisation

Although there is a large amount of literature on the nature of improvisation, much of it lacks detail beyond a vague notion of simply ‘making things up’. It is noteworthy that when the term is applied to non-musical fields such as Management Theory or Accounting, it is usually done with the assumption it involves a non-standard way to achieve a predetermined goal or state. In free jazz improvisation, there is no predetermined goal or state until one emerges in the music being created (if then), indicating a more complex, self-referential process or system of processes at work.

For that reason, the literature engaged with here focuses on three main areas: cognitive research, musicological and ethnomusicological research, examining the nature and practice of improvisation within particular cultures and pedagogical practices that underscore the teaching of improvisation. Each has a function in understanding the concept of indices of style. While the development of, and the reference to, an index of style is cognitively and affectively personal, it is also located in specific cultural contexts. Further, I argue that the use of a set of exercises to enhance the improvisational process is rooted in dialogic and evidentiary pedagogy.

2.2.1 Cognitive Research

Much of the research over the past decade examining the cognitive processes underlying improvisation has built on the work of John Sloboda (1985) and Jeff Pressing (1988). They have argued that the ability to process information in real-time is minimal and therefore requires improvisers to use constraints on creative material. Regarding group performance, Sawyer (2003) indicates that performers are subject to constraints imposed by the emergent properties of the group and must look towards a group-level analysis of the process.²⁹

Early research into the creativity underlying improvisation (see Hadamard, 1945; Guilford, 1963 and 1968; Rothenberg, 1979; Simonton, 1988) suggests the processing of creative thought is experienced in two stages. Joy Paul Guilford (1963; 1968) argues the source of creativity begins at an ideation stage of divergent thinking and is then evaluated in the second stage of convergent thinking³⁰ as illustrated in *Figure 9* below.

²⁹ Sawyer (2003) refers to this as ‘methodological individualism’. 2001b, 2002b

³⁰ Guilford suggests divergent thinking is the stage whereas many options as possible are considered while an evaluative stage of convergent thinking narrows down the most plausible options for the outcome.

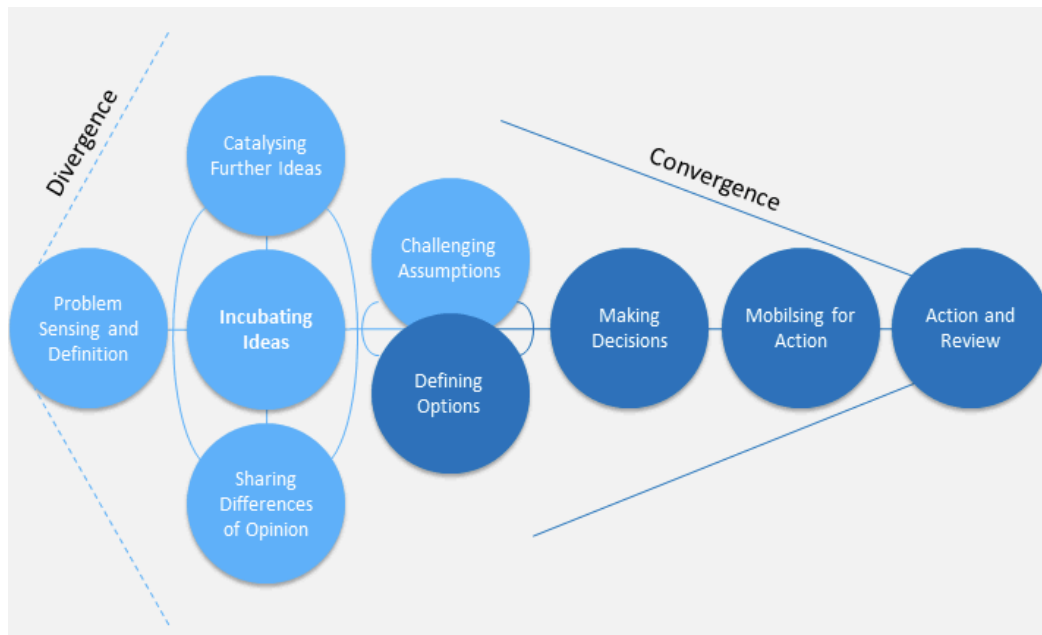


Figure 9. Divergent and convergent thinking diagram.

While cognitive research has yet to provide a plausible answer as to the origins of creative thought (2003: 173), some researchers suggest a level of evaluation occurs in the initial ideation stage in order to process the required information thus intimating parallel processing between divergent and convergent thinking must occur (see Runco & Okuda, 1991; Runco, 1993). Sawyer (2003) questions the appropriateness of sequential stages of creative thought processing when applied to a group situation and suggests existing theories of creative thought need to be expanded to cater for collective ideation and evaluation and consider the social dynamics of the group (Sawyer, 2003: 13). Drawing parallels with Sawyer's suggestion, psychologist Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (1995) proposes individual musical offerings to the field (or group) are subject to collective scrutiny before becoming part of the domain (group sound). Changes to a domain product are consequently subject to "both group-level evaluative processes and psychological processes" (Sawyer, 2003: 175). Furthermore, Csikszentmihalyi argues a group's knowledge of the domain to which they are contributing influences their creative output and ability to coordinate actions (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996: 37)

Sawyer (2003: 175) indicates that group creativity is not afforded in the same repetition and revision of material as experienced individually and therefore suggests both individual and group ideation and evaluation occur simultaneously. Additionally, knowledge of performance domains allows improvisers ample time, external to performance, to develop techniques to a level that may impact at the ideation stage. This view aligns with Pressing who suggests improvisation is a 'learned behaviour' based on 'habit hierarchies' whereby improvisers draw on personalised materials driven by concepts and motor actions based on genre conventions (Pressing, 1984: 361).

In highlighting the significance of the social context in group-based creativity, Sawyer (2003: 175) adopts the view of pragmatists such as James (1890), Dewey (1934) and Mead (1934) by suggesting "mental processes were a reflection of social processes". He proposes a view that turns current thinking on its head when he asks, "Perhaps the psychology of creativity is, in fact, the social process of creativity, absorbed and internalised by those individuals we call creative" (Sawyer 2003: 176). The proposition that social processes influence intersubjectivity is supported by the work of Biasutti and Frezza (2009), Dean and Bailes (2016), Ramalho and Ganascia (1994) and Cook (2004) among others. Sawyer's view supports my argument for the integration of intersubjectivity into the concept of indices of style. It underscores participants' ability to recognise styles of music and the idiomatic conventions associated with their performance.

Bailey's (1992) distinction between jazz improvisation as 'idiomatic' and free improvisation as 'non-idiomatic' is far from immutable, with many improvisations

crossing the hypothetical divide. As *Omelette*'s music is not predetermined before the performance, and thus performers are free to improvise in a manner they choose, the act of music-making is arguably free from idiomatic commitment and conventions.

However, stylistic associations reflexively applied when making sense of musical sounds, imposes idiomatic constraints when participating in the act of music-making with another, irrespective of choice to comply or ignore these constraints.

2.2.2 Musicological and Ethnomusicological Research

Idiomatic improvisation denotes improvisatory styles used in genres such as jazz, baroque, flamenco or Carnatic music, and relies on maintaining particular, culturally-based rules and schemas that are fundamentally product oriented. Non-idiomatic improvisation, according to Bailey, is conceptually 'free' from a commitment to idiomatic rules and conventions, hence commonly referred to as 'free improvisation', and as such is primarily process-driven. However, free improvisation is not entirely random. According to Jason Stanyek, despite its freedom from idiomatic convention, it can be "highly stylised" even though "[t]here's something else going on there, a vital, not reified, connection with idioms and markings" (Stanyek 1999: xii). Acknowledging the influence of stylistic influence in relation to one of his free improvisation groups, saxophonist David Borgo states:

Free improvisation is an umbrella term that describes the work of an eclectic group of artists with diverse backgrounds in avant-garde jazz, avant-garde classical, electronic, popular, and world music traditions that share an interest in exploring improvisation unencumbered by overt idiomatic constraints (Borgo: 2002).

Borgo implies that the individual backgrounds of the performers will inevitably generate idiomatic practices that influence the collective group sound - even within a 'free' context. Stanyek (1999: 47) shares a social and cultural view of free improvisation inclusive of performers' backgrounds when he states that free improvisation as "a particularly fertile 'communicative arena' in which divergent individual and cultural narratives can be articulated". Without the prescribed idiomatic frameworks that contextualise improvised materials in relation to predetermined models, it would appear that musical materials generated in free improvisation are primarily a socially created 'substance' (Clarke, 2012). Clarke states,

Free improvisation provides opportunities for very unpredictable and extreme social dynamics to develop, and the music that is created in these circumstances often seems to be a product of the particular social context (Clarke, 2012: 26).

Such views suggest free improvisation "is as much concerned with the exploration and negotiation of interpersonal dynamics as it is concerned with musical materials and processes" (Clarke, 2012: 26).

Despite free improvisation having "no stylistic or idiomatic commitment" (Bailey, 1992: 83) it is apparent idiomatic characteristics "may appear on a subordinate level, as by-products" (Bailey, 1992: 83). Such by-products were particularly evident in the mid-nineteen nineties, seeing an aesthetic transformation in free improvisation with the emergence of subgenres known as 'the new London silence', Onkyo, the Berlin reductionism/minimalist school or simply reductionism as a trend (Duch: 2010). The concept of non-idiomatic music continues to fuel debate amongst researchers with some arguing improvisers draw on a finite database of personally acquired experience,

restricted by technical and personal limitations that “ultimately, determines their idiom” (Menezes, 2010: 15).

An alternative view of the improvisation divide expressed by George Lewis (1996) proposes that approaches to improvised music after 1950 originate from two perspectives: Afrological and Eurological. Afrological refers to music arising from social and political dynamics within the African-American culture and represented by the music from figures such as Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor. A Eurological approach stems from European classical and contemporary music traditions typified by John Cage, Luciano Berio, Morton Feldman amongst others. Within both Afrological and Eurological perspectives are referent-based³¹ and ‘free’ approaches to improvisation.

Based on these overarching dichotomies of idiomatic' and 'non-idiomatic, and Afrological and Eurological perspectives, authors such as Nettle and Russell (2008) Berliner (1994), Monson (1996), Sawyer (2003), Borgo (2002), Wislon & MacDonald (2015), Sansom (2005), Walton, Richardson and Chemero (2014), Nunn (1998), Sarath (1996) and Mazzola and Cheerlin (2009) propose there are differences in process between the improvisatory formats. Nonetheless, a consensus exists that free improvisation in any manifestation is a highly interactive process that is dependent on effective communication among the participants directed towards the emergent music being created.

³¹ Jeff Pressing (1984; 1987) provides two definitions of a referent. First, “an underlying formal scheme or guiding image specific to a given piece, used by the improviser to facilitate the generation and editing of improvised behaviour on an indeterminate time scale” (Pressing, 1984: 346). Second, a “set of cognitive, perceptual or emotional structures (constraints) that guide and aid in the production of musical materials” (Pressing: 1987).

2.2.3 Pedagogical Literature

The following examination of pedagogical improvisation literature will focus on materials adopting an approach to learning, specifically focusing on the implementation of constraints in the form of improvisation exercises, as applied in this project. While it is arguable most musical learning utilise constraints of some kind, the following examples of improvisation-based exercises adopt a mixture of goal-orientated and exploratory approaches.

American jazz trombonist Hal Crook's (2006) *Beyond Time and Changes: A Musician's Guide to Free Jazz Improvisation* is a comprehensive study designed for the jazz practitioner's exploration of free jazz. It follows from Crook's (1993) publication, *How to Improvise* and *Ready, Aim, Improvise* and based on Crook's overarching concept of the 'target approach'. The target approach determines a specific goal within a task and adopts constraints to reduce the improvisational variables in order to focus attention on the task at hand. It counters what Crook refers to as "ready, fire, aim approach" (1991), where one improvises impulsively and hopes for the best. Crook asserts that "improvising creatively and musically within the framework of certain musical restrictions is a more demanding challenge because it requires discipline and accuracy, and, because of this, develops ability in the areas associated with the restrictions" (Crook, 1991: 11). The target approach organises the components of improvising into three conceptual categories: when to play, how to play and what to play. When to play addresses quantity, meaning the amount of playing and resting when improvising. How to play explores the structure and execution of improvised content. What to play explores how content can be derived. Crook's *Beyond Time and Changes* (2006) initially takes the student through a detailed preparation stage, explaining how the presented

concepts can be applied to free settings. It moves into an exercise stage where the student applies these concepts at the individual level. Following is a group level stage where improvisers alternate solo and accompanying roles based on suggested jazz standard repertoire and provide improvisation examples in text and audio form. While conceptually strong, following themed concepts throughout all three of Crook's publications, this book is angled at free jazz improvisation concepts extending from the American jazz standard tradition. Crook summarises his approach in the following statement about understanding freedom:

But in order to be free while playing free - and to whatever degree such a state of freedom is actually possible - we must first know and understand what it is we are trying to be free, and play free, from (Crook, 2006: 13).

In contrast to Crook's idiomatic approach, London-based percussionist John Stevens' *Search and Reflect* (1985) illustrates an approach more aligned with a non-idiomatic approach to free improvisation. Stevens adopts a more inclusive approach, first creating exercises that can be applied at any level of musicianship, beginning with rhythmic exercises that encourage listening and greater awareness before moving into more varied exercises. Some exercises require a leader while others include notation. Using body percussion, breath, observation of environmental sounds, imitation and variation and specified stage plans, Stevens' twenty-eight exercises call upon a wide range of limitations that, in holding creativity as central to each exercise, engender skills and teamwork. Without taking away from the inherent value of Stevens' exercises, perhaps problematic is the ambiguity in some instructions potentially leaving less experienced or nervous participants uncertain. Furthermore, some instructions are heavily text-based in

communicating the various stages of the exercise and could be facilitated through diagrams or more effective presentation.

Another text featuring over one hundred exercises is Tom Hall's *Free Improvisation: A Practical Guide* (2009), is presented in a step by step manner, including warm-ups, solo exercises progressing into more complex group exercises. The first three chapters present Hall's (2009) philosophical approach to his exercises and how they can be implemented in group practice. In emphasizing interaction, Hall draws attention to the potential complexities of musical relationships by focusing on the simplicity of duets making the type of relationships more apparent. Exercises then progress into concepts touching on idiomatic groove-based rhythmic concepts as well as more abstract or open-ended instructions. Hall introduces the concept of groups within groups to diversify the listening skills of the improvisers as well as covering melody and accompaniment roles. It covers a comprehensive range of materials with pragmatic titles, although almost exclusively text-based could be reduced through simple diagrams.

Tom Nunn's *Wisdom of the Impulse* (1998) features a range of solo and group improvisation exercises in the appendix of his book. Both solo and group improvisations are structured with an initial instruction followed by a discussion which is to be read before the exercise to provide context. In the seven solo and nine group exercises, Nunn covers a range of mostly abstract exercises touching on texture, pulse, associative and dissociative relationships, graphic score, and transitions between grooves. Instructions tend to be vague and interspersed with informative but ultimately distracting philosophical information which detracts from the purpose of the exercise.

As suggested by its title, Mark Bradlyn's (1991) *Figure, Ground and Field, Gesture and Texture: a Gestalt Strategy for Group Improvisation* incorporates a listening strategy requiring consideration of how one's sound integrates with the ensemble. The visual terms 'figure', 'ground' and 'field' represent different elements of a soundscape approach to group improvisation. Before the exercise, each improviser is assigned one of these roles. In a trio context, one player creates the field by adopting an ambience that maintains a constant dynamic but varies in texture, timbre and attack. In response to the field, the ground joins in exercising greater dynamic contrast, however, careful to not overshadow the timbral characteristics of the field. While the figure, by virtue of its entry, assumes a soloist role, its character ideally considers its position in the whole sonic structure. In limiting ideas, the figure will likely find more common ground with the ground and field. Throughout the improvisation, roles are alternated, however, each improviser is to maintain similar content and adjust to align with the new role. This exercise requires the following of specific stylistic requirements to experience the assigned roles effectively. Furthermore, it would be interesting to explore how this focused listening approach would fare in more varied rhythmic contexts.

Roger Dean's (1989) *Creative Improvisation: jazz, contemporary music, and beyond - How to develop techniques of improvisation for any musical context* provides an extensive range of improvisation exercises looking to attract both classical and jazz musicians. Dean focuses on musical elements rather than on idiomatic conventions and thus seeks to address gaps in the mainstream literature. While rich in information, the book does have some issues that position its strength in theory rather than the practical objective as it claims to provide. Dean's first chapter introduces the treatment of melodic and motivic fundamentals without the firstly addressing rhythmic elements that arguably

underscore melodic construction. The importance of rhythmic primacy and its unifying ability is highlighted in both Stevens' *Search and Reflect* (1985) and Hall's *Creative Improvisation* (2009) in the initial exercises. Chapter three presents some useful and practical ideas in the form of rhythmic exercises, however, is soon followed by more challenging conceptual rhythmic material that lacks sufficient explanation. Chapter four explores improvisation exercises approaching improvisation within composed contexts, followed by the final fifth chapter culminating in the concept of developing a "personal character" amidst the "universal constraints" of free improvisation.

2.3 Music Semiotics and Indexicality

This section considers literature from the field of music semiotics as a means of situating Peirce's concept of indexicality within Sawyer's book *Group Creativity: Music, Theatre, Collaboration* (2003) which has been a primary literary source of this research project.

Music has long been assumed to have signatory capacity because it can communicate ideas, values and emotions. Despite that, music, in general, has mostly eschewed semiotics, the theory of communication by way of signs and images, as a meaningful analytical approach (McClary and Walser, 1990: 283). Nonetheless, music is reliant on signs, both planned and unplanned, in both its creation and its reception. The work of French musicologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1976) was instrumental in providing a conceptual framework for music semiotics. Nattiez proposed that music operates on three levels: the neutral (structural); the poietic (intentional) and the aesthetic (received) (Nattiez, 1990). Furthermore, he discusses two approaches to music semiotics: analytical and interpretative. An analytic approach aims to find the meaning of music through an analysis of its structure. It is data-driven and (at least initially) distinct from the poietic

and aesthetic levels. An interpretative approach links musical events to extra-musical events, and taken to extremes implies that music communicates as a system of signifying symbols (Dunbar-Hall, 1991: 128).

Much of Nattiez and his colleagues' work focused on the neutral level, including developing a taxonomic objective classification of sounds arranged according to similarities and differences and excluding meaning or value, a paradigmatic table from which general rules could be determined. His analytical structuralist approach relies heavily on a syntactically closed-system linguistic model (see Reybrouck, 2017). On the other hand, Eero Tarasti (1996) claims that the derivation of meaning from a musical event relies on a system of signs. His interpretative approach focuses on the inherent meaning within music and acknowledges a sign must first be identified as such and secondly, there must be broad agreement as to what it signifies. As a result, his approach to music semiotics primarily draws on linguistic parallels, particularly pragmatics and the indexical branch of deictics. He claims, "improvisation of an utterance is always deictic" (Tarasti, 1993: 67) and argues musical meaning is reliant on the context of the sign application in order for the sign to be understood.

This exegesis adopts a referentialist view of music, drawing on both analytical and interpretative approaches. On the one hand, the notion that any particular style of music has discernible features allows it to be understood as a model, while on the other interpretation allows its received meaning to be examined. In order to be accessed efficiently, a system of signs requires an index. Due to the contextual and causal character of the index, the concept of indexicality is at the core of music semiology research.

Building on linguistic theories, primarily those of Silverstein, Sawyer integrates Peirce's concept of indexicality as a central concept for his model of group creativity. Sawyer takes an interdisciplinary approach by examining improvising music and theatre groups through a sociocultural lens, with a focus on pragmatics. His unique contribution to the field of creativity is a model based on what he refers to as 'interactional semiotics'. In drawing parallels with music and conversation Sawyer's (2003) model proposes a process underlying the moment of reception and interpretation of musical content by improvisers' (2003: 86) of which the contextual constraints arising from Peirce's theory of indexicality and Mead's concept of emergence, guide the improvisation process. Through linguistic analogies, Sawyer proposes indexicality or more specifically deixis³², as a way, improvisers derive meaning from how they engage, as opposed to deriving meaning from a purely symbolic relationship with sounds (Reybrouck, 2017). Based on five identified characteristics of group creativity; process, unpredictability, intersubjectivity, complex communication and emergence, Sawyer examines the processes differentiating the emergent group product from the individual process.

While Sawyer (2003) suggests that insights from his theory may be applied to all improvising groups, I suggest a coding system identifying qualitative forms of interaction specific to an improvising group may arguably clarify this process. A coding system has inspired the codification of ethnographic accounts which has supported the analysis by highlighting the correlation of personal observations to key concepts.

More recent research (see Walton, Richardson and Chemero, 2014: 16-17) argues traditional semiotic models are limited and instead looks towards a complex systems

³² Deixis refers to referential expressions such as *you*, *I*, *here* and *now*.

principle of self-organisation as a way of understanding the behavioural dynamics of emergent and spontaneous improvised musical exchanges. Walton et al. suggest Sawyer's framework fails to "capture the way musicians interact with each other, how within the exchange they are able to anticipate and generate expectations for future musical events for each other to actualise". I argue Sawyer's framework does not solely propose how improvisers interact as such but suggest how creative processes are generated via linguistic analogies from Silverstein. The question as to "what musical signs signify between improvisers, given inevitable miscommunications and the overlapping of sign creation and interpretation amongst the complex emergence of improvised performance?", is what my research aims to explicate. Unlike Walton et al., my research does not explore the sonic and kinaesthetic dimensions of interaction in musical performance but instead pursues a view of indexicality as not solely a conceptual-symbolic theory but as a theory in practice.

2.4 Emergence

Continuing from the work of Lewes (1879), Mead (1932) states that "[t]he emergent when it appears is always found to follow from the past, but before it appears, it does not, by definition follow from the past" (1932: 2). From this statement, Mead indicates emergent characteristics are not defined by those previously occurring or as a consequence, but instead created in relation to past, present and potential future outcomes. Emergence draws parallels with not only improvising groups but with a wide range of disciplines such as philosophy, systems theory, business, science and art. For example, choreographer Susan Scorbati (2014) describes her approach to improvised dance as emergent improvisation. Scorbati aims to derive forms not from the preconceived structure, but instead as a result of "dynamic, self-organising systems

operating in open-ended environments" (Scorbati, 2014). Emergence is a cyclic regenerative system and described by Scorbati in the following way:

Emergent forms appear in complex, interconnected systems, where there is enough order and interaction to create recognizable patterns, but where the structure is open-ended enough to continuously allow new differentiations and integrations that influence and modify the form (Scorbati, 2014).

Scorbati's description of emergence in improvised dance is analogous to the process I have experienced during my free improvised performance with *Omelette*. Through indexing shared sources of information, indices of style support the generation of recognisable musical materials within a fluid context allowing for a collective influence on structure.

Consistent with Mead's (1932) writings on emergence, authors Bailey (1992), Blackwell and Young (2004), Cannone and Garnier (2015) and Sawyer (2003; 2006) argue that form and structure emerge through collective interactions in free improvisation. They suggest smaller scale structures lead to the creation of larger structures, and while such structures are contingent on the contributions of individuals, they are not determined or reducible to individual contributions. How such structures are collectively negotiated when subject to emergent constraints looks to the concept of intersubjectivity.

2.5 Intersubjectivity

While researchers largely acknowledge free improvisation as a socially interactive process (see Emery and Trist, 1960), Sawyer (2003), Burrows (2004), Bastien and Todd (1992) and Wopereis, Stoyanov, Kirschner and van Merriënboer (2013), they have

further elaborated how shared social and musical histories underlie common goals. These scholars argue that pursuing common goals includes the shifting of power and authority via musical competencies while the shaping of rapport and defining of roles ultimately influences the music-making process. Researchers largely describe group improvisation as requiring a balance of competing attention toward individual and group processes (see Wilson and MacDonald, 2015: 2) and thus foreshadows the subject of intersubjectivity. Canonne and Aucouturier (2015), Pras, Schober and Spiro (2017), Van der Schyff (2013) and Sawyer (2006) agree intersubjectivity is necessary for improvisers to facilitate meaningful interactions. These meaningful interactions are arguably communicated through improvised content triggered by stimuli arising from similar views of its meanings and usage. Furthermore, a shared broad cultural knowledge of practices informs interactions despite differing representations of the musical content. Cumming (2000) confirms the existence of shared understandings by stating,

shared habits of description (interpretants) give evidence of shared understandings, and “hearing” vocality in the instrument as a qualitative possibility need not lead any listener to fear that it is merely their own creation, a form of “intentional” projection that reveals their private mind (Cumming, 2000: 79).

