

Discovering a Music-based Underscore

An account of the translation process from the danced Underscore
to a music based practice.

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Abstract

Discovering a Music-based Underscore is an account of the journey undertaken by David Leahy to translate the Underscore, so as to become a music-based practice. Devised by dancer, Nancy Stark Smith, the Underscore is a framework and research tool used within Contact Improvisation.

The study explores the particular insights afforded to an improviser with experiential understanding of both dance and music. With the aim of offering new perspectives to improvising musicians based on a dancers relationship to space and his/her physicality.

The study drew on the researchers personal experience and understanding of the Underscore, while also involving 35 other improvising musicians in a two-phased research process. The first phase focused on the translation of the Underscore and the identification of an appropriate way to communicate the structure to musicians. While the second phase involved the running of six Music-based Underscores (MbUS) in London and across the south of England, culminating in an MbUS as part of the 2014 Trinity Laban Graduate Showcase. These sessions offered an opportunity to refine and amend the structure further by exposing the framework to a broad range of improvising musicians, with influences, experiences and biases different to the researcher.

Analysis of the responses by the musicians and personal reflections identified that, the MbUS offered the musicians new insights in how to listen, interact with others in a group Free Improvisation and engage with the performance environment. The Underscore structure was seen as being useful in preparing musicians collectively for improvisational engagements, while the potential to engaging with an audience spatially was also explored.

This research is seen as only the initial step in the establishment of a Music-based Underscore that supports improvising musicians research their own practice, in the same way that the Underscore supports Contact improvisers.

Contents

2.	Abstract
3.	Contents
4.	Acknowledgements.
	List of Abbreviations.
	Glossary
5.	Introduction.
7.	Background to the study.
16.	Methodology.
20.	Findings.
	- Phase 1. Arriving to a Music-based Underscore
21.	1. Physical experiences.
23.	2. The wording of the
25.	3. Managing the impact of sound within the MbUS.
28.	- Phase 2. The Music-based Underscore sessions.
	Permission
	Space
30.	Listening
32.	Time
34.	Audience
36.	Conclusion
37.	Looking Forward
38.	Bibliography
41.	Appendix 1. – The Underscore
48	Appendix 2. – The Music-based Underscore
56	Appendix 3. – Transcriptions of sharing discussions
	MbUS 1, Trinity Laban 15/5/2014
64	MbUS 2, Trinity Laban 10/6/2014
67	MbUS 3, Kent Improvisers, Christ Church Canterbury Univ.15/6/2014
83	MbUS 4, Cheltenham Improvisers, Univ. of Gloucestershire 24/6/2014
92	MbUS 5, Oxford Improvisers, Brookes University 25/6/2014
101	MbUS 6, Trinity Laban 17/7/2014
Back cover	Appendix 4. – Supporting media material

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List of abbreviations

MbUS – Music-based Underscore.

CI – Contact Improvisation.

Glossary

So as to provide a distinction between the numerous terms related to the Underscore from the surrounding text, I have chosen to apply the following convention.

Where terms are introduced for the first time and/or defined they appear in italics.

There after if I felt that the term needed to be emphasised, it appeared in ‘single speech marks’.

Underscore terms including; Underscore, Skinesphere, Kinesphere, and Grazing were not cited within the text as to do so would disrupt the readability of the text due to the frequency they are mentioned. However I acknowledge my source for all these terms here as being (Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008).

1. Introduction

If you invite a group of musicians to enter an empty space, set up wherever they like and play. From my experience, you will most likely find that they arrange themselves in a line or semi-circle opening out to the space. Then for the duration of their performance regardless of their musical background, they will stay exactly where they are as if their feet were stuck to the floor.

Further more, when asked about this spatially static behaviour, most musicians would cite considerations based on sightlines for themselves and the audience, and perhaps the acoustic nature of the space. But while this may justify the rationale behind their positioning in the room, it makes no account of why they choose not to move from that spot once they started playing.

This document details the impact that the addition of dance to my musical practice of improvisation has had on my relationship to both my physicality and the space around me. It involves the translation of an improvised dance framework called the Underscore to a music-based practice, with the aim of offering new perspectives to improvising musicians on physicality and space that dancers by virtue of their art take for granted.

The Underscore is a research tool and framework for Contact Improvisation devised by Nancy Stark Smith. It guides the improvising dancers through various states of awareness and movement, in preparation for a structure-free open improvisation (the 'open score' (Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008, p.95)). Contact Improvisation is a dance practice where dancing partners negotiate a playful exploration of gravity and motion through giving and taking weight.

Reflecting on the process of discovering a Music-based Underscore (MbUS), this document begins with a look at my creative background and how that led to this research followed by an introduction of the Underscore and an outline to my research process. I then explore the two phases of the research, from the translation process, through to the creation and delivery of a series of Music-based Underscores, which culminated with a MbUS open to the public as part of the 2014 Trinity Laban Graduate

Showcase. Lastly, I draw conclusions on the possible implications of this study and suggest future areas of interest.

I have incorporated the literature review into the entire document, so as to draw on relationships, pose questions and offer new insights as particular themes are explored through the text. While this document marks the end of the research process for my Masters, the resulting Music-based Underscore should not be seen as an end product, but rather the beginning of an ongoing process of refining a new tool for investigating musical improvisation and a musician's relationship to his/her physicality and the performance environment.

Background to the Study

My improvisation practice

This account of the personal journey of translating the Underscore so as to be used by improvising musicians, stems from years of work as a professional improviser straddling music and dance, constantly questioning and comparing approaches, practices and understandings of the phenomenon of improvisation. In this section, I will offer an introduction to the specific areas of improvised practice focused on in this study, namely Free Improvisation in music and Contact Improvisation in dance, detailing my particular experience of both of these practices and how this informed the present study.

Free Improvised music

Free Improvised music is a non-idiomatic musical form that emerged in Europe during the early 1960s (Bailey, 1993, p. 84), which drew on materials and practices that musicians at the time considered useful for the creation of a new musical performance platform that reflected their cultural and musical traditions (Morris, 2012, p. 98). Like my own list of artistic influences, the musicians of the day drew inspiration from many forms of Western classical music including aleatoric (also known as Chance) and avant-garde art music, traditional folk and ethnic forms, alongside popular and jazz music.

While many of the European free improvisers came from a jazz background, they chose to place little emphasis on rhythmic regularity and the soloist/rhythm section relationship, as distinct from the development of free jazz in North America, where these qualities were carried over from jazz (Morris, 2012, p. 100). Thirty years later, I was attracted to Free Improvisation for the same potential for creative expression and freedom, away from the hierarchical constraints that I had experienced within the classical, folk and jazz idioms that I worked in. Following my arrival to the UK in 1998 and an invitation by saxophonist, Evan Parker to join the newly formed *London Improvisers Orchestra*, I made Free Improvisation my primary musical focus as I lost interest and/or connection with the other musical worlds from my past.

Free improvisers contribute freely to the group's musical performance, collectively negotiating playing time and role function within a leaderless group dynamic. Listening and responding, whilst balancing ones contribution to that of the others in the group, are fundamental aspects within Free Improvisation. "Each player is his or her own orchestra" (Morris, 2012, p. 102), with the invention of extended techniques alongside more conventional ways of instrumental playing being a recognized feature of this musical art form.

My connection to dance also began in the 1990's, as a composer for choreography and later as an accompanist for contemporary dance classes. It wasn't until the year 2001 that I first entered a dance studio not as a musician but as a dancer, bringing with me a level of somatic understanding from many years of gymnastics and yoga. I eventually focused on Contact Improvisation after identifying an affinity with my existing Free Improvising practice.

Contact Improvisation

Contact Improvisation evolved out of experimentations with improvised duets led by dancer, Steve Paxton, in response to observations that dance companies reflected the disciplinary structures and hierarchical power relations that existed in the wider society. Paxton saw potential for a return of "decision-making authority to the dancer" (Turner, 2010, p. 125), through developing the individual's socially suppressed "habit of attention" (Turner, 2010). By acknowledging that "behaviour evolves from sensing movement" (Turner, 2010) Paxton offered an alternative to the "western way" of approaching dance, that had emphasized the replication of only the external form of a movement or activity while neglecting any corporeal sensations (Turner, 2010).

Contact Improvisation can be described as a playful interplay of weight between dancing partners, who explore in a non-hierarchical dialogue the physical laws that govern our existence and movement, such as gravity, momentum and friction (Buckwalter 2010; Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008; Novack, 1990). I was first introduced to it by dancer, Claire Filmon in 2003, who had been exploring the potential of creating improvised works involving dancers and musicians, that was the result of her many

years working with leading artists such as dancers Simone Forti, Julyen Hamilton and Lisa Nelson and musicians like double bassist Barre Philips. Working with Claire was a transformative experience, which introduced me to a completely new realm of combined dance- and music-based practice.