Confirmation of intersubjectivity is often only understood when an action has been responded to in a manner illustrating a shared meaning (Sawyer 2003: 8). It is therefore plausible that recurring actions and responses signifying particular shared meanings would contribute to an improviser’s ‘internal reservoir’ as well as contributing to the group’s intersubjective knowledge base. Free improvisers sharing extensive performance histories are more likely to draw upon an intersubjective knowledge base to facilitate their actions. However, such is the nature of free improvised music whereby improvisers

meeting for the first time can still discover their intersubjective positions through the act of free improvisation and universal stylistic signifiers. As such, first-time free improvisation collaborators may experience higher incidents of codal incompetence or codal interference due to less developed intersubjective knowledge bases and thus inhibit their ability to move beyond superficial connections.

Omelette's intersubjective knowledge base has developed over time through numerous performance activities including composed, structured and free improvised contexts. The unique individual approaches of each improviser brought to these activities contributes to a socially created act, evidenced in *Omelette*'s group sound, guided by conventions surrounding these activities. Discussions or comments made in social circumstances can also contribute to intersubjectivity by revealing particular characteristics that may be avoided or recreated. Perceived successes and failures of a performance can see attempts made to create conditions for these favourable characteristics to emerge. Additionally, expressed admiration for a particular artist's music by a member of *Omelette* creates an awareness of characteristics that may arise in their performance or provide a source of inspiration from which I can draw improvised content.

The identification of stylistic indices, the emergent constraints, and the intersubjectivity underlying the communicative aspects of this concept is highly subjective. Further interviews with other members of *Omelette* would likely reveal similarities or differences between interpretations of indexed styles, sources inspiring improvised content and overarching individual approaches to free jazz improvisation. Whilst this information would be valuable and an avenue for further research, it contributes to additional subjective perspectives. In an attempt to understand a process contingent on

subjective perspectives and tie together the concepts of indexicality, emergence and intersubjectivity, I have adopted writing ethnographic accounts. Ethnographic accounts are intended as a way of illustrating the connection between thoughts, feelings and beliefs within the social act of improvised music and the creation of the music itself, as described below.

2.6 Ethnographic Literature

If ethnographic accounts, or vignettes, are considered stories providing insight into aspects of a subject's life or craft, stories about jazz usually focus on the subject's personality, character and interactions with others, rarely on the nature or processes of the music itself. In this respect, Richard Sudhalter (2001: 12) purports that "jazz musicians are their music. The two are inseparable". However, upon closer inspection, these largely anecdotal accounts rarely discuss the subject's thoughts or perspectives regarding the musical process. Therefore, to analyse my folio works beyond the static and superficial levels, I have adopted a process of journaling which has led to the writing of ethnographic accounts. Journalling has been informed by literature from Norman K. Denzin's (2003) *Performance Ethnography: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture* and Gillie Bolton's (2010) *Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development*. Bolton (2010) states that journals "are records of experiences, thoughts and feelings about particular aspects of life or within specific structures" (2010: 128). Journals have great flexibility in the range and method of observation. I adopted Bolton's "through the mirror" writing method in my journal by focusing on content rather than grammar. Writing in point form, single words and short phrases capturing the feeling surrounding particular events. Upon receiving the recordings, I would listen with my initial journal notes to augment these having had my memory refreshed from the

recording. This process would help expand my journal notes to create a draft of the ethnographic account. Richardson (2000) refers to the process of ethnographic writing as "creative analytic practice to describe these many different reflexive performance narrative forms" (Richardson, 2000: 929). In this style of writing, Denzin (2003: 14-15) states the "writer-as-performer is self-consciously present, morally and politically self-aware". The writer uses his or her own experiences in a culture "reflexively to bend back on self and look more deeply at self-other interactions" (Denzin, 2000: 15).

In writing ethnographic accounts, I have drawn on observations recorded in my journals to identify relevant performance moments revealing meaningful connections with my co-performers. I hypothesize these moments hold significant meaning due to the intersubjective nature of the occurrence and through analysis of the ethnographic account, draw correlations to related emergent and indexical properties. This approach adopts an interconnection view of these three concepts to provide a holistic analysis.

Other examples of ethnography in the form of participant interviews of improvisers have been reported by Pras, Schober and Spiro (2017) and Wilson and Macdonald (2015) who analysed detailed case studies of improvising to reveal processual insights. Similar interview-based research by Sawyer (2005), Monson (1996), MacDonald and Wilson (2005) and Wilson and MacDonald (2005) have presented studies examining the way musicians talk about improvising and how this informs their practice. Jazz improvisation often adopts the metaphor of improvisation as a 'language' and its interactions analogous to those experienced in conversation. Wilson and MacDonald argue that the turn-taking analogy of conversation is insufficient in accounting for the largely overlapping characteristics of improvised music. Furthermore, the prevalence of improvisation across

many genres may be a case to argue views from a broader range of disciplines may be required to provide a more accurate insight into this social activity.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

According to Smith and Dean (2010), a broad range of activities defined as research can generate contributions to knowledge. Such activities include "basic research carried out independent of creative work (though subsequently applied to it); research conducted in the process of shaping an artwork; or research which is the documentation, theorisation and contextualisation of an artwork – and the process of making it – by its creator" (Dean and Smith, 2010: 3). Consistent with Smith and Dean's research model (see Dean and Smith, 2010: 8), I adopt a mixed-method approach throughout this project that intertwines research-led and practice-led research methods as well as first-person ethnographic accounts.

Practice-led research, according to Smith and Dean (2010:5), is a method of searching within a practical context that helps attain a more accurate representation of how one approaches their craft. Furthermore, it helps the artist probe deeper into their work and through exploration, make discoveries that can implement change and growth (Smith and Dean, 2010: 23). Exploring improvisation exercises in the practice-led phase of this project seeks to examine performers' idiosyncratic predispositions by creating simulated performance scenarios. Nunn (1998: 32) states that "a rehearsal of free improvisation can be, at least in part, a workshop where the improvisers "rehear" the realisations of certain composed "plans" or processes, or discuss and criticize a recording made of the session". Such activities aim to improve intersubjectivity through a better understanding of how individual and group attributes are collectively negotiated as part of the group improvisation process during performances.

Information gathered through the recording of improvisation exercises, and the analysis of recorded performances aims to observe correlations between the two practice-led contexts. Due to the limitations of this exegesis, the recordings of improvisation exercises are briefly analysed to provide reflective resources in drawing correlations to performances. Recordings of the improvisation exercises are provided to give context to the exercises.

Journaling and recordings of performances assist the writing of first-person ethnographic accounts, which are guided by an ethnographic framework. Ethnographic accounts are then analysed to reveal the correlation between observed musical occurrences relating to three categories; concepts, events and improvisation exercises. Within these three categories are subcategories that are coded to identify instances of these occurrences within the ethnographic account and the relationship of these occurrences to the applied concepts and broader performance process. The subsequent analytical discussion of ethnographic accounts aims to reveal the way indices of style, and its encapsulating concepts of indexicality, emergence and intersubjectivity, inform the performance process.

Combining practice-led and research-led methods during this project allow me to explore how goal-oriented (improvisation exercises) and process-driven (performances) phases of this research inform one another. Additionally, reflection through the writing and analysis of ethnographic accounts of performances examines if and in what ways intersubjectivity developed through improvisation exercises informs the concept of indices of style in performances.

3.2 Research-led Practice

The research-led methods used in this study are primarily derived from Sawyer's model of group creativity that synthesises Peirce's semiotic theory of indexicality and Mead's theory of emergence. Additionally, the concept of improvisatory constraints as a means of enhancing one's performance practice are derived from improvisation method-based literature by Crook (2006).

In his book *Group Creativity: Music, Theatre Collaboration* Sawyer takes an operational view of improvising ensembles by expanding on Peirce's concept of indexicality. He does so through the writings of linguists Jakobson (1960; 1971), Keenan (1971), Levinson (1983) and Silverstein (1976; 1979; 1984; 1993) whilst integrating Mead's concept of emergence to create a model of group creativity. Sawyer's theories inspired the theoretical framework for this research and instigated a search for a practical method to apply this theory.

Methods as to how to explore the constraining interactional forces in improvised performance resulting from Mead's emergent led to Crook's 'target approach' (1991: 11). The target approach is a concept that counters what Crook refers to as 'ready, fire, aim approach' (Crook 1991: 11), where one improvises impulsively and hopes for the best. The target approach determines a specific goal within a task and adopts predetermined constraints as a means of reducing the improvisational variables in order to focus attention on the task at hand. Crook (1991: 11) asserts that focused attention on a singular topic increases one's familiarity and therefore, one's ability to integrate the acquired skills more creatively and musically during the performance. Mead's (1932) concept of emergent constraints and Crook's target approach led to the development of improvisation exercises.

3.3 Improvisation Exercises: Theory and Intentions

Improvisation exercises are intended to reduce the potentially infinite options in improvised music settings by focusing on a given task and making musical decisions within given constraints. In doing so, participants are limited to working with materials they predict will aid in achieving the predetermined goal. In communication intentions, improvised materials are largely framed within stylistic contexts, exhibiting particular stylistic characteristics despite being free from predetermined stylistic conventions. This approach creates what Schön (1983) refers to as 'problem setting' and Sawyer (2003) as 'problem finding'³³; "a process in which, interactively, we name things to which we will attend and frame the context in which we will attend to them" (Schön, 2003: 40). Here, problems are set and framed in a context requiring solutions to be mapped into the constraints of the exercise. The existence of constraints provides parameters for the practitioner and allows for wrong and right actions to be determined.

Applying a process or goal within boundaries pushes the musicians to make sense of a specific musical situation and consequently build a repertoire of materials based on memories of past experiences. Such a process can result in new ways of viewing particular goals or tasks and result in new ways of approaching execution through the application of new techniques. The following discussion provides the methodological approach to the workshopping of improvisation exercises through the following example.

In performance situations, improvisers may freely oscillate between various musical stimuli, however, improvisation exercises require focus on a singular topic as a guiding impetus.

³³ According to J. W. Getzels & M. Csikszentmihalyi (1976), problem finding refers to creative acts that begin without a premeditated plan of execution. The artist is confronted by a problem and begins to solve the problem. In contrast, a creative act that begins with a detailed plan of execution requires problem-solving.

What I anticipate will be interesting will be to observe how improvisers deal with musical scenarios that challenge their internal reservoir. Will adjustments be made for more ‘musical’ outcomes or will ‘rules’ be maintained?

Improvisation exercises intend to further my understanding of the various ways my co-performers behave in particular improvised musical scenarios. This understanding hopes to expand and refine intersubjective information pertaining to these scenarios and facilitate the group's ability to self-organise and coordinate improvised content. During these exercises, I attempt to generate content supportive of my co-performers and the group sound by drawing upon techniques that manipulate musical elements within the context of the defined style. During this process, I experience a growing self-awareness facilitated by self-knowledge, promoted by self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery (see Hiles 2008: 4). Ideally, the aim of heuristic inquiry³⁴ is the transformative effect the process has on my own experience. Knowledge gained from the experience of improvising within specific parameters provides a more informed understanding of how the members of *Omelette* react in particular circumstances, and my role within this group process. Heuristic trial and error has proven to be an effective method in navigating constraint-based improvisation exercises with specific guidelines and objectives and learning from both negative and positive outcomes.

The purpose of asking *Omelette* to participate in improvisation exercises was to gain an accurate understanding of *Omelette*'s current approaches to free jazz improvisation and consider how they could be revitalised to broaden our perspectives. Examining the ways an

³⁴ The pioneer of heuristic research, humanistic psychologist Clark Moustakas (see Moustakas 1990) was interested in discovering the nature and meaning of experience through a systematic and transparent methodology of self-inquiry. The term heuristic derives from the Greek word *heuriskein*, meaning to find or discover and for Moustakas, this focused on human knowing. According to Moustakas (1990: 9), heuristic inquiry requires the self of the researcher to be present throughout the process.

improvising group approaches their practice is generally considered a worthwhile exercise.

MacDonald and Wilson state,

Benefits to creative practice and the development of creative practitioners may accrue if performers gain a new perspective on longer-term collaborations that they may rarely discuss among themselves. (MacDonald & Wilson, 2006:4)

However, as MacDonald and Wilson point out, improvising musicians rarely agree to discuss the finer details of what they do when improvising, and often prefer to leave the processes unexamined in case such deep reflection affects their creativity in some way. Instead of asking improvisers to discuss their approaches to improvisation, improvisation exercises are a way of understanding the performance mechanisms that underlie free jazz improvisations as a means of developing in the short-term, a level of understanding akin to that develops more organically in long-term collaborations. It assumes that stylistic traits are largely recognisable and therefore can function as a common ‘language’ of sorts. As such, the introduction of a carefully designed set of improvisation exercises will provide an opportunity to observe the ways indices of style represent participants’ indexical presuppositions of a style by the way stylistic characteristics contribute to the creation of intersubjective communicative pathways. Introducing targeted exercises into how *Omelette* improvises is intended to clarify how intersubjectivity develops within emergent processes of the ensemble’s music.

Because improvisation exercises are designed to allow the concepts of indexicality, emergence and intersubjectivity to be made apparent within certain controlled conditions, they intentionally focus on these concepts to varying degrees as a means of developing a greater understanding of both individual and group operations during performance. The exercises primarily draw attention to the ways a musical style is engaged to achieve a

predetermined outcome. In doing so, intersubjectivity is developed by familiarising the musicians with each other's indexical presuppositions, especially the stylistic sources associated with improvised content as communicated through embodied stylistic characteristics. Intersubjective awareness does not mean musicians can anticipate the actions of others but rather provides more confidence about each other's responsive options in terms of stylistic variables. As previously mentioned, intersubjectivity is equally understood through misunderstandings and rather than thought of as shared agreements, is best considered as "a process of coordination of individual contributions to joint activity" (Matusov, 2010: 34).

In simulating performance scenarios, improvisation exercises encourage performance strategies that alert improvisers to potential performance options based on experiences of what works as well as what does not work. While all exercises rely on intensive listening, some require more challenging actions, perhaps beyond the realms of performance, to achieve a designated goal. However, in attempting to achieve the goal, participants learn from individual and group actions.

3.3.1 Creating Improvisation Exercises

Using improvisation exercises to disrupt entrenched behaviour and challenge performers' commitment to exploration and musical renewal is not a new idea (Stevens, 1985; Dean, 1989; Bradlyn, 1991; Nunn, 1998; Crook, 1991; 1993; 2006 and Hall, 2009). However, some extant exercises imply stylistic convention while the majority are heavily text-based and impractical for workshop situations. I intended to create clear and concise exercises that could be brought into workshops with minimal discussion in order to elicit unbiased results.

In *Wisdom of the Impulse: On the Nature of Musical Free Improvisation*, Tom Nunn states:

Many practicing improvisers and groups experiment (in the privacy of a rehearsal) by trying different "exercises" or "plans." Of course, it does not negate their practice of free improvisation simply because artificial restrictions are imposed; instead, it allows improvisers to explore specific aspects of the process more deeply by focusing on particular issues. What is learned from this may then be incorporated (consciously and or subconsciously) into performance (Nunn, 1998: 32).

The parameters of improvisation exercises act as artificially imposed constraints (Nunn, 1998: 32) that are not inherent in a free jazz improvisation performance context even though the indexed style encourages coherence within the emergent music. Conversely then, improvisation exercises allow the generation of materials or processes that otherwise may not occur in performances where goals are not predetermined. In effect, the structural frameworks of the improvisation exercises themselves provide a structural awareness and highlight possibilities that can be brought to performances.

Therefore, the intention of an improvisation exercise is not to recreate workshop outcomes by ingraining particular performance mechanisms and undermine spontaneity in the performed improvisation. Instead, improvisation exercises aim to create an environment where musicians can develop a framework of communication based on an understanding of what is meant or understood by a sound, which in essence is a revelation of his or her indices of style.

In order to ensure the musicians were comfortable with the improvisation exercises, they were tailored to fit in with *Omelette*'s existing performance practices. Exercises that differed radically from *Omelette*'s usual practice would have changed how the group typically

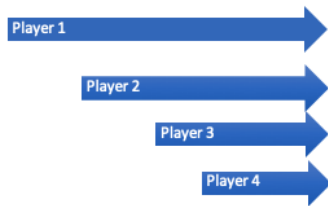
operates, thereby obscuring the very mechanisms the research is aiming to lay bare. At the same time, the exercises were designed to encourage a change in both approach and performance. Within *Omelette*, some approaches became stagnant and exhausted over time. Some performances began to feel repetitive and as if the group had become reliant on tired conventions. In order to instil new creative approaches, it was first necessary to identify existing ones. The analysis of *Omelette*'s existing practices was anticipated to guide the development of improvisation exercises. This analysis could help explore how *Omelette* could create contrasting sections of extended improvisations; foster ways of signalling changes and creating transitions between sections; explore leading and following role reversals; create interesting ways of ending improvisations as opposed to traditional fade-outs and develop ostinatos as effective performance vehicles.

I intended to design exercises with instructions that avoided stylistic implications and instead focused on structural goals. As such, indices of style would play a key role in communicating the required actions to achieve the predetermined goal. I anticipated these actions would reveal the ways indices of style facilitate structure in free jazz improvisation. I initially created text-only instructions³⁵, that soon became apparent were impractical. It was unanimous to *Omelette* that reading instructions while performing detracted from focusing on listening and improvising. Therefore, clear instructions were prioritised to reduce discussion before playing that may have influenced improvisers in any way. Consequently, nine improvisation exercises were created and presented in a simplified format consisting of diagrams accompanied by minimal text, as illustrated in the example below.

³⁵ See Appendix A

1. *Layering Ostinatos*

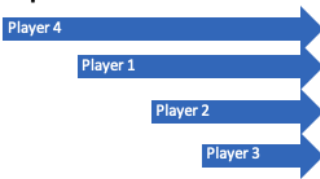
Step 1:



Step 2:

1. Player 1 drops out at own discretion
2. Player 2 drops out at own discretion
3. Player 3 drops out at own discretion
4. Player 4's ostinato starts new exercise (as per step 1)

Step 3:



Step 4:

Finish when all players have had a turn at starting a cycle.

Figure 10. Exercise 1: *Layering Ostinatos* diagram

A simplified structural overview presented in workshops before commencing each exercise helped improvisers memorise the instructions, plan an approach to the exercise and optimise focus when performing. In summary, the improvisation exercises have three specific aims: First, to familiarise participants with the denotational aspects of improvised content generated under simulated performance conditions. In other words, what style is implied by an improvised sound? Here it is important to reiterate that as all improvised sounds lend themselves to some stylistic association, the concept of indices of style is initially engaged at the denotational level before considering how improvised content is generated at the connotative level. Second, to ascertain how improvised sounds and potential stylistic sources of these sounds relate to one's presuppositions. In other words, what sources are triggered by an improvised sound? Third, to explore the stylistic range of potential improvised content implicated through connotational sources in relation to denotational aspects. Relating connotational sources to denotational aspects explores the potential range of responsive

options regarding the style implied from a given sound. Procedurally, the investigation was driven by three questions:

- (i) What style is implied by the sound?
- (ii) What is the potential source(s)?
- (iii) How can this source(s) be collectively explored?

3.4 Practice-led Research

Essentially, practice-led research involves applying theory to practice. Within my practice-led research, I adopt two common approaches of experimentation, as suggested by Schön (1991) and Smith and Dean (2010). They are a goal-oriented approach and an exploratory process. The goal-oriented approach relates to the workshopping of improvisation exercises that have a specified goal and objective, however, the goal-oriented approach will adopt an exploratory approach to work towards a predetermined goal. Studio recordings and live performances involve an exploratory process in which there are no expectations or predictions. Both during and after workshops and following performances, I took journal notes of observations, guided by my adapted version of Spradley's (1979) "Nine Dimension" ethnographic framework. The components of his framework describe the relationship between social and cultural aspects and performance activities, as illustrated in *Figure 8* below:

Dimension	Descriptor
Space and context	Physical layout of the space and things that are present: What is the location? What is the setting? What is the environment? What is the context?
Actors	Range of people involved: Who is being observed? Who are they with? What is their role? How do they carry themselves? How would you describe them?
Activity and Events	A set of related activities that occur: What happened during the observation? What are the people being observed doing? Were there any challenges encountered? The sequencing of events that occur.
Words	What is being said? How is it being said? What vocabulary is being used?
Goal	Things that people try to accomplish.
Feeling	Emotions felt and expressed. What is the tone? What is the emotion? What are the feelings? What is going on socially? Are there any cultural considerations?

Figure 11. Adapted Ethnographic Framework (Spradley, 1979).

The framework functioned as a checklist for point-form notes or brief comments to each descriptor. These recordings assisted the write-up process of ethnographic accounts to help recall greater detail and to confirm my observations. In writing each ethnographic account, I adopted what Clifford Geertz (1973) terms ‘thick’ description: noting as much detail as accurately as I could as “a way of providing cultural context and meaning, that people place on actions, words, things *etc.*” (Geertz, 1973: 4). Writing ethnographic accounts of live performances and studio recordings that incorporate the social interactions surrounding performance activities has been extraordinarily helpful in terms of my reflection on, interpretation of and communication within intersubjectivity, especially how it informs the emergent constraints and indices of style underscoring my work with *Omelette*.

Observations from the workshopping of improvisation exercises are described in detail below. The discussion aims to reveal what was learnt from each exercise and how this information has influenced the folio recordings.

3.5 Rehearsing the Improvisation Exercises

Improvisation exercises were conducted in four three hours long, monthly workshops prior to the studio recording of the CDs *On This Day* (2013) and the live recording *Omelette: Live at the Jazz Lab* (2017).

Workshop No.	Date	Location	Participants
1 (3hrs)	5 th August 2013	Victorian College of the Arts	Ferella, Murray, Shepherd and Magnusson
2 (3hrs)	9 th September 2013	Ronny Ferella's home studio	Ferella, Murray, Shepherd and Magnusson
3 (3hrs)	7 th October 2013	Steven Magnusson's lounge room	Ferella, Murray, Shepherd and Magnusson
4 (3hrs)	4 th November 2013	Victorian College of the Arts	Ferella, Murray, Shepherd and Magnusson

Figure 12. *On This Day* workshops schedule

Workshop No.	Date	Location	Participants
1 (3hrs)	8 th May 2017	Monash University	Ferella, Murray, Fredes and Magnusson
2 (3hrs)	5 th June 2017	Ronny Ferella's lounge room	Ferella, Murray, Fredes and Howard
3 (3hrs)	3 rd July 2017	Cross Street band room	Ferella, Murray, Fredes and Howard
4 (3hrs)	7 th August 2017	Monash University	Ferella, Murray, Fredes and Howard

Figure 13. *Omelette: Live at the Jazz Lab* workshops schedule

Participants were presented with identical booklets containing each numbered and titled improvisation exercise. Participants were given a few minutes to view each exercise and ask questions before playing. Some exercises required a brief discussion regarding the assignment of duos or someone to start an improvisation before commencing. Once instructions were clear, no discussion took place during improvisations.

Each workshop was recorded on either a Zoom H2 portable field recorder or an iPhone except for the 4th November workshop which was recorded by Niko Schauble on a mobile recording studio for a higher quality recording. The recordings from the November 4th workshop form the improvisation exercises folio. Shorthand notes were documented after most takes to assist journal entries which were made either the same day or day after each workshop and recording with the assistance of Spradley's (1979) adapted ethnographic framework. These notes included observations of both musical and social activity surrounding performances to maintain accuracy and provide an accurate representation of the research.

3.6 Ethnographic Accounts of the Folio Recordings

The ethnographic accounts are primarily informed from my observations during performances as a participant-observer. Studio recordings afforded opportunities to take brief notes during and in between takes, however, the time constraints and conventions of live recordings did not permit this kind of in-performance documentation. As such, both live and studio recording situations were followed by, either on the same day or day after, my recollections guided by an adaptation of Spradley's ethnographic framework and with no audio reference. Further developments of the ethnographic accounts were later supported by listening back to rough mixes of the recordings that either confirmed or challenged my original observations. Observation during performance and post-performance reflection, while listening to recordings, has assisted journaling of my awareness of personal and group idiosyncratic behaviour about *Omelette*'s intersubjective knowledge base.