Combined Practice

Over time I found that through my connection to Contact Improvisation my music-making process had changed to account for a new relationship to both my body and the space around me. A realization that I felt music as much as I heard it and that I heard dance as much as I saw and felt it, demonstrated to me that my personal practice had greatly expanded through the incorporation of movement into my practice. This is reflected by Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865 – 1950) belief, that people who had trained in *Dalcroze Eurhythmics*, the music training programme based on the awareness to bodily experiences, do not watch people move only with the eyes, but with their whole being. (Juntunen & Hyvönen, 2004, p. 203)

I began experimenting with my instrument, the double bass, as if it were a physical body and a dance partner. This led to a sense of permission to move whilst playing and to incorporate elements of my environment into my improvisations. For instance, using the non-instrumental sounds or the movements made by the other musicians or audience members as material to improvise with. I also found myself better able to communicate my intentions when conducting groups such as the *London Improvisers Orchestra* with my increased understanding of my physical presence in space.

At the same time, I was aware of how my existing music practice was helping to structure my approaches to dancing. But this was more a case of importing elements of my existing musical practice to my dancing practice. In a similar way to Richard Bull, with his background as a Jazz pianist, who clearly recognised how the principles of jazz improvisation might function both in the relationship between music and dance, and in the compositional process of making dances (Foster, 2002, p. 26).

This new knowledge based on my experience within dance caused me to consider how a deeper level of physical and spatial understanding could positively support the

development of other improvising musicians. This led me to invent new conducting hand gestures for use in the *London Improvisers Orchestra*, so as to encourage the musicians to explore spatial or physical perspectives within their playing. But without my movement experiences to support them, many of the musicians saw no relevance to what I was suggesting and saw it as little more than a trick or gimmick, rather than something that could be beneficial in the music-making process. I therefore chose to base my MA project on this area of enquiry, so as to introduce other musicians more experientially to a world that violinist, Mary Oliver describes as “temporal, physical, melodic and multidimensional” (Oliver, 2006, p. 459).

Added to this, I recognized that many concepts relating to bodily awareness and space were presented to Contact Improvisers in group-based activities, such as classes or structured jams. While these group-based activities served to prepare the dancers for the subsequent improvisation, I reflected on the apparent absence of any comparative process to prepare musicians collectively. My own experience allowed me to conclude that most musical preparation is done individually and is focused on the acquisition and refinement of skills and techniques that can be used later in performance. The potential for spatial and physical awareness to enhance the quality and nature of the music-making process is therefore largely ignored.

These considerations led me to the structured Contact Improvisation practice, the Underscore and the prospect of using it within my research. I believed the Underscore had the potential to expose the average improvising musician to a wealth of new experiences that could directly impact on their creative practice.

The Underscore

The Underscore incorporates descriptions of the significant states of mind and movement that naturally appear within Contact Improvisation. It was developed by Nancy Stark Smith, who was in the original group of dancers who worked closely with Paxton in developing Contact Improvisation. In this section, I will offer an historical account of the Underscore, draw some comparisons to music-based practices and provide a brief overview of the structure, while a more in depth outline appears in Appendix 1.

The emergence of the Underscore was a gradual process that started in 1990, following a crisis and feeling of claustrophobia that Nancy Stark Smith felt regarding her teaching practice. This came after 15 years of amassing a wealth of knowledge, skills and techniques based on *passing on* Contact Improvisation, that had become a prescriptive list of content that she felt needed to be touched on within her classes. Stark Smith then began to question where the “constant sense of discovery, the invention of materials and methods of the early years...” (Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008, p. 91) had gone?

As a result, Stark Smith began to rebel against this self-imposed list of session requirements by introducing periods of *open spaces* for movement exploration. Progressively, the classes evolved into a combination of *open spaces* and spoken and/or demonstrated instruction that focused the activity.

To Stark Smith, these directed moments were “occurring in a seemingly random, intuitively determined order” (Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008, p. 93). It was only after students began to ask questions relating to “that part of the class”, when Stark Smith started to acknowledge, that rather than her classes being an assemblage of random exercises, an underlying score consistently informed her decision-making process. The question of “what was this under pinning logic that existed throughout the classes?” (Dancetechtv, 2012), led to the eventual uncovering of what was to become known later as the Underscore.

While Stark Smith sees the Underscore primarily as a research tool and a way of studying phenomena in dance improvisation, including changes of state of mind and

physicality, she accepts that:

People like to do the Underscore because it is like a container for the improvisation. It helps to focus the practice even though it is quite open. It offers the dancers the opportunity to go through the different states uninterrupted and as a group, so as to feel what that is like and what that generates, rather than a more random jam environment. (Dancetechnv, 2012).

Stark Smith feels that the framework reflects a middle ground between being prescriptive and descriptive, suggesting what to do while at the same time offering a description of commonly experienced states of awareness (Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008, p.98).

While I appreciated a level of similarity in how the Underscore conveys a complex set of instructions just as if it were a musical score, finding a comparable structure that prepares music improvisers for collaborative engagement, while at the same time acting as a research tool proved difficult. While individual improvisers and ensemble leaders may develop frameworks and vocabulary to structure their improvisational processes⁽¹⁾, the language they create remains very localized to that individual and the surrounding musicians.

The most comparable practice that builds on a more widely recognized approach to improvisation is the phenomenon of the Improvised Orchestra, which tends to be local reproductions of an existing model utilizing a series of conduction hand signals that originated through the work of two American improvisers, Walter Thompson *Sound Painting* and Butch Morris *Conduction* (Marshall, 2014). While both of these methods support a common language that has resulted in the formation of Improvisation Orchestras across the world, they remain primarily presentational (Marshall, 2014), with the hand signals primarily concerned with shaping the sonic, and not the physical or spatial aspects of the experience. This emphasis on the performance aspects of the practices are in direct contrast to the Underscore which explores a dancers relationship to all three of these aspects, but not usually in front of an audience⁽²⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Various musicians have created improvisational vocabularies and structures such as Cecil Taylor – Unit Structures, Ornette Coleman – Harmelodics, Anthony Braxton – Tri-Axiom Theory (Morris, 2012).

⁽²⁾ Since the Somatics and Technology Conference 2012, at University of Chichester, UK. Stark Smith has been investigating the performance potential of the Underscore.

The framework of the Underscore

The structure of the Underscore consists of the following key phases, which are in turn divided into sub-phases (for a more comprehensive outline, see either *Caught falling* (Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008, pp 90-98) or Appendix 1).

Arrival

- A time to bring your awareness to your physical sensations and the present moment.
- Phases – *Arriving Energetically, Arriving Physically*.

Pow-wow

- An opportunity for everyone to introduce themselves, set specific parameters for the practice, and suggest particular focuses for the underscore which are known as *Seeds*.

Preambulation

- An opportunity to meet everyone whilst exploring the space and its potential.

Skinesphere

- A calming and quietening of the process to focus on the “sensation of movement and change inside your body” (Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008, p. 92).
- Phases – *Bonding with the Earth, Agitating the Mass*.

Kinesphere

- An extension of one's attention, awareness and movement into the immediate area around the body.
- Phases – *Low Kinesphere, High Kinesphere, Travelling/Expanding Kinesphere, Overlapping Kinesphere*.

Grazing

- A series of small interchanges and improvisations that serve to prepare the dancer for the longer engagements that will follow.
- This phase incorporates a list of possible ways of connecting with the space and the other improvisers.

First engagement / development / resolution / end / disengagement.

- The first point where the dancer stays with a connection, allowing it to develop and deepen, until its natural resolution and end.
- Following this first engagement the dancer is free to re-circulate through all the Underscore stages.

Open score

- A period of free Contact Improvisation.
- The Underscore finishes at an appointed time and is marked with a final resolution of the room.

Harvest / Sharing

- A time for personal reflection and review that can be recorded through writing, drawing and thinking.
- Followed by a coming together of the group to share both the “fruits of the harvest” (Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008, p. 95) as well as the difficulties faced through the journey of the Underscore.

Additionally, there exists a series of *Non-sequential, All the time aspects* to the Underscore. These define a series of aspects that can occur at any stage during the Underscore.

- *Telescopic Awareness, Streaming, Gap, Listening, Idiot Button.*

The Underscore also includes a series of *‘gliphs* (Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008, p.90) (see also Appendix 1.) which are pictorial representations of each aspect of the Underscore. Drawn by Stark Smith, they aim to capture “the nature of each state of the Underscore, without words.” (Dancetechtv, 2012).

Experience of Contact Improvisation is seen as a prerequisite for the Underscore, as it builds on the vocabulary and awareness’s that exist within Contact Improvisation. The Underscore lasts three to four hours, which allows time for the dancers to properly enter into each of the states. Dancers are expected to attend a *talk-through* of the Underscore before joining the practice, which is led by a facilitator who also leads the *Pow-wow* and *Sharing* discussion.

Another important feature of the Underscore is the associated language that has supported a level of discourse amongst the Contact Improvisation community. As Gadamer (2004, p. 407) states, “All understanding arrives through the medium of language” and Stark Smith’s interpretation of her experiences into language involving both existing and invented terminology, has enabled more refinement and growth within Contact Improvisation.

I felt that presenting musicians with a new perspective on specific terminology relating to the practice of musical improvisation informed by my experience as a Contact improviser could prove valuable to the wider Free Improvisation community, particularly if it were to be supported by a structure like the Underscore that incorporates periods of discussion.

As I had witnessed the discomfort of other musicians struggling to come to terms with the particular demands placed on them in a combined dance and music setting in the past, I acknowledged that some sections of the Underscore could prove difficult and/or intimidating to some musicians not familiar or comfortable with listening closely to the sensations of the body. Moreover, some movement specific language within the Underscore would need to be changed, in order for them to be understood by a group of musicians.

For the purposes of this research, it was decided to translate the entire Underscore without omitting any sections, regardless of how challenging and/or foreign some sections may be to musicians. Thus the identification of an appropriate language to communicate the structure to musicians became the first area of focus in this study. While a second phase to the study focused on the experiences of the participants and how they responded to the structure of the Underscore. The following two research questions were then formulated to guide the research process.

Research Questions

1. How might the danced Underscore be translated so it can become a music-based practice?
2. How might a Music-based Underscore (MbUS) support the creative practice of improvising musicians?

For clarity, this document will now refer to the danced Underscore as the Underscore, while the Underscore for musicians, which is the product of this study, will be referred to as the Music-based Underscore (MbUS).

Methodology

“If improvisation is a form of research, improvisational awareness is the scientific method” (De Spain, 2003, p. 36).

By allowing my understanding and experience of the Underscore to guide me intuitively through this research process, I was able to draw on my strengths as an improviser to attain a deeper understanding of both dance and music improvisation. This section will outline the methodological considerations of this study including how individual and group investigations were incorporated, how other musicians were used during the two phases of the study and the structure of the MbUS sessions themselves.

Double investigative process

As expressed by pianist Mike Vargas, improvisation involves an ongoing process of creatively negotiating a balance between individual freedom against the freedom of the group (Vargas, 2013, p. 24). While improvisers remain responsible for maintaining their own technical and artistic skills, the nature of improvisation is by and large a collaborative act (Bailey, 1993; Morris, 2012; Vargas, 2013). This may not be as obvious within musical improvisation, as in a partner-based form like Contact Improvisation, but remains true nonetheless. I believe therefore that any attempt to explore improvisation and engaging creatively with others cannot be done alone and in isolation. Stark Smith reflects this in her acknowledgement of the contribution made by the many artists that she either directly or indirectly involved in her devising process (Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008, p.98).

As alluded to in Vargas’s comment, this responsibility to both the self and the group is nothing new to an improvising artist and is the basis of my existing creative process. It felt therefore, appropriate to follow the same methodological process that I was familiar with and which Stark Smith had also intuitively followed previously, of personal reflection in combination with discussions, experimentation and practice with others, so as to uncover a Music-based Underscore.

I did however draw additional inspiration from two existing methodological practices, namely, Heuristics⁽³⁾ for specific perspectives on shaping my individual process (Douglass, Moustakas, 1985; Polanyi, 1969) and Action Research⁽⁴⁾ for ideas on incorporating and recognizing the important role of my collaborating artists.

Individual process

From the beginning, it was clear that the wealth of my personal experience of the Underscore as a dancer, accompanist and facilitator, along with my years of professional experience as a musician, would be central to this study. I also acknowledged that while I was involving other musicians in the process, I would be the only common factor in all of the MbUS sessions. My role in the research was therefore to orchestrate the translation process from the Underscore to a MbUS, through reflecting on both personal and shared experiences.

Collaborative process

The individual process of discovering the Music-based Underscore continued throughout the study while the process of engaging with collaborators had two distinct phases. The first phase concentrated on the creation of a MbUS, while the second phase focused on the refinement of the score.

For the first phase, which was concerned with the translation of the Underscore, I chose to involve a select group of musicians that were already known to me and who had prior experience of working with dance. This group I likened to Stark Smith's use of a subset of a wider body of improvisers that she calls a *Small Brains Group*, I will therefore refer to the musicians of this phase as my *Small Brains Group*.

⁽³⁾ Heuristics aims to “discover” new insight and revelations through a process of self-searching and reflection (Douglass, Moustakas, 1985). A basis of this method is Polanyi's (1967) idea of Tacit Knowledge, which suggests that all understanding comes from existing knowledge based on experience.

⁽⁴⁾ Action Research involves bringing research procedures into real-life settings and through an involvement of the participants as co-researchers, so as to arrive at new models of behaviour and operation.

The existing level of trust and shared knowledge meant that we were able to experiment with dance-based concepts of improvising that would be understood within the context of dance. This eliminated possible confusion and the need for lengthy descriptions, while offering more time to play and share thoughts and opinions on the possible shape of the MbUS.

A general invitation to improvising musicians was made for the second phase of the study, in which the Music-based Underscore sessions themselves and the experiences of those taking part became the focus. By exposing the MbUS to the wider community of musical improvisers, I was able to reflect on and refine the score itself. This included the role of the facilitator, the delivery of the ‘talk-through’, and everything else that emerged during the sessions that happened to resonate with the improvisers, whose set of influences, understandings and biases were different to my own.

It was hoped that the larger number of improvisers exposed to the practice would afford a broader level of representation of the many approaches and sub-cultures that exist within musical improvisation. However, the exact number, level of improvising experience, instrumentation and specific demography of the participants was not seen as important factors in this study.

Research process

In total, 35 musicians took part in the 6 MbUS sessions, with 5 coming more than once. While most would identify themselves as free improvisers, some also saw themselves as being classical and/or jazz musicians. MbUS sessions were held in London (3), Canterbury, Cheltenham and Oxford.

Session outline

Each practice began with a 40 minute ‘talk-through’ of the structure which involved offering a little background to the Music-based Underscore, Contact Improvisation and Nancy Stark Smith, followed by an overview of the structure, listing the improvisation stages that was then broken down with increased detail. Suggestions as to how to

approach each improvisational state was also provided, along with time for questions. Like the danced Underscore, an outline of the structure was displayed in the space for reference.

All sessions with other musicians were recorded and the ‘Sharing’ discussions were transcribed for analysis and reflection purposes that supported my personal reflection process.

Consent

The recordings and transcripts were made available to the participating musicians for verification and their own personal reflection. All participating musicians consented to the use of this material for the purposes of this research and any material used was presented anonymously.

This research was also approved by the creator of the Underscore, Nancy Stark Smith.

Findings.

In this chapter, I will present and discuss the findings from this research. Firstly detailing Phase 1., the Underscore translation process, followed by Phase 2., which explores the application of the MbUS. The complete outline of the MbUS can be found in Appendix 2.

Phase 1. Arriving at a Music-based Underscore

In this section, I explore the first phase of the study that culminated with a Music-based Underscore (MbUS) structure. I explain the translation process and offer accounts of how I approached and solved issues I encountered.

The process began with Stark Smith's own description of the Underscore, published in 'Caught Falling (2008)'. This reference acted as a template to work from, causing me to reflect on how she described each section, the length and depth of description and the conversational style of her text. All of these qualities I endeavoured to retain.

When I encountered a problem that I did not know how to rectify, for example, how to introduce sound and the playing of instruments for the first time in Kinesphere. I responded to these moments by leaving these sections to one side in an understanding that the solution, while not available at that time would appear eventually, a process that Moustakis describes as Incubation (1996, p.56). I also resorted on many occasions to playing and/or dancing with these problems in mind, recognizing that while I could not find the words, my body and my music had a way of responding to them that restored a sense of calm around the problem that invariably allowed for unexpected ideas and hunches to surface.

Each section of the Underscore needed to be addressed on three levels, with these three levels corresponding to the section headings below.

1. How would the physical experience of each aspect translate into a predominantly sound focused environment?

2. How could each of these experiences be communicated through the medium of language?
3. What impact would the sonic output of the musicians have on the space and the Underscore?

Most issues identified were either too dance-specific or not relevant within a musical practice, but while each problem may affect one level of the Underscore more than another, the implication of every change needed to be considered on all three levels.