One month after the final workshop of improvisation exercises, the first recording was made on 19th December 2013, at Pug House Studios in Northcote, Melbourne. The four members of *Omelette* were assigned to isolated recording booths with headphone monitoring between each room and a personal mixer to facilitate control of audio levels. A line of sight was maintained between the group with the recording engineer centrally located in the recording room. The first hour was spent setting headphone levels. For me, the quality of the headphone mix bears a significant influence on my studio performance experience. To overcome the isolation inherent in some studio recordings, a clear and well-balanced headphone mix is preferred before any recording takes place. In this instance, my headphone mix was remarkable, featuring a hint of reverb emulating the quality of a church or large hall which generated a feeling of ease and comfort when playing the trombone. Adversely, a dry 'dead' room can make playing a brass instrument feel more cumbersome, harder to play and

fatigue more rapidly. Upon reflection, the reverberant ‘church-like’ quality in my headphones created a focus on my tone and hence explored a classical sensibility in my improvisations.

While setting recording levels, it was interesting to note what was played by each member of the group and how this set the character and mood for what was to follow in the recording.

Upon setting the headphone and recording levels, the group agreed to record a single take, review the balance and mix and continue recording as desired with intermittent breaks.

During workshops of improvisation exercises in the months leading up to the recording, I had stressed that the outcomes of improvisation exercises were not intended to be replicated in the recording session if possible. Instead, the recording was to be an opportunity to observe if and in what ways the influence of improvisation exercises may present in the music. I

requested that the group treat the studio recording as any other *Omelette* performance of free improvised music. I was mindful not to say anything before recording that would influence my co-performers in any way. As such, the only comment I made regarding the music was, "Let's see what happens". No sheet music or instructions were provided for all improvisations except for the final take that was loosely based on the Cole Porter jazz standard *I Love You*.

The recording proceeded for five hours in total, and a total of 17 improvisations were recorded. The evening and day after the recording, I reflected on my notes from the session to commence my ethnographic account guided by Spradley’s framework.

As per the first recording session, the second recording (The Jazz Lab, 2017, Melbourne) was undertaken, again one month after four monthly workshops of improvisation exercises.

Omelette arrived two hours before the advertised start time to set up, allowing the sound engineer to set recording levels. The addition of pianist Luke Howard and percussionist Javier Fredes and omission of bassist Mark Shepherd and guitarist Stephen Magnusson was a

significant change in instrumentation as well as musical identities. As explained in the studio recording, the music played during the setting of levels again set a character and mood for what was to follow in the recording. The piano's dominance as an instrument capable of covering all roles combined with Howard's command of the instrument made it challenging to maintain independence from his influence. Before the audience arrival, *Omelette* recorded *Doxa* to allow for a videographer to capture footage for both research and promotional purposes. In this instance, no headphone mix was provided, but a foldback mix was present in the on-stage monitors. Following the recording of *Doxa*, *Omelette* took a short break to allow the audience to be seated before continuing with the first set. Due to the presence of a live audience, this recording was to proceed as a regular *Omelette* live performance. *Omelette* played one continuous improvisation for the first set. After a break of fifteen minutes, *Omelette* returned to the stage for the second set and played another two improvisations to end the performance. As before, I noted my observations of events on the following day.

3.7 Structure of the Analyses

The analyses of the three improvisations used in this study will each be prefaced by an ethnographic account. Each ethnographic account is coded with acronyms to highlight musical occurrences. These acronyms are illustrated in *Figure 19* in Chapter Four.

Occurrences identified in the text of the ethnographic account will be followed by the acronym indicating its relationship to the relative category. Following the ethnographic account, a more detailed analysis is conducted. While I acknowledge that ethnographic accounts do not capture every musical occurrence during an improvisation, the purpose is to observe musical activities through a first-person lens for a broader intersubjective perspective of free jazz improvisation. Such a viewpoint aims to provide a perspective that scrutinises the process underlying *Omelette's* approach to free jazz improvisation, the occurrences these

processes create and the role improvisation exercises may or may not have played in the development of these processes.

Chapter Four
Indices of Style in Practice

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is presented in two sections. The first section presents the outcomes from workshops of improvisation exercises. While diagrams and descriptions of each exercise are located in Appendix B, the diagrams below are presented for convenience and followed by a discussion regarding observations made during the recorded workshopping of improvisation exercises. The second section comprises analyses of three folio works taken from a recording in front of a live audience and a studio recording. The details of each recording are listed below.

Recording Title	<i>Esteban</i>
Date	December 19 th , 2013
Recording URL Link	Click here
Location	Pughouse Studios, Melbourne
Live or studio recording	Studio
Edits	Mixed and mastered at Pughouse Studios
Preparation	Four monthly sessions of improvisation exercises
Take Number	1/1
Performers	Mark Shepherd (bass), Stephen Magnusson (guitar), Ronny Ferella (drums), Jordan Murray (trombone)

Recording Title	<i>Doxa</i>
Date	September 5 th , 2017
Recording URL Link	Click here (also video link here)
Location	Jazz Lab jazz club, Melbourne
Live or studio recording	Live recording
Edits	Mixed and mastered by Phillip Rex
Preparation	Four monthly sessions of improvisation exercises
Take Number	1/1
Performers	Javier Fredes (percussion), Luke Howard (piano), Ronny Ferella (drums), Jordan Murray (trombone)

Recording Title	<i>One for Four</i>
Date	December 19 th , 2013
Recording URL Link	Click here
Location	Pughouse Studios, Melbourne
Live or studio recording	Studio recording
Edits	Mixed and mastered at Pughouse Studios
Preparation	Four monthly sessions of improvisation exercises
Take Number	1/1
Performers	Mark Shepherd (bass), Stephen Magnusson (guitar), Ronny Ferella (drums), Jordan Murray (trombone)

Figure 14. Production notes of three folio works

In exploring these works, I illustrate how the concept of indices of style informs my work with *Omelette*. Each analysis consists of two sections. First, a first-person ethnographic account articulates the observations, feelings and thoughts that inform my performative actions. In each account, a code is assigned to specific musical events, relating to three categories: concepts, events and improvisation exercises. The code is recorded at the end of the relevant passage of text. *Figure 18* tabulates the musical event and the corresponding acronym.

Concept	
Indices of Style	IOS / [name of style]
Emergent Constraints	EC
Intersubjectivity	INT
Events	
Solo introductions	SI
Transitions	T
Episodes	E
Codal Misinterpretation	CM
Improvisation Exercise	

Layering Ostinatos	LO
Layering Contrasting Ostinatos	LCO
Shadow Duos	SD
Creating Section & Finding Endings	CS & FE
First Idea	FI
Remember What Was Played	RWWP
Hidden Grooves and Signalling	HG & S
Making Tunes	MT
Hidden Grooves and Making Tunes	HG & MT

Figure 15. Coded key of concepts, event and improvisation exercises

Second, I use the ethnographic accounts as an analytical lens from which to explore five areas of enquiry; intersubjectivity, indexicality, emergence, events and evidence of improvisation exercises. The analysis will also illustrate if or in what ways these concepts have led to musical events and what evidence can be drawn to illustrate the influence improvisation exercises had on these musical works. As discussed in Chapter Three, the opening moments of a free jazz improvisation establish a character and mood from which all other material unfolds in response. As such, each analysis will pay specific attention to the role indices of style play in these initial moments in establishing a pretext from which developing material can be contextualised.

In summary, this chapter explores how indices of style inform my approach to free jazz improvisation and address how the concepts of indexicality, intersubjectivity and emergence have contributed to the group improvisation process.

4.2 Improvisation Exercises

4.2.1 Exercise 1: Layering Ostinatos³⁶

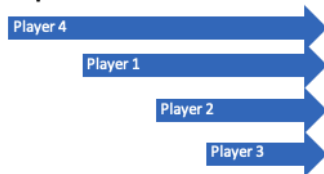
Step 1:



Step 2:

1. Player 1 drops out at own discretion
2. Player 2 drops out at own discretion
3. Player 3 drops out at own discretion
4. Player 4's ostinato starts new exercise (as per step 1)

Step 3:



Step 4:

Finish when all players have had a turn at starting a cycle.

Figure 16 Exercise 1: *Layering Ostinatos* diagram

Observations

This audio example illustrates the influence of Frisell in Magnusson's creation of the opening ostinato. From a range of influences at his disposal, Magnusson chooses elements of Frisell's style as most suitable for creating the ethereal and mysterious character and mood that best supports the minimalist design of his ostinato. It appears Magnusson is careful in his design not to exert constraining harmonic and rhythmic forces overtly, thus demonstrating his considerate and collegial approach. The subtle triplet implication in Magnusson's ostinato is reflected in Ferella's groove that similarly shows his participatory allegiance to the evolving emergent. This groove also reveals Ferella's predisposition for traditional African rhythms that connotes the sound worlds from earlier *Omelette* repertoire based on Ethiopian folk songs. In response to the emergent, I create a single pitch rhythmic ostinato that follows the

³⁶ The audio for this example can be found here: <https://doi.org/10.26180/13180430>. Also, see Appendix B for the objectives of this exercise.

structure and minimalist implications of Magnusson's ostinato and connotations of Ferella's groove. Adding the final layer to this exercise is Shepherd's ostinato that is strategically active during my inactivity, thereby creating a call and response motion. Furthermore, Shepherd's motif reflects Ferella's rhythmic impetus again illustrating intersubjective presuppositions.

Personal approaches to this exercise indicate variations in flexibility or artistic license taken by improvisers regarding constraints. While some participants strictly adhere to the conditions, others took greater liberties however eventually adapted to accommodate the more musical and cohesive outcome. Generally speaking, all members largely adhered to stylistic parameters by exhibiting improvised content that was coherent or complementary to a given context. Such considerate attributes highlight the attention to one's impression of another's identity (or internal reservoir) that ultimately informs how one listens to (or for) another and informs decisions or presuppositions that include another.

4.2.2 Exercise 2: *Layering Contrasting Ostinatos*³⁷

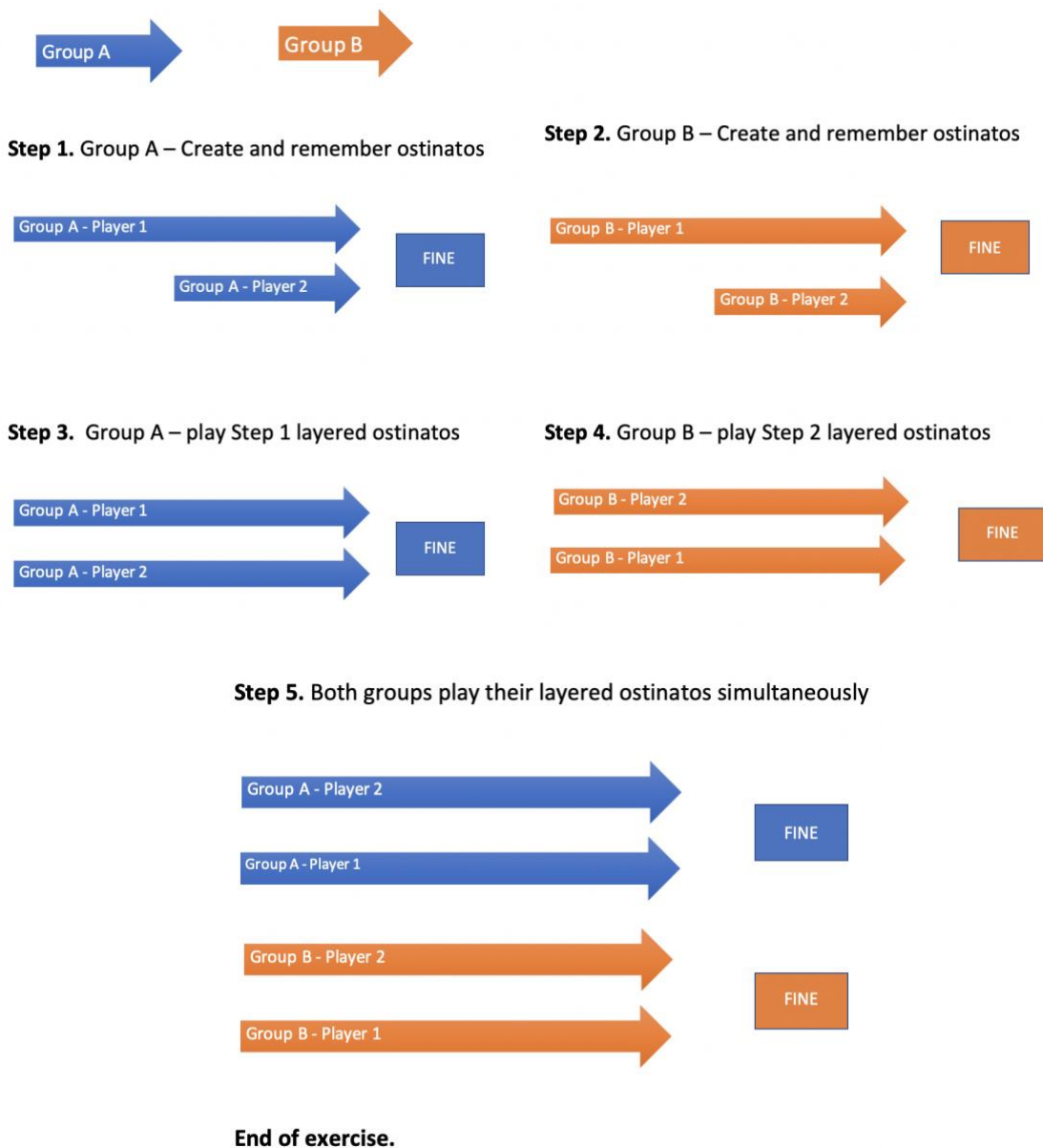


Figure 17. Exercise 2: *Layering Contrasting Ostinatos* diagram

Observations

³⁷ The audio for the example can be found here: <https://doi.org/10.26180/13180436>. See Appendix B for the objectives of this exercise.

This example further exemplifies the lengths at which participants extend their skills in order to generate a cohesive outcome. The exercise does not specify ostinatos are required to relate to each other, however, the outcome is telling as to the relationships between the participants. What is interesting about this recording is how the two contrasting duos, each composed of contrasting individual parts, created independently and without pitch reference, amalgamate in the last stage to form something cohesive. It illustrates individual awareness of orchestration; where improvisers demonstrate an understanding of how their parts influence and engage with others. Inactive ostinatos illustrate an understanding that the layering of simple parts is capable of creating complexity. As such, I intended to begin with a simple four-note ostinato, assuming complexity would derive from the addition of three other parts. Again, Shepherd adopts a call and response approach in response to my ostinato by playing in between each of my long notes. The fact Magnusson and Ferella can preview the first duo before creating their duo, and knowing both duos are to be unified later in the exercise, magnifies their intention to either be cohesive or antagonistic. While individual ostinatos in this example exhibit little relatability, except for Magnusson's descending line that mirrors my ascending line, there is no discernible steady tempo holding the two duos together, yet the group appears to move synchronously.

This exercise further instils a sense of trust within the group that despite seemingly unrelated and highly contrasting and competing elements, participants are willing to make adjustments to their performance while maintaining artistic integrity.

4.2.3 Exercise 3: *Shadow – Duos*³⁸

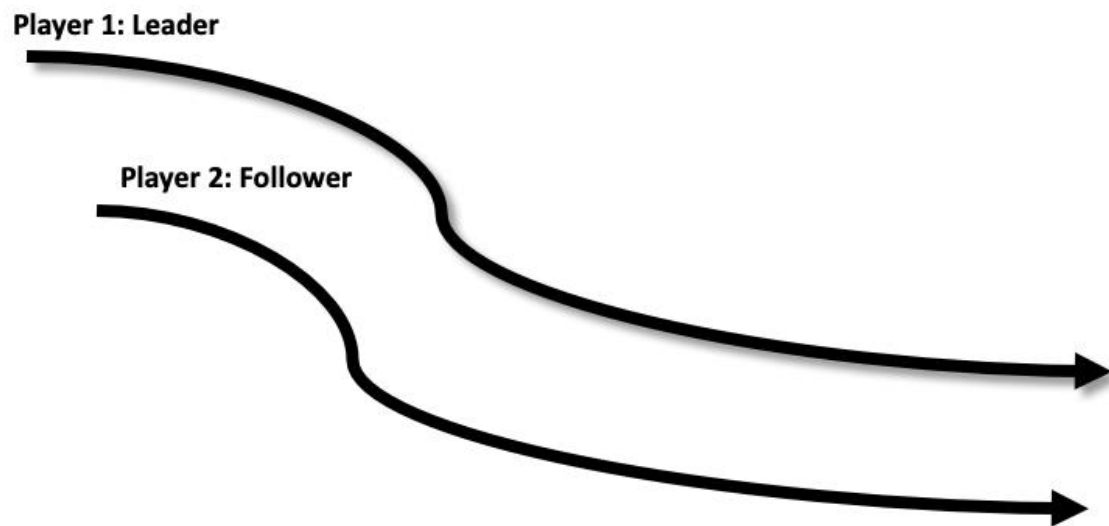


Figure 18. Exercise 3: *Shadow - Duos* diagram

Observations

A resounding theme emerging from these exercises is the way *Omelette* adapt and adhere to emergent constraints in ways that benefit the consensus of the group sound. They do this by drawing on stylistic elements from influential sources they deem suitable to satisfy the requirements of the conditions.

This exercise reveals the way leaders construct phrases that, within these adopted stylistic guidelines, assist by making it clear for the follower. In both duos, it is evident that the leaders adopted the motion-pause framework; a technique later reflected in *Doxa* between

³⁸ The audio for this example can be found here: <https://doi.org/10.26180/13180604>. Also, the objectives of this exercise can be found in Appendix B.

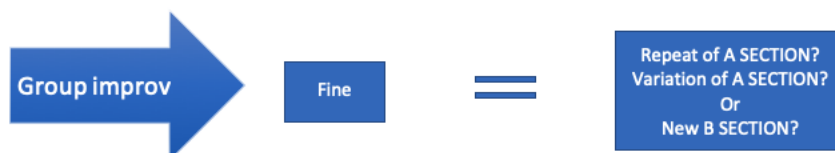
Howard and me. The general phrase length and rhythmic structure are repeated that increases predictability and increases synchronicity. Alternatively, at times the evolving emergent is prioritised to further musical developments despite the specified constraints of the exercise. Such an instance is evident towards the end of Magnusson's and Shepherd's duo, where codal misinterpretation as intentions are misunderstood and initiates a breakdown of the leader-follower relationship. This situation generates a form of engagement that is unlikely to happen in the less constrained context of performance but in doing so, discovers methods of engagement that may increase performance options.

4.2.4 Exercise 4: *Creating Sections and Finding Endings*³⁹

Step 1. Begin as desired. Create something and once established, find a way to bring it to and end



Step 2. Repeat it? Vary it? Create something new? Once established, find a way to bring it to an end.



Step 3. Repeat it? Vary it? Create something new? Once established, find a way to bring it to an end.



Figure 19. Exercise 4: *Creating Sections & Finding Endings* diagram

³⁹ The audio for this example can be found here: <https://doi.org/10.26180/13180619>. Also, the objectives of this exercise can be found in Appendix B.

Observations

One would assume that exercises instructed to 'begin as desired' would attract a more staggered or minimalist approach. However, Ferella appears to adopt a particular liking to commencing exercises simultaneously that initiates a situation whereby participants find themselves rapidly searching: improvising while listening for emergent characteristics that establish some semblance to the context. While generating more immediate pressure, this approach elicits different musical outcomes to those from minimalist beginnings. The influence of improvisations commencing simultaneously are evident on *Doxa* and two tracks from *On This Day*, *Temporal Slave* and *There You Have It*.

In this improvisation exercise example, the eighth note groove emerges and, combined with my folk or child-like melody, generates a more festive and upbeat atmosphere. Magnusson further develops the emergent through blues inflections and a country music 'twang' that connotes Frisell influences. While free improvised endings tend to naturally decay by 'fading out' or coincidentally synchronise via a repetitive rhythmic figure, this exercise created an unusual circumstance of actively initiating an ending in contrast to collectively waiting for it to happen. It reinforced various forms of signalling such as diminuendos, ritardandos, overt repetitions of materials, often resulting in miscommunications (codal misinterpretation) due to differing intentions. Nevertheless, it supported intersubjective understandings of what aspects worked and those that did not work.

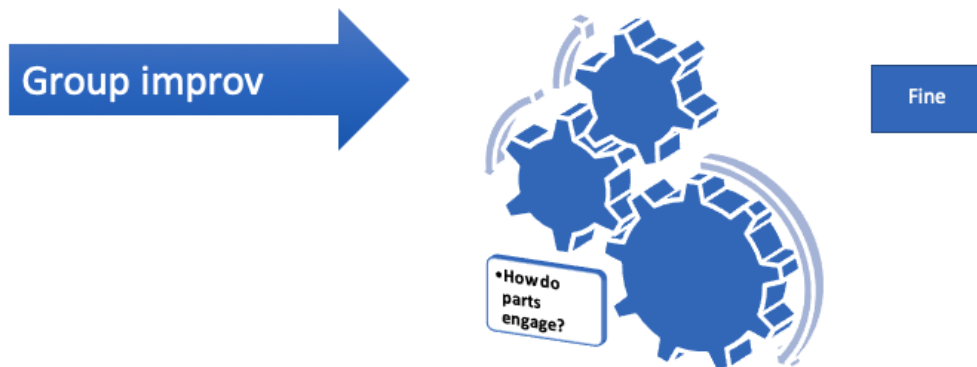
The beginning to the second indicates a new section by starting with Ferella's swing feel brushes on the snare drum to which I concur with jazz phrasing. However, Magnusson's angular voicing and Shepherd arco style index a free jazz sensibility that seems to dismantle the groove into various arrhythmic disparate parts that hints at avant-garde influences. This

series of events leans towards moments of codal misinterpretation in search of direction. However, the emergence of sustained activity appears to generate harmonic definition that draws the group together and leads to an ethereal fade out.

The third section starts in a pointillistic fashion, but Magnusson's slower reiteration of his motif from section one signifies a variation of the first section. Ferella seizes on Magnusson's motivic repetition and responds with a reggae-influenced groove, and the group proceeds to refashion material from section one. The concept of recapitulating ideas from previous sections reveals its influence in *Doxa* when the piano interlude returns at the end of the improvisation.

4.2.5 Exercise 5: *First Idea*⁴⁰

Step 1. Start as desired. Use initial material for duration of group improvisation.



Step 2. Modify material from Step 1 or alter form of engagement.