I acknowledged that finding solutions that responded to all of these considerations whilst preserving the original nature and intent of the Underscore was not going to be easy at times. A point reinforced by Gadamer (1991, p. 407) who also stresses the role of the interpreter by saying “All understanding is interpretation, and all interpretation takes place in the medium of a language that allows the object to come into words and yet is at the same time the interpreter’s own language.”

Consideration 1. Physical experiences.

The majority of changes to the physical character of sections within the Underscore were explored experientially in the studio with my *Small Brains Group*. We focused specifically on issues that we encountered while playing the Underscore, that we felt didn’t work for one reason or another.

Preambulation

The change from Preambulation to Preamble was seen as needed because while the traditional qualities of the Preambulation had relevance to musicians, it was felt more important to offer the musicians an opportunity to make some noise together. We reflected on past experiences of playing in groups of musicians who didn’t necessarily know each other and recognized that nervousness and/or ego had the potential to adversely colour the musical contribution of some individuals. So an opportunity to play licks and practiced techniques before entering the Skinesphere was seen as a necessary.

The word Preamble was chosen because of its connected origin to the Preambulation, and after a number of musical trials, it was observed that material from the Preamble reappeared later on likening it to a musical overture, a word that is a synonym of Preamble.

As a rule, music is not played during the danced Skinesphere, in recognition that any external (sound) intrusion during this internally focused state would be counter-productive to the objective of focusing inwards. This I felt remained true within the MbUS also, which allowed for the introduction of concepts based on listening, best done without the distraction of instruments.

Skinesphere

The first part of the Skinesphere, *Bonding with the earth* as implied through the new heading *Listening to the earth* establishes a focus on listening. While I interpret ‘Bonding with the Earth’ and ‘Listening to the Earth’ as being largely a physically passive but cognitively active process, I recognized that *Agitating the Mass* begins the process of actively engaging with the surrounding environment that continues for the rest of the Underscore. To reflect this progression, I chose to experiment with two forms of mental imagery, Sonic Imagery and Mental rehearsal, within the final phase of Skinesphere whilst the instruments remained at the edge of the room.

Sonic Imagery relates to the phenomenon of hearing a sound in your head, “in the absence of a directly audible source” (Godøy, 2010, p. 54). It is said that this is how Beethoven managed to continue to compose even after becoming completely deaf (Perkis, 2003, p. 76). Sonic Imagery was incorporated to reflect my sensed experience of feeling, seeing and hearing music and dance, that links to the emerging evidence of the connection between the centers of the brain concerned with musical imagery, movement imagery and motor control (Godøy, 2010, p. 55).

I initially experimented with Sonic Imagery on my own, noticing what emerged naturally and exploring how I could change or replace sounds if desired. Because I found this a useful technique in providing space for more listening, I chose to offer it within the MbUS. This technique is similar to *self-talk* used by athletes and a dancers

use of imagery to change thoughts for motivational purposes (Cumming & Nordin, 2005, p. 407).

Mental Rehearsal has long been used within sports [, dance] and elite performance domains, but is yet to be applied widely in the field of music (Clark, & Williamon, 2011, p. 343). It refers to the practice of imagining the execution of specific tasks so as to optimise performance potential, acknowledging that the body reacts similarly to thought or lived experiences (Cumming & Nordin, 2005, p. 402). I chose to include Mental Rehearsal as an experiment, as another form of preparation for musical engagement. Understanding its application within dance, I considered the possibility of musicians imagining how they would be responding to the sounds around them, along with the physical sensations associated to playing their instruments.

Consideration 2. The Wording of the Music-based Underscore

The simplest and most common changes to take place within the wording of the Underscore, were based on the inclusion of sound, music or instrument based qualifiers, such as in ‘Arriving Physically’ where the musicians are invited to consider the sensations that exist in the body with and without their instruments, or in the ‘First Engagement’ where I describe that moment as being the first proper ‘musical’ interaction. There are numerous small amendments like this throughout the MbUS, however I also chose to not include qualifiers like this at times, so as to ensure that the musicians could recognize that their focus should not be limited to just music related aspects of the space.

For fear that some musicians may find language regarding sensation not relevant or uncomfortable, I shortened, simplified or elaborated on some of the descriptions conveying internal areas of focus dealing with the body. This may have been being over cautious, but was in response to actual experiences of discussing the Underscore to musicians and them feeling uncomfortable to too many references of ‘sensation’ and ‘the touch of your body’. It is hoped, that more language relating to our sensorial connection to the world will eventually return to the MbUS.

Within the Grazing section, the majority of the connections listed were simply renamed to avoid confusion caused by introducing new words defining experiences that already had widely recognized music based terms, such as *Contrast* and *Tangent* to *Juxtaposition* and *Cadence*.

Additionally, reflecting Stark Smith's opinion that the list of possible connections in Grazing was not exhaustive (Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008, p. 91), I chose to introduce a number of new connections that I felt conveyed specific qualities of interactions that exist between improvising musicians. Firstly, *Parallel thematicism* referring to the common interplay that exists with improvising musicians, where they demonstrate accord by repeating and adding to what is being offered. *Supporting* can be seen as an extension to *Influence*, but accounts for specific musical functions that exist throughout western musical traditions, such as melody, harmony and rhythm.

It was observed by the *Small Brains Group* that many connections within the Underscore were based on physical contact or connections that are visually observed between dancers and/or objects in the space. This led to a feeling that the connections could fit on a linear scale ranging from a connection existing to it not existing. But as sounds have the potential to coexist even when their sources cannot be identified or seen, it seemed important to reflect this porous nature of sound. This resulted in the adoption of the term *Dulugu Ganalan* originating with the *Kaluli* people in Papua New Guinea (Feld, 1993), who employ a way of listening and responding to the many sounds around them at the same time. While a sense of togetherness is the overall feeling, the individual voices are not synchronized, which defies conventional western musical traditions based on melody, harmony and rhythm (Feld, 1993, p. 83). It does however, reflect some of the seemingly chaotic multiple layers of sound that can exist within Free Improvisation.

Linked to this, I chose to make explicit the definition for 'clash' to relate only to collisions that happened as a result of an intentional decision on the part of an improviser, to interfere destructively to something that already existed within the space. Because where it is very clear within a danced Underscore to acknowledge a physical collision, it could be said that sonic collisions are happening all the time within group Free Improvisations.

Consideration 3. Managing the impact of sound within the MbUS.

On speaking about the parallel nature of an accompanists' Underscore so as to demonstrate the difference between music and dance, pianist/composer Mike Vargas remarked that "you wouldn't want to have him Arriving Energetically or Physically to an Underscore". It is with a similar understanding coming from many years of being a dance accompanist, knowing that one musician can greatly influence the nature of a dancing environment, that I have approached the introduction of sound into the structure of the Underscore.

I began with the knowledge that, just as it is expected with the Underscore, that the dancers understand the basic tenets of Contact Improvisation. So too, musicians need to approach the MbUS with an existing understanding of how to balance playing and giving space for others, within group improvising. This point would need to be made clear both in my preparatory literature and during the 'talk-through'.

Kinesphere

As the Skinesphere was in silence, the section that needed the most attention was the Kinesphere, where the instruments are first played and the focus is very localized. The image of a *Bubble*, as introduced by Stark Smith (Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008, p. 92), referring to the *Kinesphere*, was adopted as it was felt to successfully convey an understanding of the immediate spatial realm around the individual.

I saw the Kinesphere as the crucial preparatory stage in the MbUS, where the new perspectives on musical engagement would be established. While struggling with various strategies to make sense of the Kinesphere for myself, I eventually decided to translate the spatial verticality of the Low and High Kinespheres so as to refer to musical velocity (low and high volume). Although this seems a logical solution it was interesting to note that it was only after considering our metaphorical use of language and the concept of a spatial image schema, as developed by Cognitive-linguists, Lakoff and Johnstone (1999), that I arrived at this solution.

An additional ‘seed’ to support this gradual increase in sound came in the form of a composition by Morton Feldman that I heard Vargas perform in London in 2012. The piece requires the musician to leave as long an interval before the next sound played, as it took the previous sound to die away. This I hoped would support a measured transition between silence and group/ensemble volume, while still affording the possibility for the musicians to remain focused within their ‘sound bubbles’. I was aware that this seed could be seen as contradictory to the instruction of keeping focused within a ‘bubble’, as musicians ran the risk of having their attention drift outwards every time they allowed a silence. But I was open to trying this solution and interested in seeing how the musicians would respond.

In *Travelling Kinesphere*, the idea that musicians can move around the space would be introduced, with them being encouraged to explore their sound in different parts of the room. While acknowledging that in *Overlapping Kinesphere*, maintaining the same individual sonic focus would be increasingly difficult, as more sound started to exist in the space. The musicians would be invited to open an awareness of the overlapping sounds in preparation for actual musical interaction that would begin in *Grazing*.

Numbered improvisations

During the *Small Brains Group* sessions, it was identified that musicians would possibly have a problem with assessing how long they should stay in each of the states outlined in the *Underscore*. But it was felt that the suggestion of a particular length of time that you remain in each state would be too prescriptive and not in keeping with the *Underscore*. The solution came in the form of aligning the duration of each state with a musician’s personal understanding of how long an improvisation is. This allowed the argument to move away from measurable time, to a subjective notion based on ones experience.

This resulted in the identification of the ‘Skinesphere’, ‘Kinesphere’, ‘Grazing’, ‘First Engagement’ and ‘Open Score’ as being five improvisations. This allowed the MbUS to being seen less as a process of working towards the ‘Open score’, but rather a set of potentially equal, co-existing states that an improviser can choose to draw on and return to as the ‘Recirculation through the Score’ suggests.

Physicality – Listening

In the Underscore, I have always introduced the *Non-sequential aspect* of *Listening* as something not just focused on sound, but also on the idea of listening to the sensations of the body and what your physical needs are at any given time. This allows me to get away from a specifically sound based activity to one that allowed the participant to reflect on information and sensation coming from the body. It seemed appropriate to maintain this wider perspective within the MbUS, as it seemed even more important for the musicians to move away from an understanding of listening as purely a sonic activity. Consequently, I added the word *Physicality* alongside *Listening*, so as to acknowledge this wider quality to listening.

Findings

Phase 2. Responses to the Music-based-Underscore

“It's that structure up there on those pieces of paper that gave freedom” (Improviser 21).

In this section, I review what emerged during the course of the six MbUS supported by the thoughts of the other musicians. It is unfortunately not possible within the confines of this document to cover everything that emerged, but it is hoped that a clear image of what was experienced is provided. This section is divided into the themes that emerged with particular connections to the MbUS and how the nature of the improvising was affected being touched on within these themes.

Permission

The predominant theme to have emerged out of the MbUS sessions seems to have been Permission, whether in relation to the musician's sense of liberty to move around the space, to explore sounds not from their instrument, to play in smaller groups rather than as one ensemble all the time, or just to engage as a listener for periods. Many musicians reflected on a re-evaluation of the conditioned and habituated procedures that they tended to follow while improvising. For example, “I didn't feel under any obligation to play in the way that I would normally” (Improviser 8), “... it was very new to be able to move as freely as we could.” (Improviser 1). Similarly with this comment that also draws on the idea of ‘recirculation through the score’, “Here I didn't feel I had to contribute. I could if I wanted to, or could simply just go back around the circle if you like. Or I could do something very different and ignore everyone else, and then come back in again” (Improviser 23).

Space

For many, permission to move which was established in the ‘Travelling Kinesphere’ was very important and became a fundamental part of many of their experiences. “It's a bit like your movement is a mixer” (Improviser 10):

I always try to avoid loops and instead I ended up walking one. And I went to exactly the same spots, but it felt great because it was a way to segment the time in that sort of ... Like you were saying, that you would go and you would mix the space. But I liked the sense of returning. But of course you had all moved. So actually there was nothing that was the same (Improviser 8).

The movement also afforded new ways of listening, engaging and relating to silence. “Exploring the acoustics of the room was interesting, especially with a string instrument, the cello. It does change a lot where you are sitting” (Improviser 27):

I think that liberty to move also increases the amount of space in the music, because rather than just sitting in front of your instrument and being silent. It’s much easier to be silent whilst you’re, and it’s much more interesting to be silent once you are walking around. And it makes you listen more as well. (Improviser 9).

The freedom to begin new musical ideas and combinations, against what existed was an unexpected but naturally arrived at response to the form of the Underscore. The musician’s ability to move and regroup, just as Contact Improvisers would do, created a constantly shifting collection of smaller instrumental groupings, very different from the usual large group improvising practice of playing just as one group. “We were spontaneously forming into new, spatially near each other at times. You would naturally form into a duo or a trio, even though we were absolutely aware that we could use every sound that was happening” (Improviser 27). “It makes much more flexible music” (Improviser 8) and “If you are doing a gig with eight musicians, there is no way you would have gotten those interactions that we got, into those duos and trios” (Improviser 28).

Because people could freely move away from one sound texture so as to create some distance from it, more potentially antagonistic approaches to engagement appeared and became acceptable:

I explored, listening to the different things and playing something that was not related at all to any of the groups, you know. Perhaps something more

melodic, or something completely noise, you know trying purposefully not to interfere with what the other groups were doing, but being aware (Improviser 27).

On hearing this comment, I recognized that this was something that already existed in my playing, which left me wondering whether I had been unaware of this influence on my music previously. “It's also nice that you have the freedom to engage, but also to deliberately refuse. And it's not an aggressive thing,” (Improviser 30). This comment interested me as it reflected a common response made by dancers about the Underscore in contrast to an informal *dance jam*, in that it offers a clarity to say ‘no’.

Further to this, musicians explored playing individually in the space responding to more than one group at the same time:

... it gives me an ability to play between people perhaps. And then because you have that personal duo perhaps, and that personal trio over there, and the personal duo happening here, you can play between all of that, you say, and you get that wonderful kind of complexity as one structure (Improviser 30).

This was taken further by Improviser 22, who felt that the MbUS offered a new way to approach listening. “I think the thing that can come out of it a lot, is redefining silence. You know, the bits in between and there were moments when the bits in between were there in their own right.”

Listening

The realm of listening for the musicians was successfully broadened with the MbUS, becoming more than simply an aural experience, with aspects of physical sensing and mental imagery being included also:

I was very, very conscious a lot of the time, on a level of detail of what I was doing in what others were doing. And not just of the sounds, but spacings, everything. It was as if everything was in focus. That was interesting. (Improviser 23)

Having the Skinesphere in silence caused many musicians to speak of how they had “forgotten how wonderful it is just to be in silence for a while before doing anything” (Improviser 12), while others noted the positive effect that this had on the quality of the improvisation. “This idea of collective silence, which didn't feel uncomfortable, I think raised our game. Or should I say, it raised the collective game” (Improviser 13).

Imagery

I was encouraged to hear musicians talking about concepts of mental rehearsal and sonic imagery that had offered them new musical insights:

I was actually thinking about the movement that I do, that goes on when you play an accordion without actually having an accordion on and it was just quite interesting just thinking about that. So when I came to the actual accordion it made me think about it in a slightly different direction. (Improviser 20)

Improviser 8 linked his experience of Sonic Imagery and the fact that imagined sound experiences exist separate from a measure of relative time (Godøy, 2010, p. 54). “Like I was occasionally listening to ‘what I could play’ which was playing like a ‘nutter’, but I wasn't doing that. So there was a lot of fast listening going on, that was silent in the room“.

Kinesphere

A regular topic of conversation was the seemingly impossible task I setup within the Low and High Kinesphere's, as expressed here:

I found it quite hard to play without listening to others, and then leave a corresponding length of silence. Because of course you leave silence and then you start listening. So that didn't really work for me, because my awareness would be this far (indicating within the Kinesphere), and then it would be this far (indicated further away from the body). (Improviser 9).

This common opinion however failed to recognize what I had observed that confirmed the importance that this task had on shaping the subsequent improvisations. Because it went against so much of our natural tendency to strive for collaborative accord, it offered a way out of conditioned modes of engagement, such as choosing to not engage with the group improvisation at all and forming smaller groups instead, or playing between a number of groups as described above.

A possible way to present this idea more successfully came in the form of a very enlightened suggestion of separating the words *listening*, to refer to what you are focused on, and *hearing* to encompass all other sounds that exist at the time. It was also interesting to note that musicians from classical music found the process of focusing on themselves while excluding the others in the room, much easier as a result of many of the playing and training conditions that they are familiar to⁽⁵⁾.

A final perspective on listening to emerge was the idea of exploring how another instrumentalist hears their instrument, as recounted by Improviser 14 who explored sitting right behind a guitarist. “I’ve never heard the guitar how you hear it. And I thought this was my chance”.

Time

Regarding the overall duration of the MbUS, people commented on the setting of a fixed end point as a difficulty and “perhaps in a performance situation we would have stopped more quickly”. (Improviser 12). Because musical improvisers generally do not engage in improvisations for more than an hour, the duration of the entire Underscore “becomes a very powerful factor in, musically, what goes on” (Improviser 22). However, the division of the time into a series of improvisations reflecting the different states, supported many improvisers, like Improviser 28 who found that “It did not feel like two hours” and that the length became “just another opportunity to just go off somewhere else” (Improviser 21) both musically and spatially.