Figure 20. Exercise 5: *First Idea* diagram

Observations

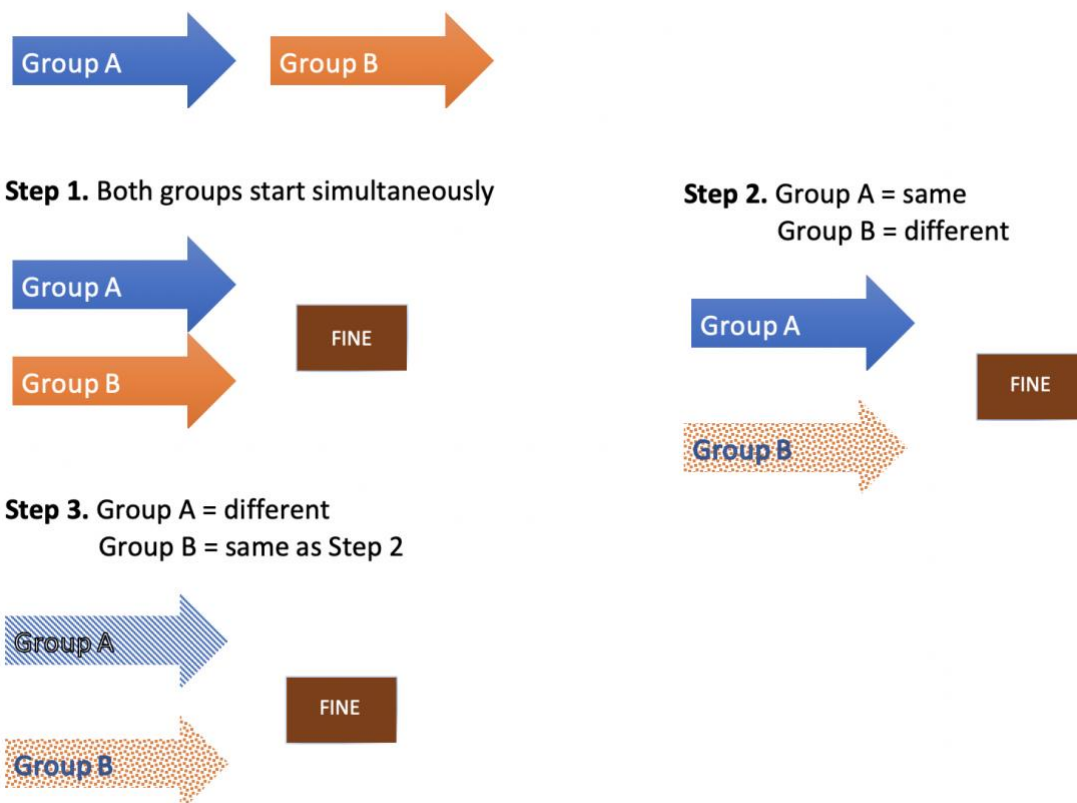
This example appears to exhibit influence from exercises that divide the group into duos while playing contrasting material simultaneously. These characteristics are a likely result of workshopping two duo exercises before this exercise. The juxtaposition of contrasting material creates an effect similar to that made famous by composer Charles Ives where parts operate independently and unaffected by each other to create a sonic collage. Magnusson and I are paired in a rubato ballad style improvisation sharing similar harmonic and rhythmic motion while Ferella's groove and Shepherd's arrhythmic improvisation are unrelated to each other or my duo with Magnusson. Shepherd adapts to the tonality of our duo but maintains

⁴⁰ The audio for this example can be found here: <https://doi.org/10.26180/13180622> Also, the objectives of this exercise can be found in Appendix B.

rhythmic independence. This assertion of independence from the three contrasting elements maintained throughout the improvisation is somewhat of a statement towards an intentional juxtaposed aesthetic.

This exercise expanded my concept of intersubjectivity as something represented primarily through synchronous acts by illustrating that *Omelette* can interact effectively and maintain awareness of other's actions while operating independently. The influence of this exercise is made evident in the improvisation *There You Have It* (*Omelette*, 2013).

4.2.6 Exercise 6: *Remember What Was Played*⁴¹



⁴¹ The audio for this example can be found here: <https://doi.org/10.26180/13180628>. Also, the objectives of this exercise can be found in Appendix B.

Figure 21. Exercise 6: *Remember What Was Played* - Two Duos diagram

Observations

This exercise highlights particular indices of style that are adopted to negotiate and adapt to the conditions applied from starting simultaneously. With one group maintaining character in subsequent stages, the exercise observes how the other group responds (differs or assimilates) and what indices of style are engaged. When starting simultaneously, the first moments of the improvisation are crucial as performers make split-second decisions and responses.

Magnusson and Ferella seem to immediately coordinate their dark and brooding groove-based duo with no prior planning, however, one cannot account for the visual assistance that may have occurred. Upon hearing Shepherd's arco glissando, I immediately interpreted this as an avant-garde index and in relation to Magnusson and Ferella's duo, responded with slow glissandi based on a chromatic theme to reflect the character and mood. Magnusson also incorporates this chromaticism into his material. It is interesting to observe the influence of exercises pervading other exercises. In this example, evidence of *Shadow – duos* can be heard between myself and Shepherd and myself with Magnusson as our parts in opposing duos appears to emphasise chromatic movement. Additionally, the influence of the exercise *Creating Sections and Finding Endings* can be heard as correlations exist between the ending of this first episode and the ending of *One for Four (Omelette, 2013)*.

The final episode of this exercise illustrates the overarching chromatic theme that has emerged from the previous two episodes presents itself in this final episode. As such, Shepherd and I adopt an arrhythmic free jazz index that utilised a motion-pause phrase structure to assimilate with Magnusson's and Ferella's duo.

4.2.7 Exercise 7: *Hidden Grooves and Signalling*⁴²

Step 1: Start simultaneously and find groove #1



Step 2: While in groove #1: *Signal* - ONE person changes their part – all others also change to find new groove #2



Step 3: While in groove #2: *Signal* - ONE person chooses to change their part & all return to groove #1. Find an ending.



Figure 22. Exercise 7: *Hidden Grooves and Signalling* diagram

Observations

This example illustrates multiple indices of style that improvisers adapt to cater for integration with other indices. Magnusson's funk comping statement is the most overt stylistic indices however the group does not immediately follow this signal. Shepherd

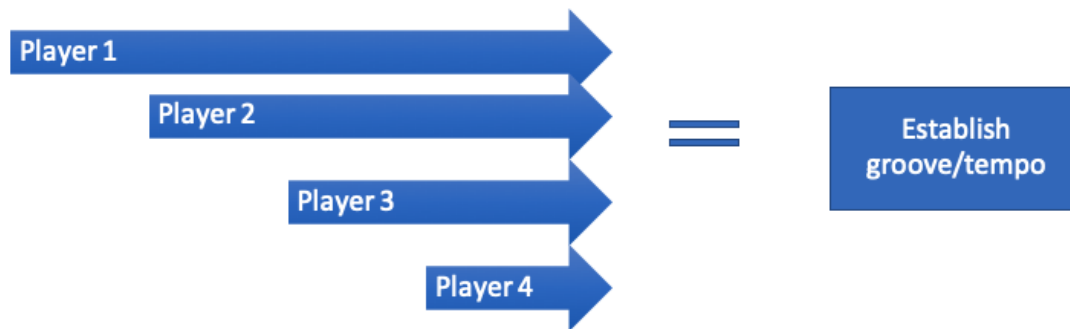
⁴² The audio for this example can be found here: <https://doi.org/10.26180/13180631>. Also, the objectives of this exercise can be found in Appendix B.

maintains an arrhythmic ostinato bassline from the outset which signals a consistency that is more likely to foster cohesion in contrast to a continually changing bassline. Its intervallic and rhythmic structure indexes a contemporary jazz style. The sustained notes provide harmonic context but do not apply strong rhythmic constraints. Ferella's avoidance of cymbals and use of cowbell in conjunction with Magnusson's tone and comping style implies connotations of Mahmoud Ahmed's Ethiopian music. The attention-grabbing timbre of the cowbell appears to synchronise with Magnusson's rhythmic activity and signify the beginning of a collective groove. Having played an active role in establishing the first groove, Ferella's cowbell again proves the signalling instigator of the transition into the second groove. I recall gravitating towards Magnusson's funk reference while drawing from free jazz sources due to the various indices of style but feeling a disconnect arising from a lack of interrelatedness between the disparate styles. Other exercises that exhibited juxtaposed contrasting styles had established connections within the duos, which seemed to bind the group despite stylistic differences.

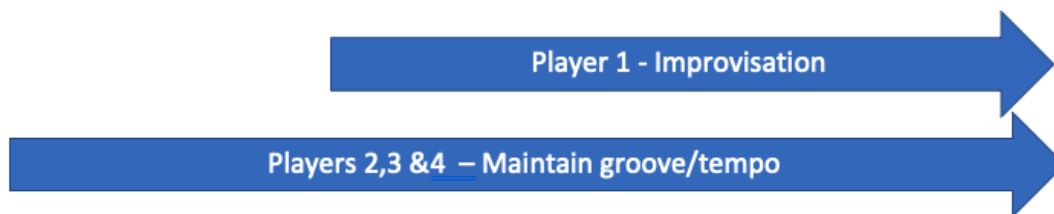
While an intention of improvisation exercises is to elicit new processes and approaches, they can be equally enlightening as to concepts that are not conducive to *Omelette's* collaborative practice. The combination of starting simultaneously and encouraging a groove to emerge was challenging and arguably resulted in significant codal misinterpretation. *Omelette's* natural tendency is to allow a subtler musical evolution rather than one actively seeking and individually instigating change. The concept of signalling and rapidly modulating to another groove proved potentially protruded *Omelette's* egalitarian ethos.

4.2.8 Exercise 8: *Making Tunes*⁴³

Step 1. Layer ostinatos



Step 2. Player 1 drops out and re-enters with improvisation



Step 3. Player 1 re-joins ostinato



Step 4. Repeat Step 2 & 3 until all players have improvised

Step 5. Reverse ostinato to finish

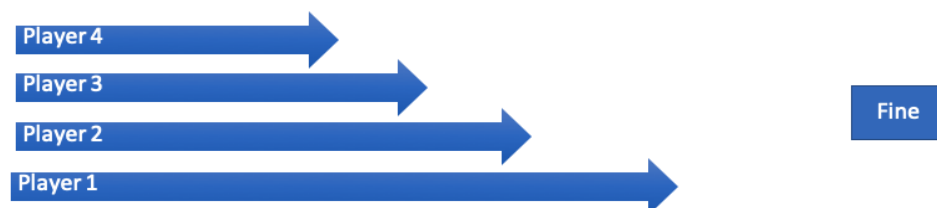


Figure 23. Exercise 8: *Making Tunes* diagram

⁴³ The audio for this example can be found here: <https://doi.org/10.26180/13180634>. Also, the objectives of this exercise can be found in Appendix B.

Observations

Ferella's ostinato features elements denoting a slow rock style, however, its irregular structure and use of brushes signify a more open approach. By open, I mean open to other influences and not strictly adhering to rock conventions. The minor tonality and progression of Magnusson's contribution elicits melancholic connotations and instead of strictly repeating content, improvises thematically over a four-bar chordal structure (Fmi – Bbmi – Fmi – Fmi). I follow the emergent structural and harmonic constraints by creating a simple three-note ostinato that provides a background role to not detract from Magnusson's activity. Shepherd too maintains simplicity through a two-note ostinato that further confirms the harmonic structure.

The folk-like arpeggiated style of Magnusson's improvisation signifies the influence of Frisell's music and emanates a powerful and emotive emergent and as such, is maintained throughout and thus a central element to this exercise. This exercise highlights particular indices of style, such as those evident in Magnusson's contribution, which resonate strongly with the group's indexical presuppositions as illustrated by the collective and sustained support.

4.2.9 Exercise 9: Hidden Grooves and Making Tunes⁴⁴

Step 1: Start simultaneously and find groove #1



Step 2: While in groove #1, *Signal* - ONE person chooses to change their part – all others also change to find a new groove



Step 3: While in groove #2, *Signal* - ONE person chooses to change their part and return to groove #1.



Step 4: While in groove #1: ONE person drops out and re-enters with improvised melody and solo

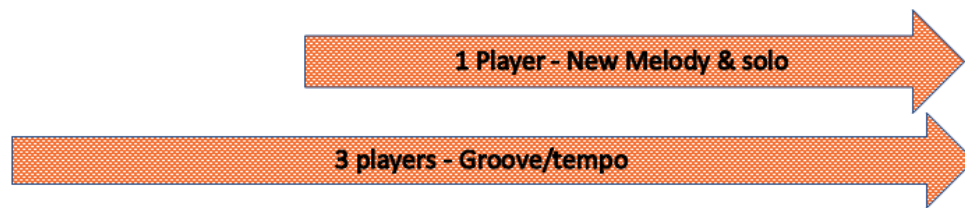


⁴⁴ The audio for this example can be found here: <https://doi.org/10.26180/13180637>. Also, the objectives of this exercise can be found in Appendix B.

Step 5: While in groove #1: *Signal* – End of solo – move into groove #2



Step 6: While in groove #2: ONE person drops out and re-enters with improvised melody and solo



Step 7: While in groove #2: *Signal* - End of solo – return to groove #1.



Step 8: Repeat stages 4 to 7 with alternating soloists.

Figure 24. Exercise 9: *Hidden Groove and Making Tunes* diagram

Observations

This exercise generates conditions that force *Omelette* to spontaneously adopt stylistic characteristics to address the sudden change in the groove that, at the time, maybe incongruent with *Omelette*'s aesthetic boundaries. While this may challenge intersubjectivity pertaining to the given context and result in codal misinterpretation, it is nevertheless

informative as to participants' stylistic predispositions. The inherent strength derived from the repetition of grooves can challenge the transition to new sections without significant disruption. Further, the exercise requirement of signalling and suddenly transitioning to another groove is a foreign concept to *Omelette*, but in doing so, elicits opportunities to address circumstances that may never arise in performances. In pursuing such exercises, ways of transitioning to new sections to generate episodic improvisations and overcome exhausted grooves or ostinatos may find their way into the group's store of signs.⁴⁵

In the seconds before commencing this exercise, I was creating a groove in my mind but would only realise its character in the opening few seconds when hearing it on context with others' contributions and then making split-second adjustments in response to the collective sound. In my experience, artistic decisions were often made before rehearsing an exercise and based on the requirements of the exercise while considering what music has taken place in the previous exercises. Additionally, improvising musicians generally pride themselves on being creative and avoiding excessive repetition, therefore I can only assume my idea was inspired by a style of music that had not preceded this exercise. My pre-emption of using the plunger mute indicated a premeditated approach, likely influenced by Anderson's more notable plunger performances on tango inspired tunes such as *Mona Lisa* (Anderson: 1989). The raw, guttural connotations from Anderson's influences combined with the task of creating an unmistakable groove with some kind of melodic character, resulted in initiating a prominent low root note and flat second degree that signified the Phrygian mode. In these few opening seconds, Ferella signifies his acknowledgement of my rhythmic motif through matching eighth note subdivisions and contributes a dub-reggae stylistic index through

⁴⁵ The group *Kneebody* provide an example of sophisticated signalling that underpins their performance approach.

flammed⁴⁶ quarter note triplets. Magnusson also quickly acknowledges the evolving emergent through signifying concurring eighth notes and chromatic material. Magnusson's country music articulation and tone and further compounds the stylistically varied context. Once the groove is established, Shepherd capitalises on Ferella's accented break in the groove to instigate the change into the second groove through an active bass line that demands the ensemble's attention. In doing so, this exercise serves as a reminder to listen attentively to how all parts engage in order for the next groove to emerge.

4.3 Improvisation Exercises Summary

Recordings of improvisation exercises illustrate that each member of *Omelette* approaches music-making with a set of preconceived indices that each assumes are suited to the group's musical aesthetic as well as the egalitarian and empathetic approach fostered within the group. The exercises illustrate the high-level responsivity of improvisers and how they will more often than not, adapt their parts to align and make coherent what they observe of their co-performers actions. Furthermore, *Omelette* will usually attempt to fulfil the requirements of the exercise within the parameters of their musical identity, meaning they will unlikely compromise their identity or play in ways that are foreign, to fulfil the requirements of the exercise. The members of *Omelette* would rather maintain the emergent as is, or not play than contradict the group consensus. Maintaining a group consensus is an essential understanding as decisions are made based on these assumptions.

Moreover, the exercises highlight two broad approaches to *Omelette*'s free jazz improvisations; ostinato-based and through-composed. In both approaches, style played an integral role in establishing the initial character and mood underpinning the improvisation,

⁴⁶ The term 'flam' is used in drumming circles to name a particular technical rudiment.

from which improvised content pertaining to the indexed style would emerge. Ostinato-based improvisation allows for increased predictability via 'forward-looking' planning of improvised content based on the recurring nature of the ostinato. However, ostinato-based improvisations often lacked the degree of variation in comparison to through-composed improvisations. Challenges arose in developing ostinato-based improvisations and usually resulted in shorter improvisations that ended when the material became exhausted. These vignette-style improvisations appealed to the group and while unplanned, underscored the approach for the studio recording of *On This Day*. The intensive listening required during ostinato-based exercises *Making Tunes*, *Layering Ostinatos*, *Hidden Grooves*, and *Hidden Grooves and Signalling* heightens awareness as to the engagement of individual parts and changes initiating transitions. Additionally, improvisations starting simultaneously was a technique adopted to increase listening and focus on adaptation. Sometimes grooves or particular tonal centres would emerge from these collective starts to improvisations while other times would result in polyrhythmic, arrhythmic and polytonal contexts.

Whilst an intention of improvisation exercises is to challenge conventional practices by allowing participants to choose how they participate, in *Omelette's* case, traditional foreground (soloist) and background (accompanist) roles were largely maintained. I suspect that influencing factors such as the unplanned content, goal of the exercise and desire to achieve the goal often encouraged participants to seek clarity through more familiar and traditional role-playing.

Other revelations from improvisation exercises included recognition of individuals who were more likely to take risks and instigate new material over those who favour supportive role-playing. Such individuals instigated methods of signalling and demonstrated a willingness to

adapt to changing conditions sometimes beyond the scope of the conditions of the exercise. Such information is essential in developing *Omelette*'s intersubjective knowledge base. Although, while it was made clear to participants that improvisation exercises were not compositional devices to be reproduced in performances, it is expected that knowledge and techniques obtained from rehearsing exercises would be exploited in performance situations.

The next phase of this research explores if and in what ways information acquired from rehearsing improvisation exercises has developed intersubjectivity and how this is evidenced in the folio recordings. This research project thus far has theorised how intersubjectivity is intrinsically intertwined with the emergent constraints that guide improvised content generated by indices of style. The research has also explained how intersubjectivity is informed by “taken-for-granted backgrounds” resulting in “automatic behavioural orientation towards others” (Gillespie and Cornish, 2009: 1) signifying a more intuitive interaction.

As such, the reflective journaling process that has led to the writing of ethnographic accounts aims to capture and reveal observed thoughts, feelings and motivations that inform the processes underpinning *Omelette*'s music. Ethnographic accounts and their subsequent analysis will provide interpretive, analytical detail that a surface level analysis of the music alone could not provide.

4.4 *Esteban*: Ethnographic Account and Analysis

Recording Title	<i>Esteban</i>
Date	December 19 th , 2013
Recording URL Link	Click here
Location	Pughouse Studios, Melbourne
Live or studio recording	Studio
Edits	None
Preparation	Four monthly sessions of improvisation exercises

Take Number	1/1
Performers	Mark Shepherd (bass), Stephen Magnusson (guitar), Ronny Ferella (drums), Jordan Murray (trombone)

Figure 25. *Esteban* production notes

The recording of *Esteban* from the CD *On This Day* (2013) features Stephen Magnusson (guitar), Ronny Ferella (drums), Mark Shepherd (bass) and myself (trombone). *Esteban* was the fifth recording of a recording session of entirely improvised music with no predetermined materials. No discussion preceded this recording other than my inquiry as to the groups' readiness to start recording. Following engineer Niko Schauble's announcement he was recording, a twenty-second period of silence ensued until the first sound was made.

Stephen jumps in with a looped chordal motif that chimes repeatedly (SI & LO). I can't quite figure out the harmony, but it feels light and ethereal, almost child-like (EC). It's a timbre I have often heard (INT) as Stephen's love of Bill Frisell is no secret (IOS/contemporary jazz/folk). Shortly after, Mark's pedal note (LO) compliments (EC) Stephen's loop and adds to the driving momentum. Mark is the drone master, happy to sit on one note for ages. When he changes, it's usually big. Ronny is quick to respond, always listening. He follows with a light, straight eighths percussive groove that confirms the metre (EC) of Stephen's loop (LO). What a team! I'm suddenly struck by the thought that these guys are replicating one of the ostinato-based exercises. That wasn't the plan. The questions that pops into my head are 'will a layered ostinato be interesting enough for a released recording?' and 'can I come up with an interesting ostinato?' I decide to go the other way; make a melody (MT).

Usually, we take time for things to build and develop, but this time, within thirty seconds, the guys have created an uplifting, gently pulsating groove (ECL & LO). I can hear Arve Henriksen; a pure tone and a soaring melody (IOS/minimalist) to balance the activity. A clear but simple melody to begin, and then we'll see what happens (INT).

I can feel where my melody will start and from there, I think I know where it will go. The guys' parts have made things simple and clear (LO). They could have played anything, but from what they've played, or more importantly, what they haven't

played, I know they're working together to make something happen. I want to return the same clarity; start simple and let it develop. That's how we usually do it (INT). I play a simple six-note motif followed by a similar lower answering motif. I repeat the same idea, a little faster with a slight variation. I repeat it all again with subtle variations and one more time to really spell out I'm going for a thematic approach (MT). I soon figure out Mark's pedal G and Stephen's F# minor chord has created a G Lydian tonality (EC). The mood reminds me of Chick Corea's *Children's Songs* (IOS/contemporary jazz/folk). The guys maintain a consistent hypnotic *Necks*-like groove (LO) (IOS/contemporary jazz) while I improvise over the top. Ronny starts to change the groove by moving to other cymbals and adding more triplet activity (HG & S). It feels like it's moving somewhere. The child-like nature prompts me to play detached lighter articulations but I can sense the energy is diminishing (T). I quickly move to a more classical, legato, sustained style in my lower register to follow the group decrescendo (IOS/classical).

With this change in energy, Mark drops to the lower octave sending out a wave of warmth to the group sound (HG & S). With this change, I move out of the solo role to find other ways of interacting. Stephen changes his loop by introducing warmer mid register notes while Ronny moves into a subtle triplet undercurrent (HG & S). The mood takes on a dreamy quality, and I respond by playing out of time, floating, gradually playing less and lowering my dynamic. I sense it's coming to a close (CS & FE). As I fade away, Stephen simplifies his loop even further by reducing it to the two-note motif that began the improvisation. Mark soon fades away. The sounds Ronny and Stephen are making gradually disintegrate to leave a single sustained guitar note. I'm struck by the comradery and skill of my bandmates who pull together to create such beauty from nothing.

4.4.1 Esteban: Intersubjectivity

We, as co-performers, to some degree, have been schooled in and have tacitly agreed to heed each other's identity as musicians. The influences that have impacted each of us have been made apparent covertly through their practice as musicians and overtly through years of discussion as part of our long social interaction. During this time, we attuned ourselves to

each other's values and ambitions as much as to our favourite musicians. When asked for examples of intersubjectivity that have led to connotations of the music of Frisell, Henriksen and *The Necks* during the opening moments of *Esteban*, I can confidently answer Frisell's timbral influence evident in Magnusson's style, the droning and ostinato characteristics associated with *The Necks* in Shepherd's approach and the influence of Ethiopian and Cuban rhythms and percussion on Ferella's style.

In the opening moment of this improvisation, connotations from Magnusson, Shepherd and Ferella parts, led to a summation of the evolving emergent as embodying a minimalist aesthetic. A minimalist aesthetic led to further ideation regarding appropriate sources from which I could draw improvised content consistent with the evident emergent constraints.

Figure 19 (below) is a representation of my summary of the correlation between intersubjective knowledge of my co-performers' influences. It also maps how this correlation leads to the arrival of Henriksen and *The Necks* as key sources that inspire my first entry point to *Esteban*.

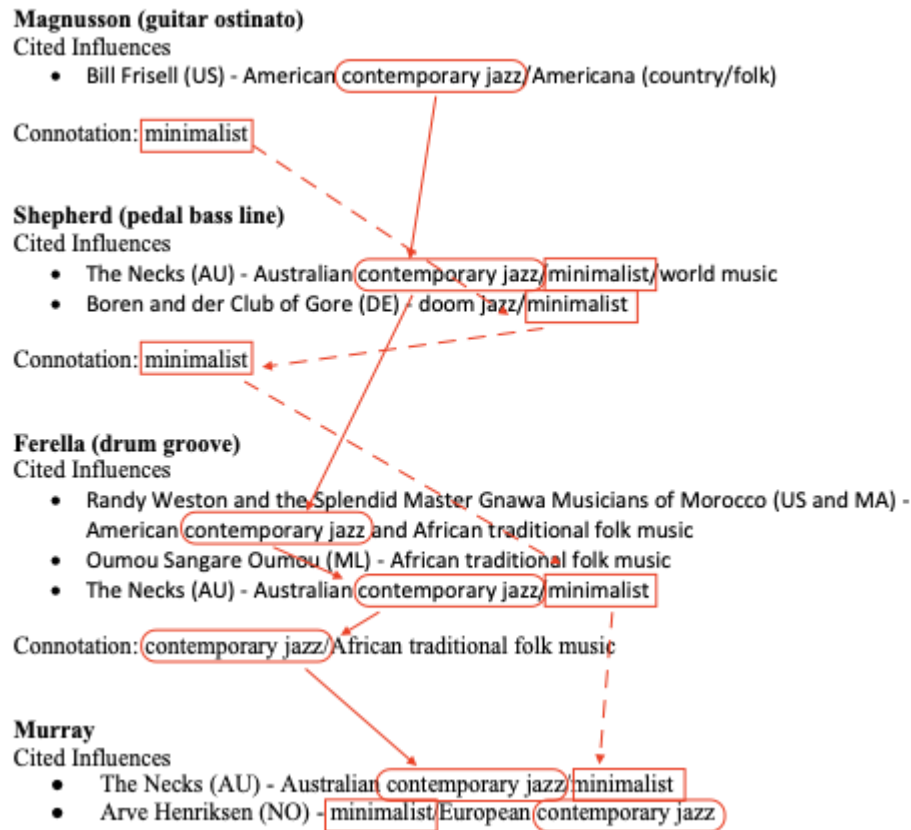


Figure 26. Interconnection of musical influences

In this instance, Henriksen functioned as a referential source by inspiring a way of playing, while the evident minimalist characteristics of the evolving emergent are indexical and representative of *The Necks* and apply constraints consistent with *The Necks*' sound-world.

Understanding of the stylistic implications of the denotational elements plus the group knowledge of Magnusson's admiration of and evident influence of Frisell leads to consideration of additional connotational sources extending from Frisell, or others, that may gel with the emergent conditions. At the same time, sources such as *The Necks* and Arve Henriksen inspire my improvisation but rather than operating competitively, our shared musicality and commitment to the performance focuses complementarity. Awareness of each other's preferred style allows us to be creatively comfortable within the improvisation.

An outcome I did not anticipate was the effect of the studio on the improvisations recorded for the CD as a whole. The ethnographic account suggests an intersubjective understanding, the manifestation of a collective presupposition garnered over time and experience, that studio recording is associated with recording music that is suitable for radio play. This prospect may have subconsciously prompted the recording of shorter improvisations rather than the extended improvisations created on live performances, few of which last less than thirty minutes. Furthermore, moving beyond exercises as artistic statements may have explained my decision to avoid layering an additional ostinato and instead improvise in a more through-composed manner. In any case, it is an example of intersubjective coherence being based on the recognition of and response to a complex but familiar set of musically communicative signs.

4.4.2 Esteban: Indexicality

Esteban commenced with Magnusson's ostinato that comprised of a sustained note, percussive finger picking and resonant overtones outlining an F# minor triad that was processed with reverb through a Line-6 effect pedal. This ostinato is a sign with a dual function; it can signify both denotational and connotational elements based on a codified system that is informed by an intersubjective knowledge base. For example, in terms of denotational elements, the straight eighth note rhythms, single chord or static modal harmonic quality, and a particular timbral quality (affect indices) of the ostinato (sign) stands for contemporary jazz through connotations of Frisell's music. Frisell's music features elements of Americana⁴⁷ music (folk and country) and minimalist characteristics. For me, the minimalist characteristics in this contemporary jazz context lead to sources such as *The Necks*

⁴⁷ An American contemporary style of roots music that draws on elements of folk, country, blues, rock, gospel and bluegrass.

and Arve Henriksen as sound worlds from which ideas for improvised content can be drawn. Henriksen, in particular, is a source of inspiration for his improvised folk-like melodies exhibited at the start of several of his recordings. Adopting his rhythmically spacious and diatonic melodic approach allowed for gradual development of improvised content, thus affording more opportunities for participants to contribute.

These identifications and understandings are due to indexical presuppositions resulting from knowledge of musical style and characteristics particular to the aforementioned influential sources. A summary of the sign-object-interpretant relationship regarding Magnusson's opening ostinato can be seen in *Figure 20*:

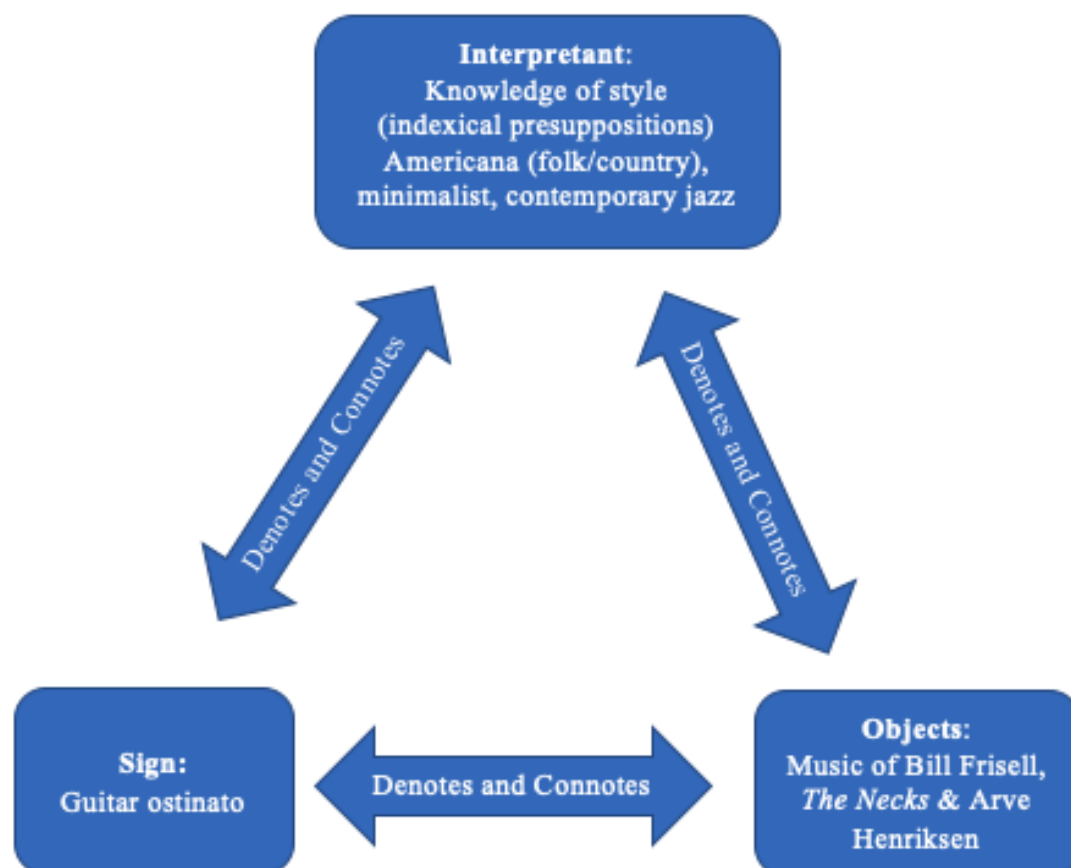


Figure 27. *Esteban*: Sign, object interpretant relationship

Esteban is an example of an improvisation that is informed by indices of style during the initial stages to develop a character and mood. Furthermore, this character and mood are maintained throughout, primarily due to the underlying ostinato mechanism.

4.4.3 *Esteban*: Emergence

The aforementioned denotational and implied stylistic connotations established by Magnusson's ostinato create minimalist guidelines that constrain the range of responsive options while at the same time, provide a set of possible guidelines for creativity. By the other musicians responding to Magnusson's ostinato as indexical rather than as a single sound, its repetitive nature and clear rhythmic and harmonic parameters afford the opportunity to plan while being concerned with the music of the moment. In other words, in the context of Magnusson's ostinato, projections can be made as to how improvised contributions will sound regarding a given repetitive context. Shepherd's polyrhythmic pedal G bass line under Magnusson's F# minor triad ostinato establishes a G Lydian tonality while Ferella's drum pattern further strengthens the evolving emergent by fortifying rhythmic parameters congruent with Magnusson's and Shepherd's parts. These conditions are largely maintained throughout this improvisation due to the strong emergent characteristics of the interacting parts.

4.4.4 *Esteban*: Events

The collaborative emergence created by the guitar, bass and drums up to my point of entry established the beginnings of an episode. As such, four options were presented; to improvise an additional ostinato, to improvise within the emergent constraints, to improvise disregarding the emergent constraints or to not play at all. I wanted to avoid overtly referring

to an ostinato-based improvisation exercise, therefore avoided layering an additional ostinato. Similarly, not playing at all may have given the impression I was dissatisfied, which I did not consider a viable option. Furthermore, playing freely outside the emergent constraints during the initial stages of an improvisation is a rare approach in *Omelette* and unlikely to occur in a recording session aiming to document *Omelette's* practice. Therefore, I decided to improvise within the emergent constraints and adopt a thematic approach to my improvised content.

The 2:30 minute mark of *Esteban* illustrates Omelette's sensitivity to respond to subtle changes. At this point, Shepherd's introduction of the lower octave appears to instigate a change in Magnusson's ostinato that thereafter resonated with warmer and sustained mid register notes. Ferella responds with increased swung triplet activity in his drum groove. The emergence of these elements creates subtle timbral changes and increased rhythmic activity that operates as a code for a transition. As rhythms intensified, I attempted to balance the overall rhythmic context by decreasing my rhythmic engagement through the use of space and sustained arrhythmic ideas. I also reduced my volume, which appeared to contribute to a collective reduction in volume and activity that initiated a gradual fade out and end to the improvisation. In retrospect, the guitar ostinato throughout *Esteban* created a constant character and mood generating a singular episode or vignette-style improvisation.

4.4.5 *Esteban*: Evidence of Improvisation Exercises

Evidence of improvisation exercises is difficult to qualify as such evidence can be perceived as coincidental or simply a process of group improvisation. However, the purpose of this section is to identify, from a first-person perspective, instances where there is a sense of improvisation influencing performance in ways that differ to *Omelette's* practice prior to the research project.

The workshopping of improvisation exercises leading up to this recording session had instilled mechanisms that appeared too alluring, despite my request to avoid the overt recreation of improvisation exercises in performance contexts. Irrespective of its conscious or subconscious creation, Magnusson's ostinato points to an intersubjective knowledge base that has developed through performances and workshops of ostinato-based improvisation exercises. This knowledge base facilitates commonly held views (interpretant) as to ways the ostinato could be treated. It is plausible during the opening moments of Esteban that the knowledge acquired from rehearsing the ostinato-based improvisation exercise *Layering Ostinatos* informed Shepherd's and Ferella's responses following Magnusson's initial ostinato. While I recall deliberately avoiding layering an additional ostinato, as articulated in the ethnographic account, the exercise *Making Tunes* arguably influenced the more compositional approach exhibited in my opening improvised statements.

4.4.6 Summary

Esteban illustrates how a simple opening ostinato operates as a stylistic index to a more in-depth resource of intersubjective information that informs *Omelette*'s free jazz improvisations. Intersubjectivity surrounding this ostinato supports the creation of improvised material as suitable to enter the evolving emergent. In other words, *Omelette* will often improvise material they believe their co-performers will understand, based on intersubjectivity pertaining to particular sounds. Proposed improvised content that is consistent with a shared view of evident stylistic constraints enters the emergent, while material beyond the constraints of the emergent is often not acknowledged or rejected. *Omelette* often favours minimalist approaches to begin improvisations because space, repetition and static qualities allow more time for ideas to evolve and develop. Throughout

this improvisation, stylistic indices of minimalist, Americana and contemporary jazz provided sources from which improvised content was drawn. The ostinato feature also appears to minimise the variety of stylistic indices, consequently reducing the number of episodes and transitions.

While this example has demonstrated how indices of style inform an ostinato-based improvisation, the next example - that of *Doxa* - will explore how stylistic indices generate a non-repetitive, episodic type of improvisation.

4.5 *Doxa*: Ethnographic Account and Analysis

Recording Title	<i>Doxa</i>
Date	September 5 th , 2017
Recording URL Link	Click here (also video link here)
Location	Jazz Lab jazz club, Melbourne
Live or studio recording	Live recording
Edits	None
Preparation	Four monthly sessions of improvisation exercises
Take Number	1/1
Performers	Javier Fredes (percussion), Luke Howard (piano), Ronny Ferella (drums), Jordan Murray (trombone)

Figure 28. *Doxa* production notes

Doxa was the first improvisation of a recorded free jazz live performance at the Melbourne venue The Jazz Lab on September 5th, 2017 and featured Luke Howard (piano), Ronny Ferella (drums), Javier Fredes (percussion) and myself (trombone). Following the regular performance protocol of the venue, *Omelette* agreed to play two forty-five minute sets of music with a fifteen-minute interval. Contrary to some *Omelette* performances that were a mixture of original compositions and free jazz improvisations, it was agreed that this

particular performance would be freely improvised following the preceding workshops of improvisation exercises.

I start with a single long note; open, simple, sparse (IOS/minimalist). This is how we normally do it (INT). Ronny's warm cymbal wash is right there with me. I immediately feel less exposed; Ronny has my back. Luke responds with a gentle sustained chord. It fits (EC). His voicing and touch reveal a classical sensibility merged with folk elements. I'm reminded of Luke's recording collaboration with ECM engineer Manfred Eicher and that whole reverb, classically influenced ECM sound emerges in my mind (IOS/European jazz/folk/classical sensibility). There's space. Then Javier; his cricket-like claves are amplified by crisp wind chimes. My eyes are closed but the space intimates everyone is listening. We are on the same page, and it feels good, like we have arrived at a sound-world that has already come into its own (E). I don't want to move on too quickly from what we've got now as I know we can stay with this and take it somewhere (INT). I breathe slowly. There's no rush to get the horn back on my face. I can feel Luke listening intensely. His gentle touch, simple voicings and melodic line shadows my melody (SD) and brings a folk-like character with ESP precision (INT). It feels remarkable; we're not even looking at each other, yet we are totally synchronised. Luke and I share leading roles, alternating phrases (INT) until I drop out (T) and Luke moves into a classically inspired passage (IOS/classical and E) underpinned by Ronny and Javier's emerging samba groove (IOS/samba). They couldn't be more different, but I love it. I smile to myself.

Luke draws his brief interlude to a close, and with the impending rhythmic change, I feel it is time to introduce some harmonic variation (T). I throw caution into the wind and move through a few different key centres to eventually join the growing samba feel (EC). Luke also acknowledges this groove (EC) with a driving pedal point and repetitive comping style that begins a more conventional modal jazz exploration (IOS/contemporary jazz and ECL. The mood becomes dark and intense and adopt a distorted tone to comply.

I'm suddenly thrust into the fore as the soloist (INT) and cannot predict where the harmony will go from here (E). Seeming to anticipate my next move (INT), Luke

changes pedal point to a new modality (EC). It takes a moment to find my feet before Luke changes modality again and continues to do so every sixteen bars or so. (EC) Deciphering the harmony is challenging (CINT) and I start to worry knowing that the music is being recorded. I find myself momentarily outside the music, preoccupied with issues external from the moment of music-making and seize a break in the groove to change tact. I alter my character by reducing my dynamic and softening my articulation. (HG & S) My melodic line synchronises with Luke's chord change and all of a sudden there it is; we arrive at a shared harmonic space.

There has been a lot of trombone up until now, and I've had my say, so I bow out (INT). Javier and Ronny disintegrate the groove (T) but maintain a bustling texture (IOS/free jazz) and (E). Luke contrasts this activity by juxtaposing an almost sacred, hymn-like passage of sustained chords (IOS/classical). Just as Luke arrives at a major chord at the end of his interlude (HG & S), Javier's rapid scratching of the clave (CS & FE) mimics a gust of wind, and we're back where we started; that space, that simplicity. We all know Javier's signal has brought the improvisation to an end. (INT)

4.5.1 *Doxa*: Intersubjectivity

Intersubjectivity intertwines social circumstances surrounding the performance of improvised music with the musical events themselves. During the music-making process, intersubjectivity underscores a performer's ability to recognise musical style, locate the source of a specific stylistic reference, consider further stylistic connotations that may enter the collective frame and through idiomatic convention, and provide ways of negotiating emergent contexts. However, intersubjectivity also prefaces the conditions that lead to the opening moments of an improvisation. Such moments establish a particular character and mood that bear significant influence as to how the rest of the improvisation will unfold. Knowing the live performance was being recorded, I approached the performance with a premeditated plan of a Henriksen-inspired minimalist introduction. To avoid long periods of silence that often preceded *Omelette* performances, I had decided that a minimalist approach

would be an effective way of commencing the first improvisation of the recording.

Minimalist-inspired introductions allow for the gradual evolution of content that could be developed over a longer time frame.

Several of my thoughts illustrated in this ethnographic account draw attention to intersubjectivity that underlies musical interactions. For example, comments such as “this is how we normally do it”, “Ronny has my back” and “we are on the same page” convey mutually shared interpretations of particular musical signals that stem from interpersonal relationships developed over years of collaborative music-making.

Over numerous performances, musical "material" is repeated and recontextualised, thereby becoming recognisable elements of participants' individual 'internal reservoirs' and the group's collective 'store of signs'. When recreated in performances, these elements not only function as code that denotes meaning regarding a musical style or process but also connote meaning within the relationships between the performers. This meaning is symbolic of the time and effort spent collectively working on a non-verbal form of expression and the development of an approach that is unique to a particular group of people; an approach that enables them to engage in a meaningful exchange.

For me, the creation of improvised music (a socially created act that can only be what it is through the contributions of others) transcends the communicative indexical function to represent the performers' commitment to an act that symbolises their collective musical identities at a given moment in time. This feeling is particularly apparent before commencing an improvisation, knowing the group is about to embark on a public act where artistic integrity and reputations are at stake and without the safety net of a predetermined structure.

4.5.2 *Doxa*: Indexicality

My opening entry of *Doxa* is a single pitch followed by sustained intervals of fourths and fifths. As illustrated below, it is indexical of minimalist music in its absence of overt stylistic traits. It avoids an overt harmonic context by emphasising a C tonality and initially remains static. The intervals connote anthemic and solemn musical themes and influenced by Henriksen's work with pianist Tigran Hamasyan on the recording *Tsirani Trar* from the album *Atmospheres* (Hamasyan, 2016).

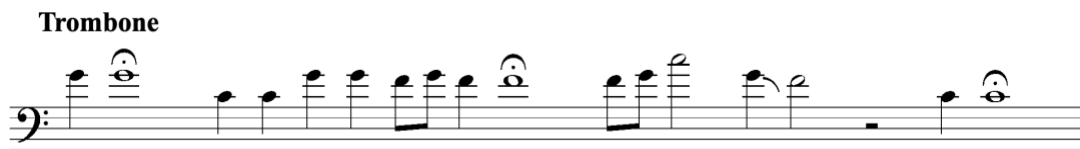


Figure 29. *Doxa* opening trombone entry

Ferella's unison bass drum and sustained cymbal wash shortly followed by Fredes' atmospheric clave quickly confirm a minimalist aesthetic. Howard's sustained cluster chord also maintains stylistic ambiguity and further confirms an ambient, minimalist style. This intersubjective knowledge of Howard's musical identity connotes a western classical influence often inherent in many European jazz pianists associated with the ECM record label and ambient-minimalist composer David Moore's ensemble *Bing and Ruth*.

Howard's classical sensibility, combined with intersubjective knowledge of his affinity with European jazz styles associated with the ECM record label, generate a contemporary classical sound world where we share leading roles. In this exchange, I intentionally avoid improvised content idiomatic of the bebop genre to remain consistent with Howard's index of European jazz that is largely antithetical to its American jazz counterpart.

As Howard became more harmonically active, I sensed his desire to explore this context further and decided to refrain from playing temporarily. My exit signalled the opportunity for Howard to lead into a new section. Howard obliged with a rubato style improvisation indexing a classical, folk-like sensibility superimposed over Ferella and Fredes' active rhythmic texture. Howard's ritardando and chordal cadence signalled the closure of his interlude, while Ferella and Fredes' continued bustling texture assisted the transition into the next section. Ferella and Fredes appeared to be generating more momentum, reminding me of their jam sessions where they would work on rhythmic concepts motivated by Fredes' study of the Cuban Bata drum tradition. Not privy to the traditions of this music, I avoided engaging by superimposing a contrasting arrhythmic approach and exploration of various tonal centres.

Howard's touch and accompaniment style continued to exhibit a classical sensibility, indexical of Keith Jarrett ECM recordings such as *The Köln Concert* (1975), *Munich 2016* (2016) or *The Carnegie Hall Concert* (2005). It is plausible that the lack of evident jazz stylistic traits (such as swing or bebop-based vocabulary) in my opening improvised statement prompted a contemporary improvised approach in Howard's accompaniment that drew upon influences from artists who, according to Howard, represent a contemporary improvised style. Classical indices from both piano and trombone further strengthened the emergent resulting in idiomatic articulation, timbre, rhythmic and harmonic content. Such attributes were drawn from my undergraduate performance of contemporary classical trombone repertoire such as *Chorale, Cadence and Fugato* by Henri Duttieux (1950) and *Deux Danses* by Jen Michael Defaye (1950) providing a sound world to further fuel improvised material.

In synchronising with the Ferella and Fredes' groove, Howard's voicings and comping style are indexical of a modal Latin jazz style. This strong collaborative emergent context prompted me to adopt a soloistic role in a contemporary jazz style. Modulations by Howard's every 16 bars generated increasing intensity and structural predictability. Conscious of potentially exhausting this passage, I seized upon a sudden drop in dynamics as an opportune moment to change the character and mood by returning to an arrhythmic approach. This return to arrhythmic playing instigated a gradual disintegration of the samba groove and a return to the bustling percussive texture that had underpinned Howard's earlier classically inspired interlude. This recapitulation seemed like a logical place for me to refrain from playing as Howard returned to a sacred, hymn-like inspired improvisation. As Howard drew to a conclusion, Fredes' rapid scratching of a shell emulated the sound of a gust of wind that signalled an apt way to draw the improvisation to a close.

4.5.3 *Doxa*: Emergence

Omelette's introductions to free jazz improvisations often index minimalist stylistic characteristics to avoid the statement of explicit rhythmic or harmonic material. In evading overt stylistic material, a weak emergent is established which seeks to reduce constraining forces. While it is arguable that a minimalist style is constraining within its own characteristics, particular arrhythmic and harmonically ambiguous contexts afford opportunities more supportive of a collective approach without the compulsion to adhere to a pulse or harmonic structure. In these moments, the concept of emergence appears to be more focused at the group level as opposed to at the individual (or collective) source that may be transmitting a constraining structural force. Figure 24 is based on Sawyer's (2003) model, exhibiting different levels of emergent constraints. The image on the left illustrates performers in a minimalist context, unaligned by a constraining force that yields a broader

range of options. The picture on the right shows the alignment of performers in a style featuring characteristics such as a consistent pulse or harmonic structure that issue higher constraints and thus a lower range of options:

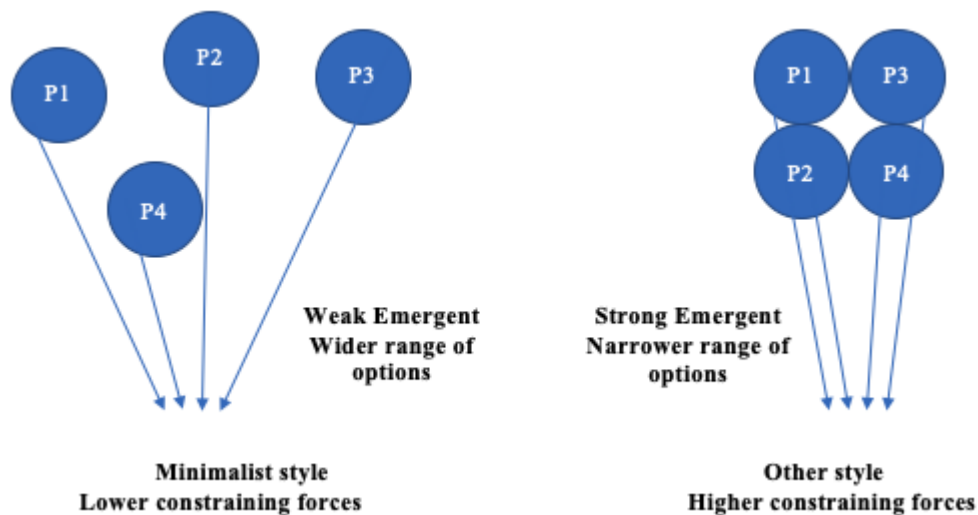


Figure 30. Variations in emergent constraints

During the opening moments of *Doxa*, Ferella's warm cymbal washes, Fredes' atmospheric arrhythmic clave and Howard's low sustained C2 avoid rhythmic pulse and thus confirm the minimalist aesthetic signalled by the trombone. Howard's low C also signifies recognition of the tonality further strengthening harmonic constraints. My intention here was to create opportunities for more collective interactions via the maintenance of sparse, thematic, arrhythmic and harmonically ambiguous melodic material. Repetition induced through thematic improvisation creates a level of predictability by reducing the potentially infinite variables to those characteristics of the thematic material. Predictability creates opportunities for forward-planning strategies that may increase collective coherence. Thus, adopting sparse phrasing and thematic material in arrhythmic and harmonically ambiguous contexts provides more flexible time frames for improvisers to make judgements and thus is less constraining.