⁽⁵⁾ Classically trained musicians who are employed in an orchestra regularly find themselves in shared environments such as Auditoriums, Orchestra pits and Green Rooms, where a level of separation to the sounds around them is needed to practice.

As a result of the MbUS, I have noticed an increase in my ability to improvise for long periods, finding more interesting material that can sustain my improvisational flow.

Streaming

I have long been attracted to the Underscore for its ability to elicit in me a state of *Flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991) referring to a state of optimal performance, with a singularity of focus and heightened awareness. I closely relate this term to Stark Smith's term *Streaming*, which relates to a sense of an ongoing flow of energy, where time loses meaning and there is a narrowing of focus on what you are doing (Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008, p.96). This ongoing and larger perspective was expressed nicely here by Improviser 8:

It felt like we all had a rough idea of where we were. But we had also given each other the liberty to dip in and out of our own playing, so it meant that we didn't return at the same point. So you know. You play for a bit, you've had enough, you stop. And other things are happening in the music and, when you return you absolutely bring in a sense of freshness for you, that hopefully translates into the music. And if we all do that collectively, at different points, the music is being ebbed along quite consistently with renewed energy that is not ego, I think.

Also related to the ongoing flow of the MbUS, I experienced on a number of occasions, after being in the practice for over an hour, a euphoric sense of arriving to an incredibly acute sense of listening. Where the sounds being played, along with the sounds outside the space and what I was playing, all seemed to merge in an “unsynchronized togetherness” (Feld, p. 82) described as ‘Dulugu Ganalan’^(refer to page 24).

A final point regarding ‘Streaming’ and the ongoing flow of energy relates to the nature of the music within the MbUS, which was felt to be “less personally driven” and “without ego” (Improviser 24), which caused Improviser 9 to recount, “I sat for a long time just laughing, because the energy in the room was slightly overwhelming.” Which

was supported by Improviser 8 “Yeah, there was an ecstatic quality, but with a slow release.”

Audience

Although only the final MbUS at the Trinity Laban Graduate Show had an audience, discussions during the ‘Sharings’ regularly turned to the impact of, and potential for sharing the MbUS with an audience.

Initially, it was acknowledged that “the whole nature of [the MbUS] was affected by the fact that we had no audience” (Improviser 15) and that it is “quite rare in this context [of free improvisation] that you feel such a sense of completeness” and “it feels a shame that it has to become an event” (Improviser 8).

But I chose to open up the last MbUS to an audience so as to explore some of the ideas raised during the other MbUS’s. Rather than simply allowing the audience in to sit at the side and become external observers of the MbUS, I decided to invite the audience to enter the space with the musicians if they wanted to. This had first been talked about in the Canterbury MbUS and after reflecting exactly how to manage this, I decided that as long as the audience knew to enter the performance space respecting what was going on, I was confident that the musicians had enough experience to not be too adversely affected by the intrusion.

During the ‘Pow-wow’, I highlighted to the musicians that this was an experiment and that the primary focus of the MbUS should remain on the quality of the group. While a few musicians did feel self-conscious initially with being watched when entering the Skinesphere, no one remained uncomfortable for long. Later when audience members did enter the space, a slight shift in the energy was noticed, as some musicians jumped at the chance to interact with the new additions to the space, while others chose to either protect the group or the audience members who had not been through the lengthy process of arriving that the musicians had shared.

The introduction of an audience and in particular to the performance space is felt needs further consideration to ensure the focus on the group remains. But the potential of such

an engagement with the audience was widely felt to be exciting and worth pursuing. As reflected here by Improviser 21 “It was beautiful to have the audience members coming in and out”, and “that was great, to see them in the space. Coming in and walking around and interacting in their own way with the music and what was happening” (Improviser 27).

Conclusion

This study focused on the translation of the Contact Improvisation framework, the Underscore devised by Nancy Stark Smith, so as to become a music-based practice. The study stemmed from my combined improvised dance and music practice, and my relationship with the Underscore as a dancer, accompanist and facilitator.

The study was conducted in two phases, firstly focused on identifying the most appropriate way of communicating the structure of the Underscore to musicians, and then to further refine and amend the structure through the delivery of six MbUS sessions. While being primarily a personal investigation, the vital role of my collaborating artists in helping to shape and clarify the structure of the MbUS is acknowledged and greatly appreciated.

The majority of the participants found that the MbUS offered a vehicle to break from conditioned approaches to music-making, that even exist in such a supposedly free musical form as Free Improvisation. I primarily put this sense of permission down to the structure of the Underscore itself and the multiple states that it invites the improviser to explore and revisit if so desired.

The sense of preparedness for improvisation that these states elicit, I believe is comparable to how the Underscore prepares the Contact Improvisers. But as nothing like this structure presently exists for musical improvisation, its true impact can only be identified at a later date.

The MbUS offered the musicians new insights in how to listen, engage with others in a group Free Improvisation, along with how to interact with the environment they are playing in by moving freely so as to give new perspectives on the improvisational process.

I began this study considering the differences between musicians and dancers, but find myself now reflecting on the differences between the art forms themselves, that shapes each individual in the image of itself. I have enjoyed observing the shift in the performance nature of close musical collaborators, who through their involvement in

this study have become very comfortable in engaging physically as well as musically. Where 12 months earlier they would have preferred to sit in performance, now find it strange to do so.

Looking forward

The duration of this study has been too short to truly understand how the MbUS can impact on musical improvisation, but plans already exist for more MbUS sessions in both London and Kent. This will ensure that new insights and refinements will continue to appear, allowing for the continuing evolution of the framework.

The implications of the MbUS on the Underscore, has not been addressed in this study. But it is hoped that a level of dialogue and interest will surface regarding the possibility of running a joint MbUS/Underscore in the future. Although some level of preparation for the dancers would need to take place, so they can approach the music and musicians as other partners rather than simply an accompaniment.

The political implications of the MbUS and the Underscore, both in relation to the improvised practices involved and also as models of horizontal democracy, is recognized as a completely separate study, but one that interests the researcher.

Finally, It is my feeling that the Music-based-Underscore simply needs to be presented to more musicians, both with and without an audience. So that it's potential as a new way of engaging audiences, along with it being a tool for collective preparation in music and personal research comparable to the Underscore can be realized.

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Appendix 1. The Underscore

This outline draws greatly from the outline authored by Nancy Stark Smith that exists in the book *Caught Falling*, (Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008).

Arriving energetically



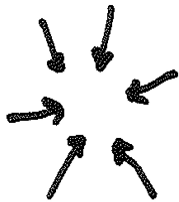
Bringing your attention, your presence, your will, into the room. Bringing your focus into the present situation. Arriving into the present moment. (Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008, p. 91).

Arriving Physically



Arriving into sensation. Focusing your attention on your physical sensations, the textures and locations of sensation throughout the body – the rise and fall of your breathing, the sensation of muscle tissue stretching, the action inside the joint, the touch of your body against the floor, your weight. Waking up to the encyclopedia of sensations in the body.

Pow-wow



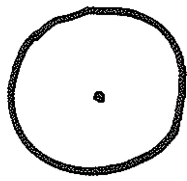
Taking time to check in with the others who will be practicing the score: to introduce ourselves, set time parameters, mention any physical issues and any other practical information. An opportunity to ‘plant seeds’ into the practice - specific ideas or areas of focus that anyone in the group may bring to the practice.

Preambulation.



Circulating through the dance space, so as to see the room, the objects within it and the people you are doing the practice with. A nice chance to feel your own movement within the space, in connection to the people you’re going to be practicing with.

(Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008, p. 91).



Skinesphere

A made-up term, that refers to the movement arena inside the boundary of your skin – that is, the sensation of movement and change inside your body.



Bonding with the earth

Releasing your weight to the ground establishing a feel-able sensation of the mass/weight of your body and its connection with and support from the earth.



Mobilising / Agitating the Mass

Stimulating the Skinesphere in another way. Moving from the passive awareness to an active experience of initiating the movement of your body, energizing the mass for greater readiness to move and interact with others.



Kinesphere

Gradually extending your field of attention, awareness, energy and movement from the Skinesphere's internal focus outward to the area around your body and beyond.



Low Kinesphere

Bringing particular attention to the immediate area around the lower part of the body and your connection to the floor.

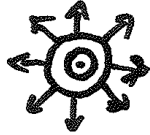


High Kinesphere

Extending your focus upwards to encompass the extent of your reach when standing. Widening your area of awareness so as to incorporate both High and Low Kinesphere.

(Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008, p. 91).