During this introduction, I played three rubato phrases characterised by rhythmic motion resolving with a pause. This ‘motion-pause’ structure appeared to create a phrasing framework underpinning the following passages where Howard and I alternate leading roles. During my leading passages, Howard’s accompaniment followed my melodic line, pre-empting my rhythmic movement suggesting the influence of the *Shadow-duos* improvisation exercise. Similarly, Ferella and Fredes can be heard following the same motion-pause structure, albeit slightly delayed, giving the impression of an arrhythmic context to the undiscerning listener. The trombone and piano eventually merged their rhythmic motion in a combined rubato passage that concluded with a pause before the piano moved into an interlude. This passage illustrates emergent properties whereby broader phrase structures evolve from conversational interplay built on the motion-pause idea, as illustrated below in *Figure 23*.

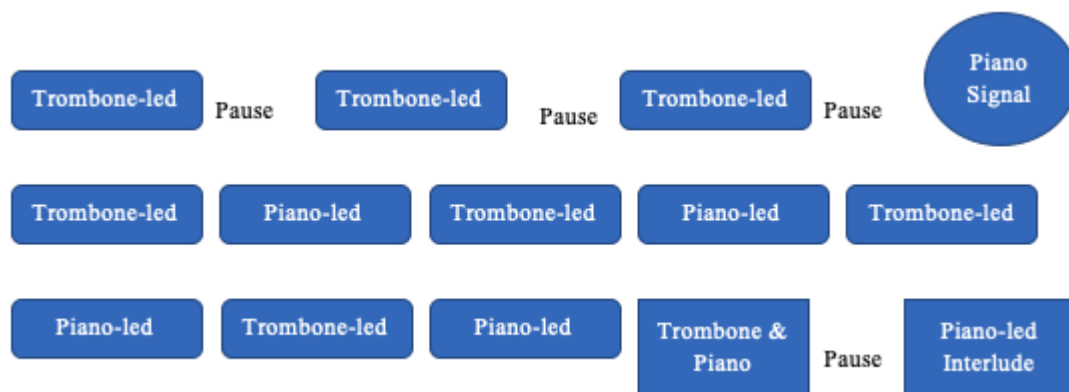


Figure 31. Motion-pause phrasing structure

Beneath Howard’s rubato ballad-style interlude, rhythmic synchronicity began to emerge between Ferella and Fredes of which would prove to be a precursor to events at the end of the improvisation. Fredes hinted at idiomatic two-three clave pattern⁴⁸ in tempo with Ferella’s

⁴⁸ Three-two or two-three clave patterns underpins the rhythmic organisation in Afro-Cuban music.

eight notes adding to the impending sense of developing pulse. In drawing this interlude to a close, Howard's *ritardando* referred to the motion-pause framework. Looking forward and anticipating how this section could potentially be developed, I returned to the motion-pause framework to explore ways of connecting with Ferella and Fredes' rhythmic impetus. To develop this transitory moment, I deliberately moved beyond the harmonic constraints as a means of eliciting new material, however, was met with silence from Howard. This period of extended silence perhaps signified my improvised content was beyond the realms of the emergent and thus allowed for the emergence of Ferella's and Fredes' synchronised groove. I immediately acknowledged this groove with a unifying eighth note phrase which Howard reinforced with a repeating pedal point and Phrygian modality articulated in a repetitive comping rhythm as illustrated below.



Figure 32. The pedal point and rhythm of Howard's comping pattern

Howard's Phrygian voicings establish harmonic constraints that guide the melodic construction of my content. The increasing dynamic of Howard's voicings and contemporary jazz connotations implied by Phrygian harmony encouraged me to adopt timbral distortion to match the dynamic intensity and mood. To expand the existing constraints, I intentionally explored melodic material beyond the established harmonic context and intersected with extended use of space between phrases to encourage greater interaction and actively dissolve my soloist role.

At one point, my use of space (silence) appeared to exceed that of previous phrases and encouraged a change in modality from Howard. Following this harmonic change, Ferella's series of bells initiated thoughts of the signalling concept from several of the improvisation exercises that signify a desire to change. I responded by playing out of time, which was further acknowledged by rhythmically disruptive figures from Fredes and Ferella. This option of change was abandoned as Howard's root motion established a strong cadential point further strengthened by Ferella's assertive batucada-like snare drum figures that launched a return to new modal groove section. My difficulty in ascertaining the new harmonic context while maintaining dynamic intensity created codal misinterpretation. At this point, my desire to find harmonic security diminished my dynamic intensity which was further exacerbated by Howard's insistent comping pattern as illustrated in *Figure 24*. The repetition of Howard's pattern established predictability that Ferella capitalised on with snare drum accents and cymbal crashes and culminated in a momentary break in the groove. This break, in the form of a sustained chord from Howard, signified a sudden reduction in dynamic intensity and gradual disintegration of the groove.

Following the change in momentum of the evolving emergent, I adhered to the collective dynamic reduction, adopted a gentler character through smooth legato articulation and arrhythmic phrasing to eventually fade out for the rest of the improvisation. The disintegration of the groove developed into a bustling arrhythmic texture between Fredes and Ferella over which Howard superimposed a hymn-like chordal passage. This final episode appeared to be a recapitulation of the previous rubato piano interlude over the earlier percussion-drum duo. A return of this nature indicates the group may have taken a broader macro-structure view of the improvisation with the memory of past episodes influencing their performative choices. Furthermore, the pairing of duos within the quartet and musical events

these pairings generated would have primarily contributed to constraints discussed thus far. Throughout this improvisation there appeared to be an overarching concept of two duos working simultaneously with careful consideration of the other duo.

In summary, *Doxa* primarily exhibited duo collaborations that worked both independently and were superimposed. The contrast between duos demonstrated that not all emergent activities necessarily lead to a homogenous goal but can encompass divergent approaches. Contrasting material between duos was varying in their differences to the degree that one could distinguish and appreciate the marriage of the two. *Doxa* also illustrated examples of Mead's idea of the emergent as a "balance of indexical presupposition and entailment" (Sawyer: 2003, 84) whereby the intersubjective understanding of a signified object and its connotations contextualises and realises all future improvised content.

4.5.4 *Doxa*: Events

Doxa consists of four distinctive episodes, with episodes two and three partitioned by a transition. Episodes one, two and four and the transition exhibit arrhythmic qualities while episode three is based on a consistent pulse. As previously discussed, a consistent pairing of the drums and percussion can be observed throughout the improvisation. The piano and trombone are also paired when not operating independently. This structure is illustrated in *Figure 26* below.

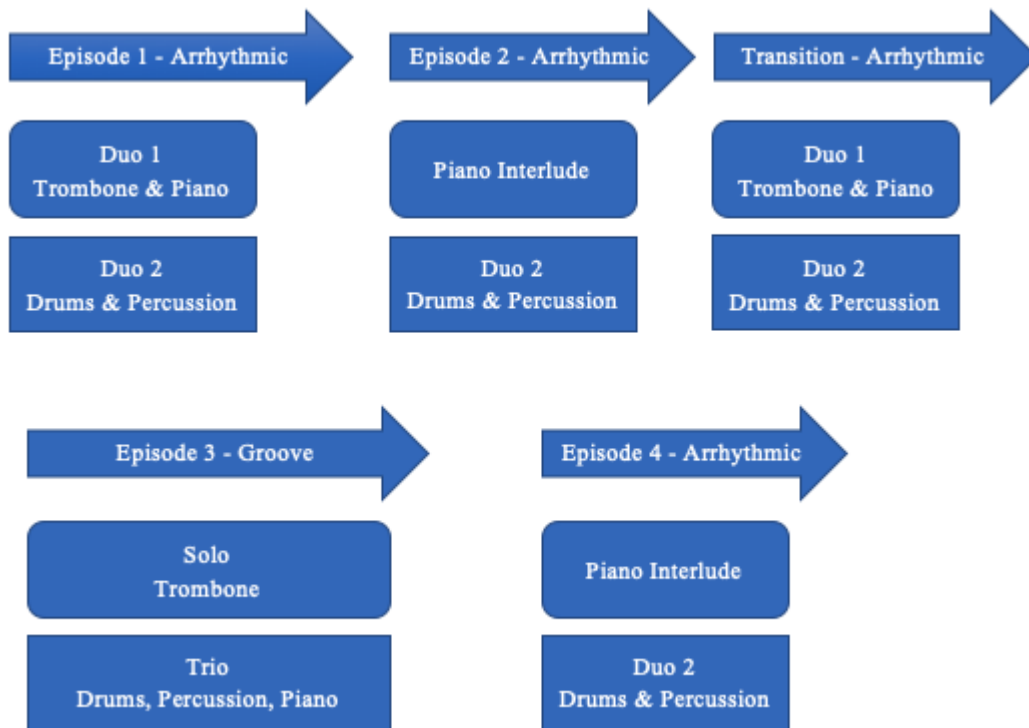


Figure 33. Event structure of *Doxa*

Based on previous live performances, I anticipated this live performance could develop into an extended set-long improvisation; a set being around 40-50 minutes. As such, I was conscious of the potential episodic nature of the improvisation and how a broader macro-structural view of the impending improvisation would influence decisions. This projected imagination is highlighted by my thoughts of the time (recalled in the ethnographic account) such as “we have arrived at a sound world” and “I know we can stay with this and take it somewhere”. Such thoughts indicate my awareness of potential future episodes; a broader macro-structure concept that gives rise to a focus on present moments with an understanding that new episodes will likely emerge. This concept eliminates an urgency to evolve rapidly and instead, fosters a cultivation of ideas that tend to manifest as episodes. However, always present is the potential for sudden change and transition to a new episode that heightens listening and wrestles with intersubjectivity regarding the duration of episodes. Questioning

when it is appropriate to introduce new material to move to a new section, potentially disrupting another band member's focus or wondering if the music is retaining the listeners' attention are valid considerations when making decisions influencing structure.

The transition following the piano interlude emerged from Howard's conclusive *rallentando*, signifying the ending of his contribution. The continued momentum of Ferella's and Fredes' evolving groove inspired my re-entry into the improvisation. I initially followed the emergent groove, however, upon hearing Howard's *rubato* implications, I returned to the previous duo-based motion-pause framework. Attempting to introduce new material, I explored various unrelated tonalities, however, the strength of the emergent percussive groove was irresistible and episode three ensued.

During episode three, I experienced codal misinterpretation, whereby my assessment and subsequent performance in relation to the evolving harmonic context did not concur with my intentions and disrupted my process of communication. As such, I sought ways to minimise the impact of this disruption through continued rhythmic punctuation, thematic phrasing, use of space to allow time for harmonic processing coupled with chromatic melodic content to help decipher harmonic contexts. Shortly after, a disruption in the momentum of the groove and subsequent disintegration saw a final episode four that featured a recapitulation of the piano interlude superimposed over a more intensified drum and percussion duo, reminiscent of episode two.

4.5.5 *Doxa*: Evidence of Improvisation Exercises

The influence of improvisation exercises can be felt and enacted while performing or create processes that are observed retrospectively. For example, hearing Ferella enter immediately after my first note of *Doxa* implied that the process of the improvisation exercises was something he valued and wished to explore. Contributing to my intersubjectivity, Ferella once commented that simultaneous starts forced the group to work things out in a different way to that of minimalist beginnings to improvisations. From a retrospective viewpoint, the concept of two duos playing contrasting material that underscores this improvisation was not something I was aware of at the time that motivated my performance. It is possible that workshops of improvisation exercises that divide the group into duos created an awareness of contrasting duos but did not necessarily encourage synchronicity or engagement between the duos of any kind. The focus of exercises working in duos was more about increasing listening scope while playing and in hindsight, insightful regarding improvising independently in the context of contrasting material.

Forms of signalling can be heard during and towards the end of episode three that instigate changes into episode four. Ferella's ringing of handbells is challenging to ignore since the sound is culturally ingrained as a form of attention-seeking usually requiring a response. While this does not result in significant changes at the time, it did increase the element of listening for change as opposed to a more passive form of listening.

Another signal, regardless if intentional or not, resulted from Howard's brief sustained chord that halted the momentum of his comping pattern (illustrated in *Figure 24*). This break appeared to initiate a disintegration of the groove and change into episode four. A remarkably responsive sequence of events drew the improvisation to a close; Fredes' immediate

cinematic rapid shell scratching, Howard's final cadence, and finally, Ferella's decrescendo and subtle rallentando. Again, while difficult to attribute these actions to a specific improvisation exercise, *Creating Sections and Finding Endings* required participants to make transitions within short time frames and in rehearsing the exercise, addressed possible ways of orchestrating endings. It remains likely that the type of listening and decisiveness encouraged by *Creating Sections and Finding Endings* may have facilitated this sequence of events.

4.5.6 *Doxa*: Summary

This analysis of the improvisation *Doxa* has highlighted the application of indices of style from minimalist, European jazz, classical music, samba and Cuban rhythmic influences, contemporary jazz and free jazz. In creating personalised improvised content, referential influences from the music of Arve Henriksen and contemporary classical trombone repertoire by Duttieux and Defay were formative. Similarly, indices of style generated by other members of *Omelette* for me alluded to representative influences from ECM recordings by Keith Jarrett and South American rhythms framed within a European contemporary jazz context.

In contrast to the ostinato-based improvisation *Esteban* that resulted in a single elongated episode, *Doxa* saw the application of indices of style that led to the creation of four distinctive episodes. *Doxa* also saw the recapitulation of an episode which implied an awareness of an overarching structure. While this recapitulation of a classically inspired piano interlude superimposed over an active arrhythmic percussive texture could have been coincidental, it is arguable that improvisation exercises requiring participants to return to

previously improvised sections of an improvisation⁴⁹, underscored a recapitulation as a viable structural option.

Initially, *Omelette*'s improvisations were based on compositions, remembered characteristics of which tended to create an episodic style of improvisation partitioned by transitions.

Extended improvisations often adopted a minimalist approach, to begin with, allowing for pacing the rate of musical growth by utilising more space and taking time to develop musical ideas. For me, extended live performance improvisations encouraged a strategic awareness in terms of balancing periods of playing with periods of resting across the performance to allow an improvisation to develop organically.

Conversely, our shorter improvisations, such as *One for Four*, explore role-playing that frequently moves between background and foreground material, eliciting a conversational style of improvisation that avoids the perpetuation of the single featured soloist. This approach to shorter improvisations is exemplified in the following ethnographic account of *One for Four*.

⁴⁹ *Creating Sections and Finding Endings*, *Hidden Grooves and Signalling*, *Making Tunes* and *Hidden Grooves and Making Tunes* each require participants to return to previously improvised sections.

4.6 *One for Four*: Ethnographic Account and Analysis

Recording Title	<i>One for Four</i>
Date	December 19 th , 2013
Recording URL Link	Click here
Location	Pughouse Studios, Melbourne
Live or studio recording	Studio
Edits	None
Preparation	Four monthly sessions of improvisation exercises
Take Number	1/1
Performers	Mark Shepherd (bass), Stephen Magnusson (guitar), Ronny Ferella (drums), Jordan Murray (trombone)

Figure 34. *One for Four* production notes

Although listed as the opening track for the CD *On This Day* (2013), *One for Four* was the fourth track recorded for the studio recording of and features Mark Shepherd (bass), Stephen Magnusson (guitar), Ronny Ferella (drums) and myself (trombone). Under the same studio conditions as *Esteban*, no instruction preceded the recording and the extent of the discussion is illustrated in the following ethnographic account.

"Do we want to record another one or have a break?" I ask the group. "Let's do one more then have a cup of tea and a lie-down," jokes Stephen. Everyone agrees, and Niko is way ahead of us. "Recording!" he says. Mark dives straight in with a walking bass line (SI & EC), like *Hat and Beard* from Eric Dolphy's *Out to Lunch* (IOS free jazz). I immediately reach for my plunger mute as I can hear shades of Ray Anderson over this one. This way of starting is different from our usual gentle 'ease into things' way (INT). Mark must really want that cup of tea.

I like Mark's decisiveness, and it brings some variety to the session. The bass line is strong, driving, kind of dark, atonal and establishes a two-bar jazz waltz feel. (LO & FI). Ronny enters not long after with a broken tom-tom groove with reggae overtones (IOS reggae & EC). Stephen's intermittent, angular voicings add to the free jazz

aesthetic (EC). I default to my Ray Anderson bag; plunger muted growling tone, smears, rips and trills (IOS free jazz). This one feels raw, not so much about melody but more about expression. Ronny's move to the cymbals signposts a gear shift (INT). These sorts of grooves can get repetitive and challenging to keep interesting. I find myself questioning and plotting ways of developing. Where will we go from here? Will this be a short improv like the others or will the guys stretch out? Who's going to change it up? I'm uncertain, so I decide to return to my opening ideas. I try to be conversational, back and forth. I don't want to be the soloist. Stephen and I trade and overlap. I dig deeper into the Ray Anderson bag but soon feel that perhaps some space will change things (INT). Stephen keeps throwing in the odd crunchy sustained chord between his percussive skanks (HG & S). Is it a signal? Things get wobbly but more intense. This action is too alluring, so I'm back in with more Ray inspired ideas. It's getting busier, building momentum as Stephen begins to hint at rock-inspired sounds (IOS-rock). One of Stephen's crunchy voicing seems to finally catch everyone's attention and trigger an instant collapse just at the point I summon the courage to start a new idea. (HG & S) Mark drops out sensing the change, Ronny appears to turn a fill into a decaying snare roll (CS & FE) which I follow by cutting my idea short. I follow the group by fading out on a slow descending glissando. I'm surprised by both the sudden ending and the way we managed to reconcile it. It's quirky but such is the nature of what we do in *Omelette*.

4.6.1 *One for Four*: Intersubjectivity

Intersubjectivity surrounding the moments preceding the live performance of *Doxa* illustrated extra-musical circumstances influencing the approach to *Omelette*'s free improvisation. Similarly, the recording studio encompasses extra-musical aspects but of a different kind that, in turn, embodies different intersubjectivity influencing performance decisions. My approaches to live and studio recordings differ primarily based on the idea that studio recordings are associated with the creation of a product suited for airplay while live recordings are more about documenting the group's actual performance. Furthermore, studio recordings allow for post-production edits which may influence performative decisions

knowing edits can be made later. The recording conditions of live recordings do not usually afford the luxury of post-production editing. Track lengths also often differ between the two formats. While studio recordings often consider track lengths falling within acceptable time frames consistent with radio policy, live recordings are generally exempt from these restrictions. While the duration of improvisations for the studio recording session for *On This Day* was never discussed, my feeling was that *Omelette* instinctively replicated the approximate lengths of the improvisation exercises undertaken over the months leading to the recording. It is possible that the group thought recordings of similar lengths to the exercises would assist my research? As such, this recording session resulted in shorter tracks in contrast to live recordings that typically saw extended improvisations ranging from 35 to 45 minutes in length.

I contend that intersubjectivity concerning where an improvisation occurs in a performance, meaning the first or last improvisation of a performance influences one's improvisatory approach. *One for Four* was the fourth recording of the recording session and begged the question as to what sort of improvisations preceded it, that led to the events in *One for Four*. For example, any performed improvisation is not subject to comparison with prior improvisations. Subsequent improvisations will naturally attempt to avoid repetitious characteristics of previous improvisations and thus call upon alternative approaches by performers to create variety. This kind of intersubjective knowledge varies from the kind involved in deciphering sounds and drawing from shared sources but nevertheless influences performance decisions.

Historically, *Omelette*'s repertoire has primarily featured music based on rubato or straight eighth-note grooves with little repertoire exhibiting swing rhythmic characteristics. While

Omelette's members primarily identify as jazz musicians, the group's repertoire is not jazz-based (in a traditional sense) and therefore intersubjectivity pertaining to the jazz genre in *Omelette* is relatively undeveloped. This conscious disassociation with obvious jazz elements may have explained Ferella's and Magnusson's avoidance of idiomatic swing conventions in response to Shepherd's jazz index. Instead, stylistic elements more familiar to the group were implemented.

4.6.2 *One for Four*: Indexicality

Shepherd's opening bass line ostinato indexes the free jazz style through timbre, pizzicato articulation and rhythmic character and atonal tendencies. For *Omelette* (who identify as a free jazz ensemble), such an overt reference to the jazz idiom immediately indexes the free jazz genre and does so with a sense of irony. As such, the free jazz notion of challenging convention is a possible explanation for Ferella's stilted broken tom-tom swing feel and Magnusson's octave voicings. They hint at the avant-garde. For me, the emergent generates further connotations of the recording *Hat and Beard* from Eric Dolphy's landmark free jazz recording *Out to Lunch* (1964) as well as exhibiting similarities to the opening bass line of trumpeter Tomasz Stańko's composition *Too Pee* from the album of the same name (2005a).

Connotations of free jazz, Stańko and irony evoke the stylistic influence of Ray Anderson who embraces humour in his at times raucous approach. In emulation of Anderson's style, I incorporate the use of the plunger mute, timbral distortion and exaggerated vibrato. The character and mood are somewhat dark and dirge-like and hence adopt Anderson's guttural blues inflections to reflect this atmosphere. As the improvisation progresses, Ferella's high hat groove seems to imply a straight eighth-note groove interspersed with snare drum fills and bass drum and crash cymbal punctuations that connote a mixture of rock and reggae

influences. Magnusson randomly interjects accented sustained chords that alternate with fragmented comping that implies reggae skanking⁵⁰ and with a timbral quality more akin to rock. Meanwhile, the pulse and tonality of Shepherd's bass line remain constant. The overlapping of free jazz, avant-garde, reggae and rock indices appears to generate an amorphous stylistic blend that is maintained until the end of the improvisation.

4.6.3 *One for Four*: Emergence

Shepherd's opening bass line generated a strong emergent via clear rhythmic parameters. Ferella's rhythmic adherence to Shepherd's ostinato further strengthened the emergent while Magnusson's sustained notes constrained the harmony by emphasising the tonal centre. My initial rhythmic and melodic content further strengthened the evolving emergent. As illustrated in Sawyer's emergent model in Figure 5, the strength of the emergent restricted the range of possible options should improvisers adhere to intersubjective requirements. The strong tonal centre of the bass ostinato restricted the development of thematic material and instead elicited a more conversational and approach between the drums, trombone and guitar. In this recording, the strength of the emergent was such that *Omelette* defaulted to more idiomatic jazz conventions.

A sequence of events nearing the end of the improvisation appeared to evolve the emergent. Shepherd deviated from the consistent pulse by playing quarter note triplets which destabilised and weakened the emergent. This change was reflected in increased activity and dynamic intensity by the trombone, guitar and drums. Following, Magnusson's accented sustained chords interspersed throughout his accompaniment appeared to indicate a form of signalling that seemed to catch the attention of Shepherd and Ferella and initiated a break in

⁵⁰ Skanking is a term used to describe a particular off-beat chordal accompaniment often used in reggae music.

the groove's momentum. Observing Magnusson's and Shepherd's exit, and committed to my entry, I followed Ferella's snare drum decrescendo with a glissando to orchestrate a fade-out ending.

As previously mentioned, the stylistic strength of Shepherd's index generated responses that complied with the emergent constraints, further constraining the emergent and eliciting more conventional role-playing. As such, my intention during this improvisation was to avoid convention by pushing the boundaries of the emergent constraints within *Omelette*'s aesthetic limits and my technical limitations.

4.6.4 *One for Four*: Events

Shepherd's ostinato bass line generated a similar interpretant to that which underscored Magnusson's guitar ostinato in *Esteban*. The consistent ostinato pulse and tonality throughout *One for Four* maintained the fundamental emergent characteristics that result in a single episode with no transitions into new sections. The inherent repetition of the bass line ostinato and strong emergent allowed performers to plan improvised content. As such, instances of codal misinterpretation were minimised despite extensive experimentation with various superimposed indices of style. However, despite the coherent and coordinated interactions derived from the predictability yielded by repetitious conditions, ostinato-based improvisations appear to propose significant challenges in generating new material and transitioning to new episodes.