Expanding/ Travelling Kinesphere



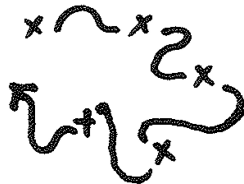
Naturally progressing the increase of movement and awareness out from the body to encompass more and more space around you.

Overlapping Kinesphere



Becoming aware how you can encroach on the kinespheres of others. Generating energy and further awareness of the others in preparation for the dancing that is to follow.

Grazing



Short engagements in preparation for more complete interactions with the other improvisers. The following connections, while not exhaustive, provides an initial list of vocabulary that can help to define some of the connections that you may either experience yourself or see occur between others in the space

Touch



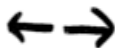
Allowing physical contact to happen, be it accidental, intentional etc.

Attraction



An awareness of being drawn to another person, an object or area of the room.

Repulsion



An awareness of wanting to pull away from another entity in the space.

Coincidence



An awareness of two things happening at the same time.

Intersection

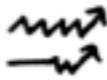


Noticing a crossing of trajectories or paths.



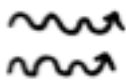
Contrast

Recognising differences of quality, behaviour, energy spatial levels etc.



Influence

Acknowledging how one thing can respond to another, ie. changing to match speeds with another.



Empathy/Resonance

A feeling of sympathetic accord with another person in space, perhaps something that remains simply a felt sensation without words.



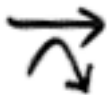
Confluence

A coming together of two or more paths to form one.



Divergence

The dissolution of one common path into many.



Tangent

A single moment of coming together, a meeting of worlds.



Collision.

A coming into contact, possibly intentionally or unintended, possibly at forcefully or not.

(Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008, p. 91).

Engagement



The first engagement is the first proper dance that everything up to this point has been preparing you for. It may be used to explore a particular quality of connection for longer or and in more detail or to focus on developing the dance within Contact improvisation.

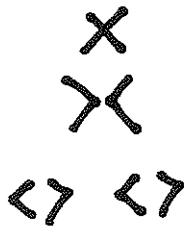
Subsequent engagements can range in style of connection, from Contact improvisation to non-touch engagements focused on image, rhythm, shape, sound, rhythm, etc.

Development



The engagement is allowed to naturally develop, deepen and unfold with one thing leading on to the next.

Resolution/End/Disengagement



As with everything, the engagement comes to an end, either sensed or with a level of intention. It may end mutually or by one individual, and can be experienced with a wide variety of dynamics, ie. abruptly, gradually, etc.

The ending may be marked in a number of ways, which is then eventually followed by a physical departure from the form that has just ended.

Recirculation through the score



Following the first engagement you are free to move anywhere through the score and the various qualities and aspects of each stage may overlap with each other.

You are now in the Open score.

The open score.



This is a period of open improvisation that while an individual can choose to step out and to witness at anytime (perhaps between engagements), it is acknowledged that you are not leaving the Underscore to do so. And in fact, the changing of your role during the underscore, from participant, observer, supporter, etc., is an important function of the structure.

Final Resolution



Usually announced with 5 minutes remaining, it is an opportunity to find an ending or enter into a final dance (coda), before bringing the improvising to a close.

Disengagement from the whole.



Once the point of final resolution has been felt and acknowledged by everyone, each individual removes themselves from the whole and shifts into a period of reflection/harvest.

Reflection/Harvest



A period of rest, for warming down and reflecting on this journey through the underscore. A point to reflect on the qualities of this Underscore in relation to past experiences of improvising and an opportunity to identify what you focused on, what you perceived, felt and/or learnt.

Sharing/Thanksgiving



A time to come together to offer reflections back to the group about your experiences of the Underscore.

(Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008, p. 91).

Nonsequential, anytime, all the time aspects of the Underscore

Streaming



The sense of ongoingness, flow and effortless continuity that can be experienced in relation to a lack of awareness to a measure of time, a singularity of focus, a calm clarity ment of what you are experiencing with no judgement.

Gap



The moments 'in between', where focus is lost and perhaps wanders away from the present activity and moment. Gaps can be undesirable and may lead to further distraction and frustration, but can also be something to look for (ie. a sense of not knowing, an encounter with the unknown).

Idiot Button



A way of acknowledging that things have become too complex and/or out of hand. It can be used to signify a simplification of things rather than just a shutting down.

Telescoping awareness



An acceptance that you can focus on the macro as well as the micro (along with everything in between), in terms of your personal awareness to sensation, activity and any other information or aspect of your improvising practice.

Listening

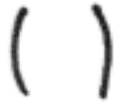


As with Telescoping awareness, your quality of listening, using your ears as well as your other senses, can range from noticing what you need personally, to what the entire space is needing at any one time.

(Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008, p. 91).

Appendix 2. The Music-based Underscore

It is acknowledged that much of what is contained in the MbUS closely resembles the Underscore as published in *Caught Falling* (Koteen, Smith, Paxton, 2008).



Arriving Energetically

Bringing your attention and focus to the present moment.



Arriving Physically

Arriving to the sensation of your body with and without your instrument. Acknowledging that you are not only arriving with your instrument, but all of your physical being as well. What does it mean to be in a musician's body? Take time to sense how you are feeling as you prepare and take your instrument out of the case. "Use the mind as a lens into the body," (Paxton) magnifying sensation with attention.



Pow Wow

Taking time to check in with everyone practicing the score: to introduce ourselves, set time parameters and any other practical information.

It is also an opportunity to 'plant seeds' into the practice - specific ideas or areas of focus that anyone in the group may bring to the practice.



Preamble (Perambulation)

A short introductory improvisation that allows the musician's to experience the sound of the group and the room for the first time. It is an opportunity to do whatever is needed so as to maintain a level of concentration to the process of improvising as a group and your relationship to your body throughout. It is a time to move around the space experiencing the sonic qualities of the room and to meet and see the other musicians in space.

[Sonic] Skinesphere – Improvisation 1



This first improvisation of the underscored practice is done with the instruments to the side of the room and in silence. It is an opportunity to extend your listening beyond yourself and your instrument, while at the same time deeper within yourself.

Listening to the Earth. (Bonding with the Earth)



This is an opportunity to acknowledge the natural soundscape around you and within you. The sound of the macro and the micro experienced without judgment.

Sonic imagery/mental rehearsal (Agitating the mass)



You may experience a nature desire to interact with, and actively change what you can hear. Perhaps by quietening an internal sound or music (sonic image), or enter a process of mental/physical rehearsal in preparation for playing your instrument.

[Sonic] Kinesphere – Improvisation 2



The second improvisation focuses on the relationship between the musician and his/her instrument. It's beginning may be marked by a clear desire to make physical contact with your instrument. It may be nice to acknowledge what changes physically as you go to pick up your instrument after the Skinesphere. The Kinesphere is the immediate area around you and it may be useful to imagine you and your instrument being inside an imaginary bubble, removed to some degree from the others in the space.

Low volume sounding (Low Kinesphere)



Explore the tonal and sustaining quality of the instrument when played quietly, allowing space for thoughts and listening. This is an improvisation of beginnings, explore how you can initiate a sound or idea without a need for a conclusion. Punctuate the natural soundscape of the room with your own musical voice.

High volume sounding (High Kinesphere)



As the volume increases both from you and within the space generally explore what is changing. Give yourself permission to play in response to your personal needs rather than the needs of the ensemble.



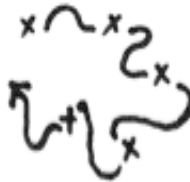
(Expanding) Travelling Kinesphere

Now explore how your sound changes in different parts of the room. What is it like to play in different parts of the room?



Overlapping Kinesphere

Naturally as more sound is created we start to sense the connections between the overlapping sounds within the room. Try to maintain a level of separation and avoid being influenced by the sounds of the others in the space. Simply start to note the accidental musical connections being made in the room.



Grazing – Improvisation 3

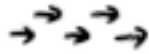
Now the attention moves beyond you and your instrument and out to the other musicians in the space. It is a time of short engagements and exchanges between musicians within the space, with the idea that these small interplays will prepare the improvisers for the longer improvisation to follow.

Some of the following terms may reflect the exchanges that you hear. All possible aspects, you can choose go with or against what you are sensing.

Touch



Allowing a sonic contact of some description to happen, be it with another individual, an object or the space as a whole. Is it possible to define the quality of the touch any further?



Parallel Thematicism

Sensing the interplay of a little idea between two parties, gradually evolving as each interplay supports the previous one.



Attraction

Sensing a sonic pulling or coming together with another or perhaps of resonant frequencies within the space.



Repulsion

Sensing a need to pull away from something within the space, be it a sound, an individual, etc.



Coincidence

Noticing when the same thing happens at the same time.