One would assume that an improvisation that begins with an ostinato (such as *One for Four*) would evoke a similar layering of ostinato ideas that unfolded with *Esteban*. However, in rehearsing ostinato-based improvisation exercises, it became evident that *Omelette* favoured

minimalist or an amorphous approach when working with ostinatos. While the ostinato nature of Shepherd's walking bass line was explicit, its overt jazz characteristics initiated more traditional role-playing practices as opposed to introducing other ostinato materials.

4.6.5 *One for Four*: Evidence of Improvisation Exercises

Improvisation exercises have been shown to heighten listening, increase awareness of the idiosyncrasies of others and provide insight as to how particular musical scenarios are to be treated individually collectively. Ostinato exercises revealed types of ostinatos more conducive to layering further ostinatos while others lent themselves more towards more solitary functions within other elements. As illustrated in this recording, ostinatos remain a performance mechanism within *Omelette*'s store of signs. Rather than claiming Shepherd's opening ostinato reveals an influence of improvisations exercises, the exercises instead provided ways of choosing how to deal with ostinatos when they arise in performance. Regarding concepts of signalling, transitioning to new sections and finding endings, Magnusson's sustained accented chords toward the end may not have intended to signal such intentions, nonetheless, instigated a sequence of events that brought the improvisation to a close. It must be noted, however, that it is unlikely to be the only signal. The work was created by individuals in a contextual environment with an intention for it to develop its own musical constraints. As previously mentioned, this ending may have also been influenced by the seven-minute average length of the improvisation exercises.

4.7 Chapter Summary

Collectively, the observed events in the three improvisations evidence the performative importance of indices of style in practice. For example, *Omelette*'s intersubjective knowledge of the music of Frisell allowed the guitar ostinato to connote a minimalist index, which in

turn drew in the shared characteristics of *The Necks'* music. This minimalist connection then led me to refer to Henriksen to remain coherent with the established minimalist character and mood.

The episodic nature of *Doxa* required a more dynamic referencing of indices of style to communicate intersubjective signs because transitions between episodes are based on an overarching structural awareness that influences the balance of one's playing and resting. The improvisation exercises that divided tasks between duos were evident in the juxtaposition of duos playing contrasting and unrelated material.

One for Four demonstrated a similar conceptual and structural approach to *Esteban* in that its ostinato foundation maintained a consistent character throughout. However, free jazz connotations resulting from Shepherd's opening stylistic index drew upon influences that facilitated different ways of playing. *One for Four*'s emergent constraints were weaker than those of *Esteban* and thus allowed a greater degree of experimentation that led to the adoption of wider-ranging stylistic indices.

The discussion and analysis of these three works from my folio has articulated and evidenced how indices of style inform my approach to free jazz improvisation. In conducting this analysis, I have communicated how the concepts of indexicality, intersubjectivity and emergence have contributed to the group improvisation process. While the intention throughout this research has been to develop intersubjectivity as a means of improving communicative pathways in free improvised music, this development has presented a broader understanding of intersubjectivity than merely "shared understandings" (Cumming, 2007, 79). More broadly, the analyses in all examples have explained how improvised contributions

are largely created based on an intersubjective understanding of *Omelette*'s store of signs and negotiated within the emergent constraints that are particular to each given context.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

5.1 Summary

At the beginning of this research, I set out to ask the question in what ways does the concept of indices of style impact the performance processes underlying free jazz improvisation. From this research, I have concluded that the concept of indices of style has influenced my approach to free jazz improvisation through emphasizing intersubjectivity. In facilitating a broader awareness of how I engage with my co-performers, intersubjectivity has heightened my listening and accentuated the collaborative aspects of my work. The intertwined concepts of indexicality and emergence have played key roles in developing this intersubjective framework. Indexicality evidences the existence of a sign system whereby improvisers are able to recognize sounds, primarily through stylistic characteristics, and the meanings embodied in these sounds. It has become apparent that emergence relies on an intersubjective understanding of these meanings that bears influence on how sounds are organized.

Developing intersubjectivity in Omelette does not necessarily mean that its members strive to create improvised music that is consistently homogenous. Instead, my approach to developing intersubjectivity refers to an active, respectful dialogue of understanding, misunderstandings and propositions that lead to more informed and collaborative creative decisions. Intersubjectivity allows decisions about what to play, as well as what not to play, to be made confidently.

Because the music is improvised, it existed as a one-off creative event, which even if recorded, can only be mimicked but not repeated. Therefore, in order to expose the underlying processes, I created a series of improvisatory exercises designed to draw my co-performers' attention to specific stylistic potentials and thereafter analysed the subsequent performances for evidence of their influence. Research of a wide range of improvisation

literature, including recordings, has confirmed the many and varied approaches and opinions towards improvised music that make it, as Bailey (1992: ix) claims, "the most widely practiced of all musical activities and the least acknowledged and understood". Bailey's statement was made three decades ago, and in that time, research from a wide range of knowledge domains has made significant inroads since his assertion. This study has sought to contribute first by casting light on the generative processes inherent in intersubjectivity and secondly by showing how those processes may be energised in a group of free improvising musicians by deliberately facilitating and challenging communication and interaction via exercises that lay bare the meanings associated with musical signs. In effect, this approach, based mainly on frameworks of communication adapted from semiotics, does not attempt to assign specific meanings to musical signifiers but instead allows improvisers to maintain their own interpretations and draw inspiration from their own sources. In upholding individual freedom of choice as the essence of what draws improvising practitioners to free improvisation, my research has proposed a way in which improvisers can collectively workshop their idiosyncratic approaches to discover more about their own approach and those of their co-performers to enrich the intersubjective experience of socially-based musical collaboration.

In terms of benefits, improvisation exercises heightened listening and awareness, challenged conventional practices and revealed idiosyncratic and group traits. Additionally, conceptual approaches to free improvisation such as ostinato-based improvisations, through-composed episodic improvisations, transitions and the superimposition of contrasting duos have been further developed. Improvisation exercises also reframed outlooks on free improvisations by raising awareness of potential overarching structures through signalling methods, transitions, distinctive episodes and the recapitulations of episodes.

This research evidences that the reframing of outlooks on free improvisations has provided other options when commencing an improvisation than just 'hoping for the best'. In having a pre-conceived idea or intention about a potential approach to an improvisation instils forward-planning thinking by which one's improvisation can be measured in real-time in aiming for this intention. The detail of this intention may be abstract in its structure or concept and only crystallise as the improvisation proceeds. As such, adjustments can be made in response to likely unforeseen changes and 'plans' can be reset according to the ephemeral conditions. However, the concept of a forward-planning intention remains constant to which one's contributions can be held accountable.

Rehearsing improvisation exercises as a means of developing intersubjectivity has proven to be beneficial in several ways but also that it is not without its pitfalls. From my perspective, the primary reason for playing free jazz is the feeling derived from the element of surprise. At times, improvisation exercises, when overtly recreated in performances, detracted from the spontaneity of the free jazz improvisation experience. The recreation of improvisation exercises was particularly apparent in the context of studio recordings where the pressures of recording and producing a product for radio play and research purposes, and the financial implications of potentially not meeting preconceived expectations, come face-to-face with creative pursuits and artistic integrity. In this regard, it was apparent that studio recordings took on a starkly different approach of shorter, radio-friendly improvisation to that of the continuous set-long and thus more adventurous improvisations that had become *Omelette's* standard practice at live performances. The unrecorded environments of *Omelette's* live performances created a safe place to experiment free from judgement and wider public scrutiny and thus saw improvisations that exercised a higher degree of risk than studio recordings.

5.2 Interpretation and Discussion

The analysis focused on two main aspects of intersubjectivity: the emergence of the music created and the indices of styles of the musicians who create it. Whereas the concept of emergence is relatively and increasingly well known, I proposed that the concept of indices of style as applied to improvisation provides a different perspective in understanding the processes informing free jazz performance. Improvisers have sets of indices they bring to various musical situations. The types of indices engaged usually vary depending on the type of music and performers. The depth and breadth of a musician's index of style are entirely idiosyncratic. It depends on experience, expertise and one's own encompassing aesthetic. However, in terms of intersubjectivity, indices of style are tied to how the other musicians recognise them.

The journaling and ethnographic write-up process exceeded my expectations in its ability to scrutinise and reveal the intersubjective relationships that underscore my interactions with *Omelette*. The ethnographic analysis has transcended the audible qualities of the music to illustrate a holistic view of the music-making process and thus a richer form of analysis. It has achieved this by providing insight to location, personal character and interpersonal relationships of participants, events surrounding the music-making, including challenges, discussions, intentions and the feelings encountered during the process.

While indices of style are usually recognised and influences on the musical process heard, the meaning behind particular sequences of musical events is inaudible. Analysis of ethnographic accounts was beneficial in this regard as they revealed deeper meaning through the descriptive language surrounding the event in question. References to thoughts, personal

traits, relationships and background knowledge of players transcend the audible qualities of the sound to provide further insight.

This study has clearly shown that indices of style inform my approach to free jazz improvisation. However, more broadly speaking, the internalisation of indices of style as a conceptual framework has influenced the way I engage with the music and musicians by listening beyond my own sound and listening for the ways my improvisation engages with that of my co-performers. This type of listening has led to reappraisals of my thought process towards free jazz improvisation. It has emphasised intersubjectivity as the primary focus driving my improvisational thinking and playing to the point where my focus is becoming and remaining attuned to it in performance. It has recast intersubjectivity from a concept that leads to homogeneous musical outcomes by way of synchronicity and unified alliances to a view of intersubjectivity as shared understanding and accommodation of difference as much as similarity.

Although I in no way resile from the comment at the head of this section, I add that the exegetical writing has served a purpose of “re-versioning” the folio works as well as creating a discourse about “revealing moments” (Barret and Bolt, 2007: 160). In doing so, the writing and reflection process has created a departure from my customary practical approaches and allowed me to know what I do not know I know. Furthermore, the act of undertaking this research has allowed me to understand my thinking, feeling and beliefs concerning my role within free jazz performance, and ascertain how my actions correspond to these beliefs (Bolton, 2010: 4). Although I make no assertions on behalf of my colleagues in Omelette, I can satisfactorily conclude that it has generated changes in my practice as an artist.

The current study suggests that improvisation exercises are an activity that may be suitable for both groups in their infancy of free improvisation and established groups experiencing stagnation and require the implementation of change-provoking methods. As such, it opens up numerous other avenues for research. One such avenue could include the application of improvisation exercises to secondary school music students as a means of enriching their learning and appreciation of the music through a deeper understanding of the musical process. Furthermore, providing a creative alternative to the largely dominant Western classical, jazz and popular music pedagogical frameworks may stimulate creativity and learning more broadly across all disciplines.

From a qualitative perspective, it would be illuminating to interview my co-performers as to the concepts that guide their approaches to free jazz performance to observe any correlations to the concept of indices of style. Additionally, it would be interesting to bring improvisers from divergent disciplines into *Omelette* to observe the ways all parties interact in free contexts.

A lingering question remains regarding why I pursue this activity of free improvised music, often performing to small audiences, committing time, passion and energy for little remuneration and experiencing artistic frustration as well as fulfilment. For me, it is this vulnerability and exposure of one's innermost artistic expressions, unfettered by predetermined convention, in the face of public scrutiny, and at the mercy of one's co-performers that unifies participants during this process and makes the experience so unique.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Improvisation Exercises - Initial Text-Only Format

1. Layered ostinatos

- a. Player one begins to improvise an ostinato (a repetitive pattern played in tempo). Allow time for this ostinato to become established and settled. During player one's ostinato, player two is to think of a second ostinato to play in conjunction with the first ostinato.
- b. Player two joins player one by improvising a second ostinato. Allow time for the two ostinatos to settle into each other.
- c. Players three and four follow the same procedure.
- d. Once all players have established their respective ostinatos, player one ceases their original ostinato
- e. Player two drops out after player one and player three drops out after player two
- f. The ostinato of player four becomes the new ostinato
- g. Player one joins player four by improvising a second ostinato. Player two follows, followed by player three.
- h. Once all players have established their respective ostinatos, player four ceases their original ostinato followed by player one then player two.
- i. The ostinato of player three becomes the new ostinato and continue this pattern until all players have started a cycle.

2. Layered Contrasting Ostinatos

The group is divided into two groups.

- a. Group one: Player one begins to improvise an ostinato. Allow time for this ostinato to become established and settled. During player one's ostinato, player two is to think of a second ostinato to play in conjunction with the first ostinato.
- b. Player two improvises a second ostinato with the first ostinato and allows time for the two ostinatos to settle into each other and for the players to memorize their part.
- c. Group one ceases their combined ostinatos.
- d. Group two follows the same procedure as group one however must improvise contrasting ostinatos to group one. Allow time for the combined ostinatos to become established and settled and for the players to memorize their part.
- e. Group two ceases their combined ostinatos.
- f. Group one plays their combined ostinatos for a brief period and stops.
- g. Group two plays their combined ostinatos for a brief period and stops.

- h. Repeat this procedure several times.
- i. Finally play the two combined ostinatos simultaneously and observe the results.

3. Shadow - Duos

This exercise is more effective when conducted with two people only as the results will be more audible. The exercise relies on leading and following and requires the leader to improvise in such a way that makes it easier for the follower to anticipate. Observe the results at all stages of the exercise.

- a. The designated leader improvises a phrase that is to be mirrored as closely as possible by the follower.
- b. At the end of each phrase, the roles are reversed.
- c. Continue this process until a flow is established between the participants.
- d. Finally, try the same process however do not designate a leader or follower and instead follow each other.

4. Creating Sections & Finding Endings

- a. Start improvising simultaneously and listen for potential opportunities to end the section. Also, be aware of the characteristics that define this section. Stop playing when this ending naturally occurs. This is section A.
- b. Start improvising simultaneously with awareness of the characteristics of section A as individuals may decide to repeat section A. Also listen for potential opportunities to end the section. Stop playing when an ending naturally occurs. If the section was contrasting to section A, it is section B. This section may contain characteristics of section A however contain new material or have developed in a different way. A modification of section A section is A1. Observe the ways in which section A was modified however still maintained its characteristics.
- c. Start simultaneously improvising a third section with awareness of the preceding sections. Listen for characteristics of preceding sections, new material and observe ways in which material may be modified. Also listen for potential opportunities to end the section. Allow the improvisation to end naturally.
- d. Continue this procedure as many times as desired.

5. First Idea

- a. Start improvising simultaneously only using materials occurring in the initial stages of the improvisation for the entire improvisation. Observe the characteristics of your material and way in which your material engages with others in the group. Allow this improvisation to end naturally.
- b. Begin a second improvisation however modify your material from the first improvisation in a different way or alter the way in which your material engaged with others in the first improvisation.

6. Remember What Was Played

The group is split into group A and group B.

- a. Both groups start improvising simultaneously only using materials occurring in the initial stages of the improvisation for the entire improvisation. Groups need to be aware of their improvised content and will be required to recall their individual material for the exercise.
- b. Both groups commence a second improvisation however group A maintains the same material from the first improvisation while group B improvises a response to the first group's first improvisation.
- c. Both groups commence a third improvisation however group B maintains their material from the second improvisation while group A responds to the second group's improvisation.

7. Hidden Groove & Signalling

- a. Commence improvising simultaneously and attempt to collectively agree upon a universal tempo as quickly as possible. Allow time for the tempo to become established and for participants to observe their role within the collective groove. Individuals need to be aware of their improvised content and will be required to recall their individual material for the exercise.
- b. After a period of time, one undesignated person makes a change which signals that everyone else is to also alter their part and the group is to establish a new tempo and role within the new groove.
- c. After a period of time, one undesignated person makes a change which signals that everyone else is to return to the first groove.

8. Making Tunes

This exercise is most effective when layering ostinatos to commence improvisations.

- a. Create a group groove by layering ostinatos. Be aware of the order in which each part enters the groove.
- b. After the groove is well established, one person ceases their part for a brief moment and re-enters by improvising a melody. An effective melody is one that demonstrates contrasting characteristics to the other parts of the groove.
- c. Once the melody has been established, the person who created the melody improvises a solo.
- d. The soloist eventually returns to the melody and ceases to play after its statement.
- e. The same player reinstates the original part from the layered ostinato to establish the group groove.
- f. The group improvisation ends by participants dropping out of the groove in the reverse order in which they entered.

9. Hidden Groove & Making Tunes

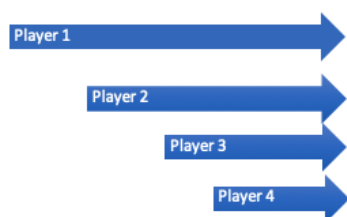
- a. Create a group groove by layering ostinatos. This is Groove 1.
- b. After a period of time, one undesignated person makes a change which signals that everyone else is to also alter their part and the group is to establish a new tempo and role within the new groove. This is Groove 2.
- c. Whilst in Groove 2 one undesignated person makes a change which signals that everyone else is to return to Groove 1.

- d. Whilst in Groove 1, one person ceases their part for a brief moment (approx. 10 seconds) and re-enters by improvising a melody and a solo.
- e. The end of the improvised solo is the cue to move into Groove 2
- f. Whilst in Groove 2, one person ceases their part for a brief moment (approx. 10 seconds) and re-enters by improvising a melody and a solo.
- g. The end of the improvised solo is the cue to return to Groove 1 and repeat the process with alternating improvised solos.
- h. The group improvisation ends by participants dropping out of the groove in the reverse order in which they entered.

Appendix B: Improvisation Exercises: Diagrams and Objectives

Exercise 1: *Layering Ostinatos*

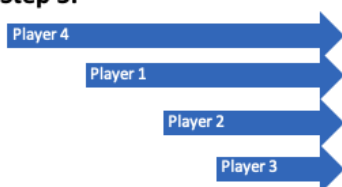
Step 1:



Step 2:

1. Player 1 drops out at own discretion
2. Player 2 drops out at own discretion
3. Player 3 drops out at own discretion
4. Player 4's ostinato starts new exercise (as per step 1)

Step 3:



Step 4:

Finish when all players have had a turn at starting a cycle.

Figure 9. Exercise 1: *Layering Ostinatos* diagram

Task Objectives

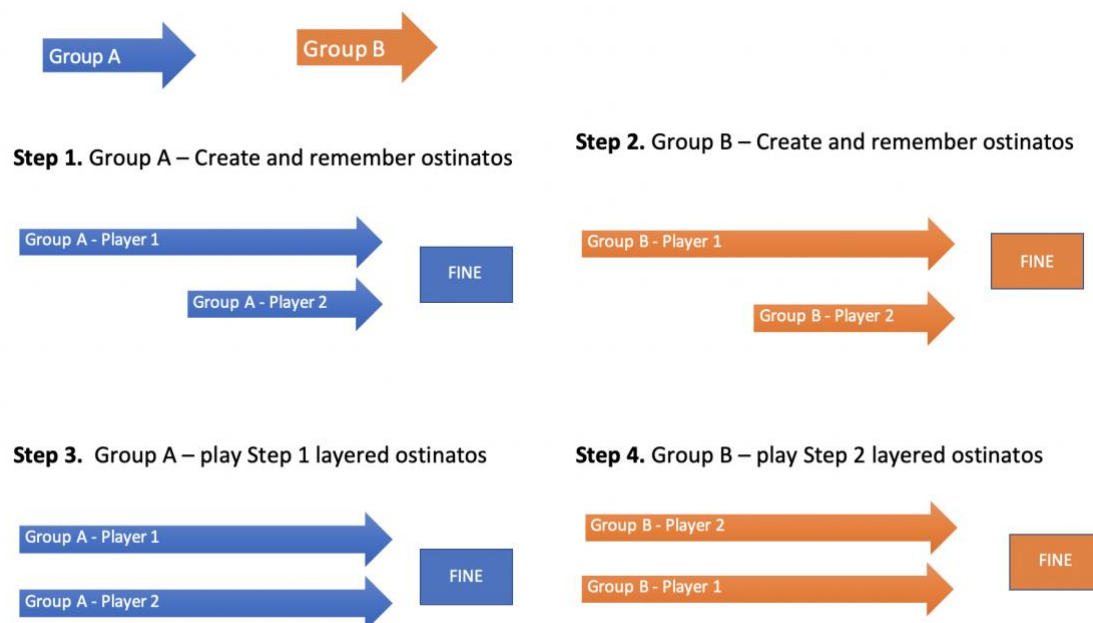
By definition, an ostinato repeats, and for the purposes of this exercise, must feature a defining tempo or rhythmic characteristic indicating its beginning and end. This is necessary for other players to layer their ostinatos following the original ostinato. The defining structural features of this original ostinato are inevitably communicated within a stylistic context, either through connotations via instrumentation or evident denotational elements. As such, stylistic indices instigate individual searches through participants' internal reservoirs, in regard to a collective intersubjective knowledge base, to facilitate the improvisation of suitable ostinatos. Each following ostinato is generated within the stylistic and emergent constraints initiated by the original ostinato. This exercise encapsulates the functions of the concepts of indexicality, intersubjectivity and emergence within constraints of the original ostinato via a forward-looking approach enabled through repetition.

It is up to player one to communicate tempo, duration and melodic, harmonic and rhythmic complexity of the ostinato in consideration of how it will impact the players to

follow. Following ostinatos will naturally add to the collective composition and as such, increase overall complexity. Therefore, by intersubjective requirements, all players should consider the impact of their individual ostinatos in the context of the group sound. Complex individual ostinatos will increase the difficulty of perception, engagement and overall complexity. Simpler ostinatos will generally make perception and engagement easier and complexity will be determined by the number of ostinatos.

This exercise reveals idiosyncratic approaches towards the composition of ostinatos, including favoured styles, ostinato complexity, duration (length of ostinato) and indicates players' flexibility in adapting to changes of rhythmic and harmonic material.

Exercise 2: *Layering Contrasting Ostinatos*



Step 5. Both groups play their layered ostinatos simultaneously



End of exercise.

Figure 10. Exercise 2: *Layering Contrasting Ostinatos* diagram

Task Objectives

While exercising the same indexical, emergent and intersubjective aspects as *Layering Ostinatos*, *Layering Contrasting Ostinatos* differs by reducing ostinatos to two voices and creating ostinatos in response to a given context. Firstly, reducing ostinatos to duos simplifies density through less voices and thus also allows participants to observe interaction with greater clarity. Secondly, understanding that both duos will play simultaneously in the final stage of the exercise places group B in a position where they can aim to create a duo that is coherent with group A or not. By virtue of following group A, group B will either individually or collectively be influenced by group A and exhibit similar characteristics or not. The final combination of both duos asks both groups to consider how their respective individual parts and duos will potentially interact with the other duo. Furthermore, the duo and combined duos stages of the exercise allows for observation as to how parts are adjusted, expounded or maintained in relation to contexts.

Exercise 3: *Shadow - Duos*

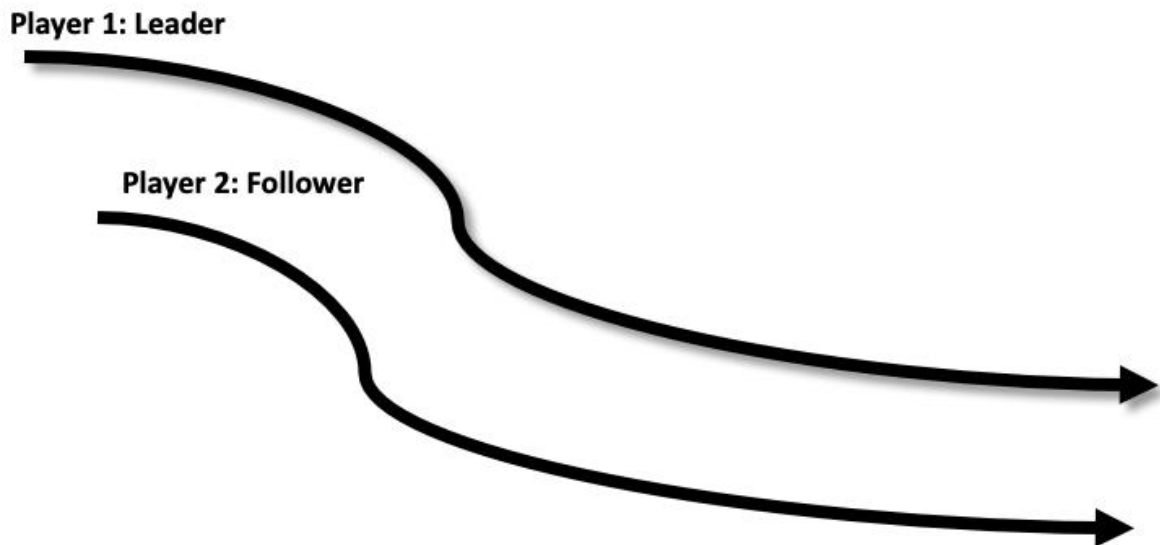


Figure 11. Exercise: *Shadow - Duos* diagram

Task Objectives

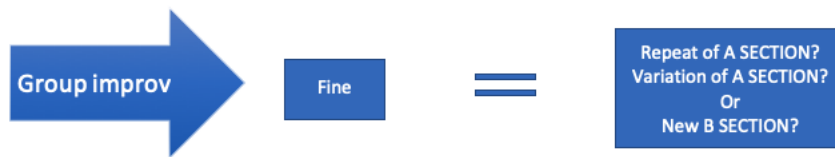
Due to conventional jazz practices, the roles of instruments such as bass and drums are renowned as accompanying or background roles while piano, guitar and trombone adopt leading or foreground roles. *Shadow - duos* seeks to challenge these conventions by alternating between leading and following roles within each duo. As such, it encourages a different listening that is not aligned with conventional practice and illustrates how traditional accompanying instruments may approach leading roles. This exercise has been reduced to duos to further clarify leading and following roles. The simplicity and minimal instruction of leading and following aims to reveal particular stylistic tendencies or adversities towards the emergence or lack of structure and observe what intersubjective knowledge is drawn upon in both leading and following roles.

Exercise 4: *Creating Sections & Finding Endings*

Step 1. Begin as desired. Create something and once established, find a way to bring it to and end



Step 2. Repeat it? Vary it? Create something new? Once established, find a way to bring it to an end.



Step 3. Repeat it? Vary it? Create something new? Once established, find a way to bring it to an end.

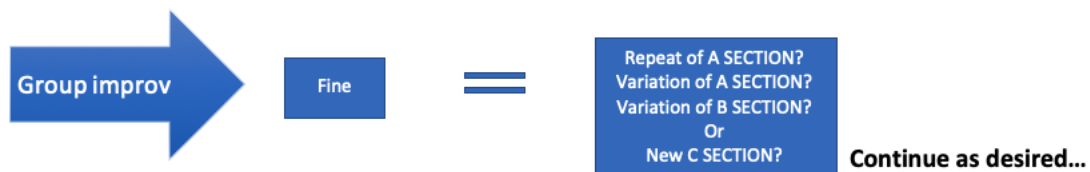


Figure 12. Exercise 4: *Creating Sections & Finding Endings* diagram

Task Objectives

Creating Sections & Finding Endings requires intensive listening of all parts to observe if participants have decided to repeat, vary or create a new section in step two and therefore decide whether to follow these decisions or not. There will inevitably be variations in decisions and interpretations that will further exercise emergent and intersubjective properties.

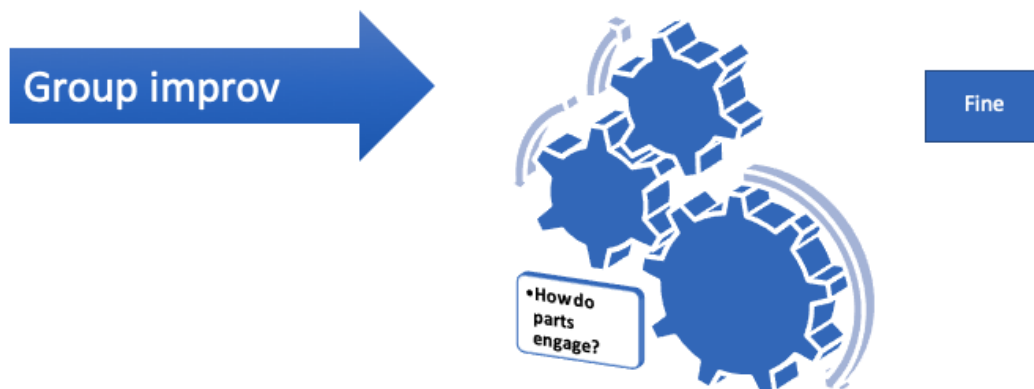
In creating a section and its potential repetition, the exercise implies the section exhibits some sort of defining characteristic and the participants observation of their individual role within the section. This is necessary for it to be repeated or varied. As such, in creating a section, the tendency will often gravitate to the most obvious or unifying element and in doing so, highlight individual roles in relation to the evolving emergent. It will explore also the role style plays in the strength of the emergent as defining elements emerge.

The concept of actively listening for or instigating an ending is unusual as this tends to happen naturally in performances as fade outs or rhythmic repetitions that set up a more

predictable ending. As such, it leads to methods of signalling while remaining democratic. This usually sees overt repetition of an element to maximise its chance of being noticed and draw participants to some kind of closure.

Exercise 5: *First Idea*

Step 1. Start as desired. Use initial material for duration of group improvisation.



Step 2. Modify material from Step 1 or alter form of engagement.



Figure 13. Exercise 5: *First Idea* diagram

Task Objectives

The intention of the exercise *First Idea* is to explore the reflexive ways participants respond and adapt to particular unforeseen imposed conditions. Upon commencing, improvisers are asked to maintain the ‘initial material’ for the duration of the exercise. This wording is intentionally vague to allow for liberties in adjusting to the emergent conditions. In starting simultaneously, participants are denied the experience of previewing a context before considering ways to engage. As such, it exerts pressure on the collaborative emergence to

maintain one's initial idea within more rigid emergent constraints. It reveals participants' flexibility or rigidity in their willingness to adapt to the emergent conditions. While stylistic attributes are inevitably evident, indexicality is less influential due to the simultaneous start and requirements to maintain initial material. Intersubjectivity is exercised to explore options of improvised content within limited stylistic boundaries.

Exercise 6: *Remember What Was Played - Two Duos*

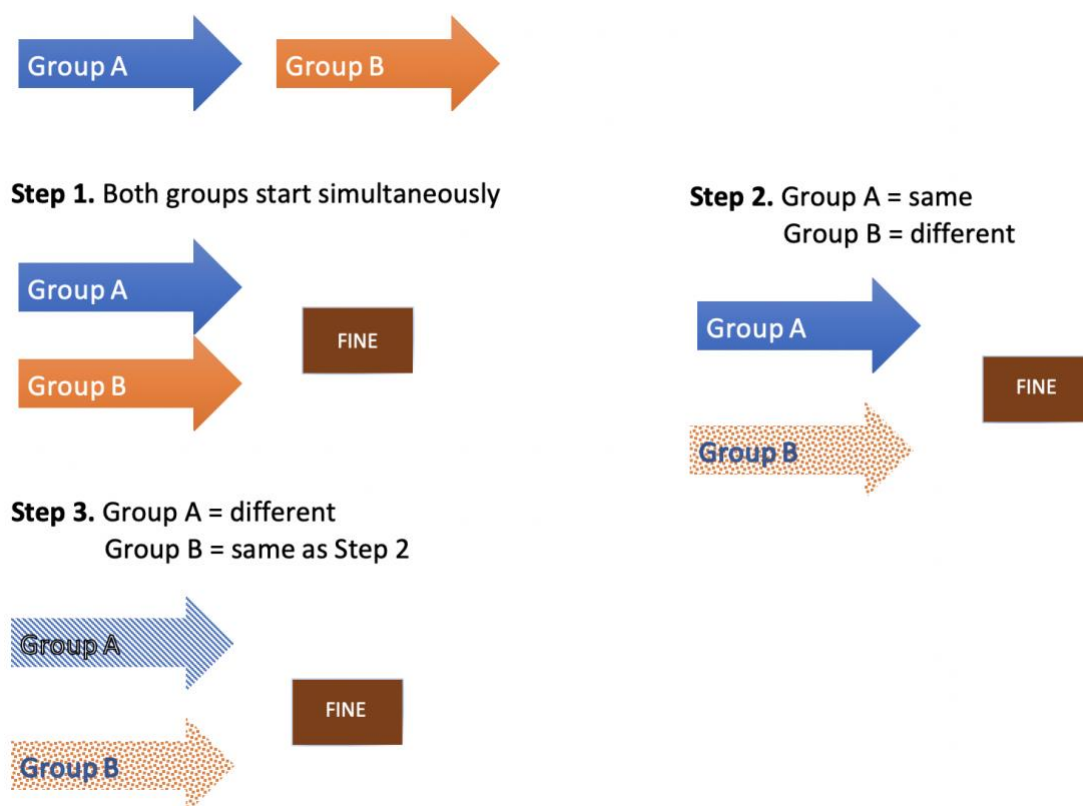


Figure 14. Exercise 6: *Remember What Was Played - Two Duos* diagram

Task Objectives

This exercise begins in the same manner as *First Idea* and as such, exercises the same concepts, but it includes additional stages that impose contrasting duos in relation to duos in previewed stages. In stage two, the exercise explores if group B repels or gravitates towards group A and due to additional stages, allows for the observations of particular indexical (stylistic) and emergent (structural) actions that may be employed to facilitate this activity.

Stage three reverses the roles however observes the ways group A either assimilates to or disregards group B.

Exercise 7: *Hidden Grooves and Signalling*

Step 1: Start simultaneously and find groove #1



Step 2: While in groove #1: *Signal* - ONE person changes their part – all others also change to find new groove #2



Step 3: While in groove #2: *Signal* - ONE person chooses to change their part & all return to groove #1. Find an ending.



Figure 15. Exercise 7: *Hidden Grooves and Signalling* diagram

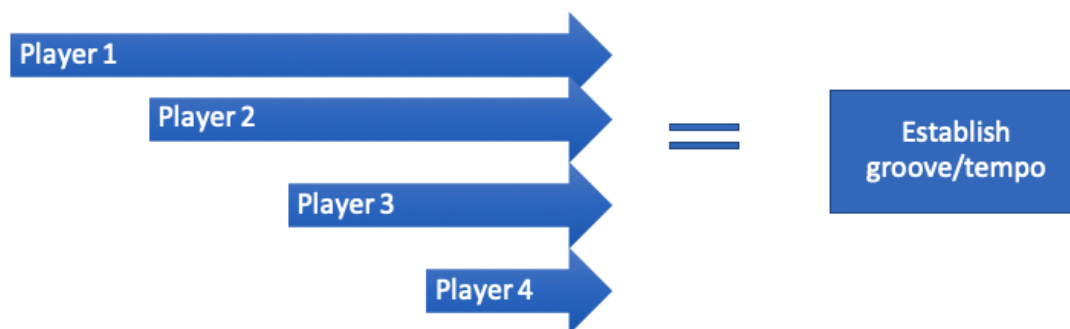
Task Objectives

Building on the concept of starting simultaneously as seen in *First Idea* and *Remember What Was Played - Two Duos*, *Hidden Grooves and Signalling* differs as participants are actively listening for evidence of grooves emerging from the group sound while playing a groove of

their own when commencing the improvisation. As such, this exercise examines the notion of equally dividing one's attention between listening and playing. The emergence of grooves reveals preferences of stylistic indices adopted to generate grooves and what characteristics are more prevailing than others. The unsolicited signalling component in stage one of this exercise requires participants to pay close attention to all parts in order to decipher who has changed their part and how this part has changed in order to decipher the groove in stage two. This component examines the handling of transitions in short time frames and thus exercises the emergent properties of the group. The pictured cogs are a reminder to pay attention to how all parts engage as stage one is to be revisited in stage three. The exercise also highlights participants who are more likely to instigate changes and the methods of signalling they choose to adopt. The groove element of this exercise emphasises intersubjectivity in regard to stylistic indices while the simultaneous start and changing grooves focuses on emergent properties.

Exercise 8: *Making Tunes*

Step 1. Layer ostinatos



Step 2. Player 1 drops out and re-enters with improvisation



Step 3. Player 1 re-joins ostinato



Step 4. Repeat Step 2 & 3 until all players have improvised

Step 5. Reverse ostinato to finish

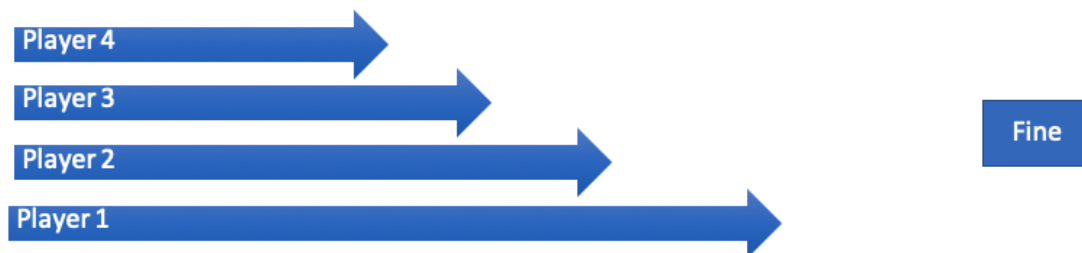


Figure 16. Exercise 8: *Making Tunes* diagram

Task Objectives

Making Tunes builds on the exercise *Layering Ostinatos* by including the additional task of alternating improvised solos over layered ostinatos. Improvisers are required to be aware of their role within a collective ostinato in order to effectively return to their original ostinato part following individual improvisations. As per *Layering Ostinatos*, *Making Tunes* initially explores intersubjectivity via indexical presuppositions following initial and subsequent stylistic indices. This intersubjectivity assists in drawing on stylistic attributes that maintain the character and mood and simultaneously apply emergent constraints consistent with the indexed style. Each improvised solo introduces variations to the established context and the exercise explores the tension and release in negotiating these variations.

Exercise 9: *Hidden Grooves and Making Tunes*

Step 1: Start simultaneously and find groove #1



Step 2: While in groove #1, *Signal* - ONE person chooses to change their part – all others also change to find a new groove



Step 3: While in groove #2, *Signal* - ONE person chooses to change their part and return to groove #1.



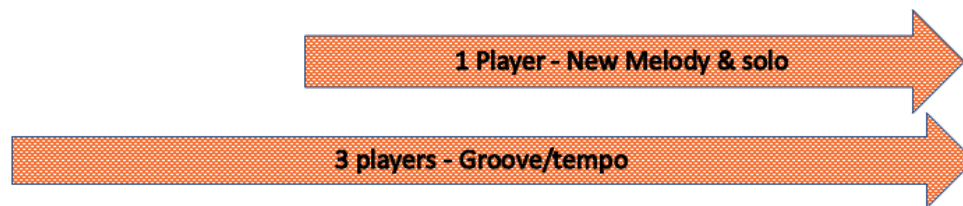
Step 4: While in groove #1: ONE person drops out and re-enters with improvised melody and solo



Step 5: While in groove #1: *Signal* – End of solo – move into groove #2



Step 6: While in groove #2: ONE person drops out and re-enters with improvised melody and solo



Step 7: While in groove #2: *Signal* - End of solo – return to groove #1.



Step 8: Repeat stages 4 to 7 with alternating soloists.

Figure 17. Exercise 9: *Hidden Groove and Making Tunes* diagram

Task Objectives

As the title suggests, *Hidden Grooves and Making Tunes* is a juxtaposition of *Hidden Groove and Signalling* and *Making Tunes* and thus incorporates and exercises the same concepts. However, once the two contrasting grooves have been established via signalling and transitions between sections, the exercise introduces the concept of creating new melodies and improvised solos over these contrasting sections. In asking participants to create

melodies, it encourages thematic material that is discernible from improvised solos.

Repetition arising from thematic material can introduce a forward-looking outlook and allow participants to plan their interactions to a certain degree. Creating melodic material can also be telling in terms of intersubjectivity and the stylistic indices referred through this melodic material.

Appendix C: Album Reviews

On This Day Review

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JAZZWISE REVIEWS

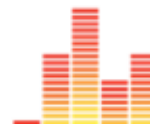
AUSTRALIAN JAZZ ALBUM ROUND-UP MAY 2015

May 08

Category: [CD Reviews](#)

LIVE STREAM

64 kbps



Omelette

On This Day

Jazzhead ****

Jordon Murray (trom), Stephen Magnusson (g), Mark Shepherd (b), Ronny Ferella (d). Rec. 19 December 2013

This album is one seriously tasty morsel! The group sound, loose and free, is dominated by the fabulous trombone of Murray, who introduces a great sense of fun and entertainment to his playing. Supporting him is the ever present Magnusson, who seems to be everywhere in Australian jazz these days. All the tracks are group compositions and performed with gusto and intent. Jordon delivers an extraordinary range of sounds from his instrument and this is what makes the album work so well. What could have been hampered by lack of variety is instead a sheer joy. Magnusson has a unique approach to the guitar and in addition to his lead provides the perfect sound bed for Murray's excursions, whilst complementing the shifting rhythms. The impression gained from listening to this album is that the band had a ball during recording and this enthusiasm simply leaps out of the speakers. The concept of a trombone led album may be daunting, but that is certainly not the case here, Murray's trombone has a rich sound enhanced by obvious technical skill, but more importantly, imagination. This album was recorded over a year ago and represents their debut. I can only hope that their sophomore release is already in the can.

Omelette Live at the Jazz Lab Review

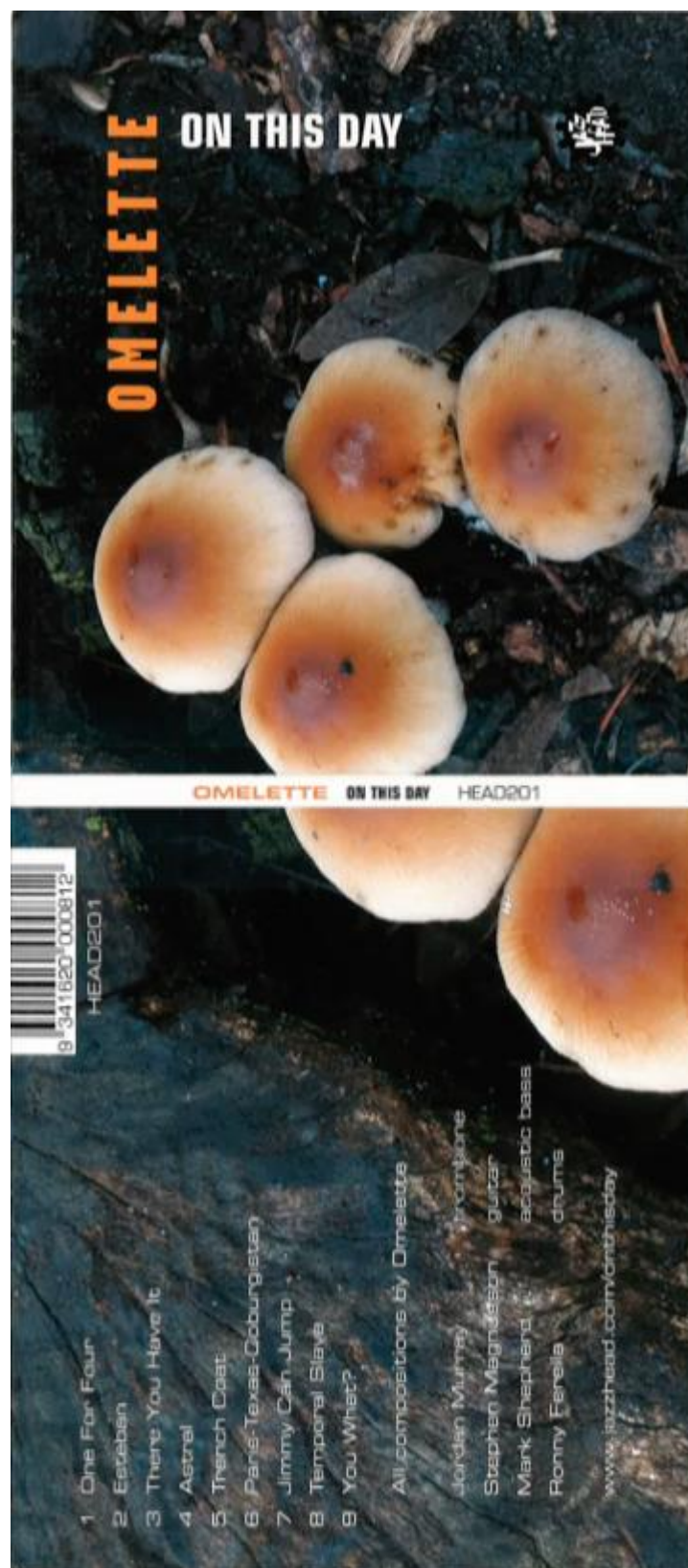
OMELETTE With JORDAN MURRAY / RONNY FERELLER / LUKE HOWARD / JAVIER FREDES - Live at the Jazz Lab (FMR 483; UK) Featuring Jordan Murray on trombone, Luke Howard on piano, Javier Fredes on percussion and Ronny Fereller on drums. I know very little about the members of this quartet. Omelette appear to be from Australia with Jordan Murray being on the faculty at Monash University. Dave Douglas did a collaboration with the Monash art Ensemble in 2016. Australian pianist Luke Howard has quite a good reputation as a pianist and producer with dozens of discs to his name. This disc is warm, clean and superbly recorded. The piano and trombone are especially enchanting with a rich cushion of drums and percussion flowing underneath. Both drummers/percussionists work quite well together. The music is mostly warm, rather melodic and quietly haunting. Some of the melodies on this disc recall those early, neoclassical, early prog-like songs of Procol Harum, but more slipped down and with no rock influences. At times, the trombone and piano take off and soar together but not in a total free or with too much abandonment. I don't think I've heard anything quite like this in a long while: lovely, quaint, dreamy, calm, sublime... quite beautiful, actually, at times. - Bruce Lee Gallanter, DMG

Appendix D: Album Covers and Track Listing



Track Listing - *Omelette: Live at The Jazz Lab* (2017)

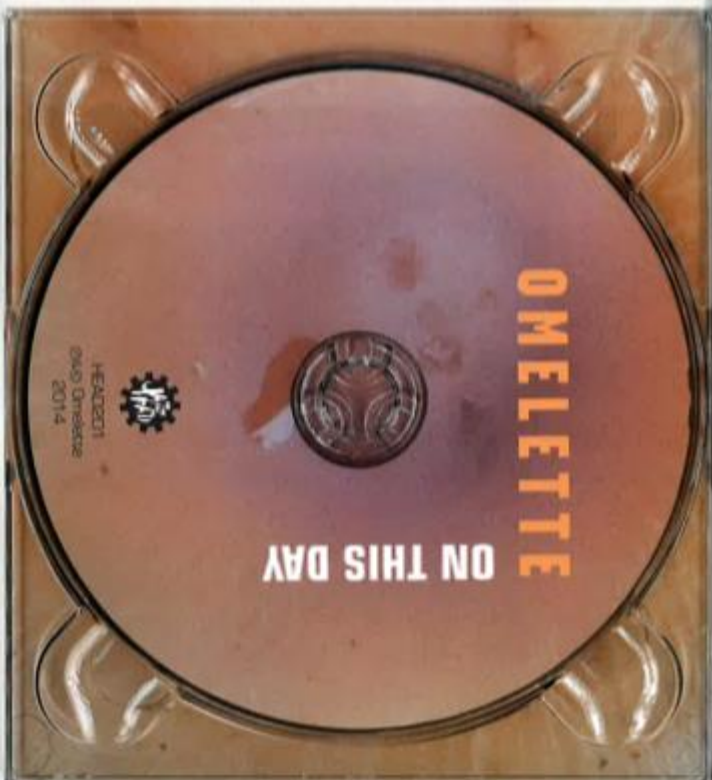
1. Doxa (*Omelette*)
2. Utforske (*Omelette*)
3. Dele (*Omelette*)
4. Skape (*Omelette*)
5. Veksten (*Omelette*)



- 1 One For Four
- 2 Eteben
- 3 There You Have It
- 4 Astral
- 5 Trench Coat
- 6 Paris-Texas-Goburgistan
- 7 Jimmy Can Jump
- 8 Temporal Slave
- 9 You What?

All compositions by Omelette

Jordan Murray trombone
Stephen Magnusson guitar
Mark Shepherd acoustic bass
Ronny Ferella drums
www.jazzhead.com/onthistday



Track Listing – *On This Day* (2013)

1. One for Four (*Omelette*)
2. Esteban (*Omelette*)
3. There You Have It (*Omelette*)
4. Astral (*Omelette*)
5. Trench Coat (*Omelette*)
6. Paris-Texas-Coburgistan (*Omelette*)
7. Jimmy can Jump (*Omelette*)
8. Temporal Slave (*Omelette*)
9. You What? (*Omelette*)