Dulugu Ganalan

A quality of cohesive listening to all of the sounds within the space, while at the same time contributing to the sonic layers that exist. Intermingling the natural sounds of the space, the produced sounds within the space and your own sound.



Confluence

A coming together out of chaos to form one sonic, spatial, or physical entity for a time.



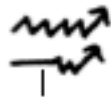
Divergence

The sense of parting from one idea into many, a shared theme becomes multiple variations.



Juxtaposition (Contrast)

Sensing two objects in the space that are different. Possibly; tempo, timbre, rhythm, etc.



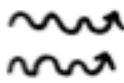
Influence

Noticing how one thing affects another, whether it is intentional or otherwise.



Supporting

Noticing the nature of a relationship that may appear. Are traditional roles based on musical functions assumed (Melodic/ harmonic/ Rhythm). Can a hierarchical relationship be identified?



Empathy (and Resonance)

A sense of sympathy to a quality or nature that is present in the space. ie. you hear what someone is playing but you don't have a desire to be influenced to join or respond to it.



Clash (Collision)

An intentional destructive interference to something else in the space.



Cadence (Tangent)

A coming together of two or more paths for a moment, that can be either intentional or accidental.

First engagement – Improvisation 4



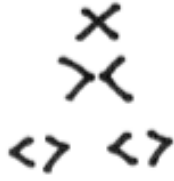
The first proper musical interaction, where duets or small ensembles are free to exist and go beyond the small interchanges within Grazing state, so as to develop the playing relationship. It is an opportunity for the musicians to apply elements from all the previous Underscore stages, so as to extend their existing modes of interaction and improvisational practice.



Development

The engagement is allowed to naturally develop, deepen and unfold with one thing leading on to the next.

Resolution/end/disengagement



As with everything, the engagement comes to an end. It may end mutually or by one individual, and can be experienced with a wide variety of dynamics i.e. abruptly, gradually, etc.

The ending may be marked in a number of ways, which is then marked by a departure from the form with each improviser free to then recirculate through the score.

Recirculation through the score



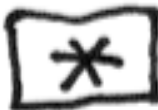
Following the first engagement you are free to move anywhere through the score and the various qualities and aspects of each stage may overlap with each other.You are now in the Open score.

The Open score.



This is a period of open improvisation that while an individual can choose to step out and to witness at anytime (perhaps between engagements), it is acknowledged that you are not leaving the Underscored practice and your role as listener/viewer is an important one. The switching between roles during the underscore, from participant, observer, supporter, etc., is an important function of the structure.

Final Resolution



Usually announced with 5 minutes remaining, it is an opportunity to find an ending or enter into a final small engagement (coda), before bringing the improvisation to a close.

Disengagement from the whole.



Once the point of final resolution has been felt and acknowledged by everyone, each individual removes themselves from the whole and shifts into a period of reflection/harvest.



Reflection/Harvest

A period to reflect on the journey that has just happened through the Underscore. A period to reflect on the qualities of this Underscore in relation to past experiences of improvising and an opportunity to focus on what you perceived, felt and learnt.



Sharing/ Thanksgiving

An opportunity to share your experience of the Underscored Music Practice with the group.

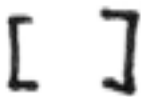
Nonsequential, anytime, all the time aspects of the Underscore

Streaming



The sense of ongoingness, flow and effortless continuity that can be experienced in relation to a lack of awareness to a measure of time, a singularity of focus, a calm clarity of what you are experiencing with no sense of judgement.

Gap



The moments 'in between', where focus is lost and perhaps wanders away from the present activity. Gaps can be undesirable and may lead to further distraction and frustration, but can also be something to look for (ie. a sense of not knowing, an encounter with the unknown).

Idiot Button



A way of acknowledging that things have become too complex and/or out of hand. It can be used to signify a simplification of things rather than just shutting down.

Telescoping awareness



An acceptance that you can focus on the macro as well as the micro (along with everything in between), in terms of your personal awareness to sounding, sensation, activity and any other information or aspect of your improvising practice.

Physicality (Listening)



As with Telescoping awareness, your level of awareness to your body can move from an acute sense of your body in space, to very little knowledge of yourself in space with all your focus on the music.

But through identifying the extent of your physical awareness, you can start to understand and acknowledge the part your body plays in your performance practice.

Appendix 3. MbUS Sharing Transcriptions

Transcription P2S1 Trinity Laban 150514

Improviser 1.

I can certainly remember other improvisation workshops where we have sat around in a circle and somebody has got to start, and it is invariably the same person every time because they're feeling confident in doing it. It has a very uncomfortable feeling at the beginning, and I loved the fact that one could express one's discomfort naturally in this, which was a really lovely way to start. And so to reflect on how I could ever approach my violin and normalise it was actually very refreshing.

Improviser2.

The importance of mindfulness, I'd kind of forgotten how wonderful it is just to be in silence for a while before doing anything. It makes such a difference.

David

Permission to stay with myself despite the group really enjoyed and it is not something that you would usually do.

Improviser 1.

I found that quite uncomfortable, I felt it was like warming up before concert, when you are in the bedroom and everyone is doing their own thing, playing their own concertos and I just have said why bother? I sort of felt, okay I'm in tune, let's get on with it then.

Improviser 3.

I also thought it a bit strange, because we had got all reflected and sensitive, and all of a sudden I felt now it's time I have to do this, what I call parallel playing, where everything is going on all at once. It just didn't feel natural at all.

Improviser 2.

I thought there were some really great moments and beautiful sounds, and I have a habit of this of coming away a bit, and in going in and coming away again. But it was just great being able to listen to everybody else.

Improviser 4.

I went into the Kinesphere before everybody else and I thought 'ah now I don't want to disturb everyone else's mindfulness, I have really got into it now', so I wondered whether I should wait a bit. I wondered whether it is something to do with the intention of having to do it at the same time, and so not be at odds with others.

Improviser 2.

This is the thing it is very hard not to think 'who was leading?' And therefore am I doing that or I not doing that? It's very hard to be independent in the group to not think I have gone on before everybody else.

Improviser 4.

It is because when you do it in the dance version, you can go into the Kinesphere without being in anyone else's way. But here you can just hear it, and so it's not as easy.

Improviser 2.

But also because it is new I had another little voice saying 'Am I my doing it right but that stopped after a while.'

Improviser 3.

I felt it was very contrived. It is very hard to do this, to play and not be influenced by the other people. It is extraordinarily hard and goes against everything.

Improviser 4.

I thought it was very liberating.

Improviser 2.

I decided to just forget about the sections and just go for it

Improviser 1.

I wasn't following the sections at all, I was just compositionally reflecting on what was happening and what needs to happen next. And I've just got no idea and I just couldn't remember. No chance. But I think that it just flowed so I wasn't worried. And if I had

started to go off on one, regardless of what everything else that is happening around you, but you wouldn't, because you have to be mindful of what is going on around you.

Improviser 3.

Just drifting back to what we were talking about. It felt like it was being purposefully rude and antagonistic but maybe there is a way of playing parallel which is you're all doing different things but it is making sense.

Improviser 4.

What do you mean by making sense?

Improviser 3.

I don't know.

David

It is almost like a paradox. It is an impossibility, but at the same time.

I did enjoy the overlapped Kinesphere, where my awareness of everything that was happening just overtook my ability to stay here. And I was able to stay here for quite a while, but then there was a lovely cadential moment, which was between the piano and clarinet. It just sort of arrived, quite cadential, quite chordal. But I wasn't playing at the time so wasn't working against anything, so it just existed it was by chance and I was really really lovely.

Improviser 1.

I think some of the highlights for me were when I wasn't playing it was when the texture became thinner. I felt there was a tendency for us to all ... we played a lot. There was one moment, when I thought, 'oh a flute cadenza' and I thought how lovely. And it was a moment when you were all alone in you kept playing and it was perfect.

David

There were two trio occasions. And you two 'were off on one' (laugh) and I really enjoyed it but said, 'No my focus is with Improviser 2. and Improviser 3. and I'm sticking with that.' And I really enjoyed it, and that happened twice. And I think you were doing glissandi and felt there was a sense of permission to find a sense of

separation. Because that would never happen in a free improvisation, that sense of separation from the group. But I was just able to say 'no' and just stick with that.

Improviser 2.

Another thing is, what stays with you afterwards. Because I don't really remember I mean I do sort of, but I just remember, but I do remember that but I do remember other things.

Improviser 4.

Because you have to sort of shut off, but you have to zoom away. Just like in the Kinesphere where you are trying to zoom into yourself. So in a way I don't how you could propose doing that. You just have to trust that it will make sense, if for example there was a witness. I would imagine that this would be quite an immersive thing, and if there was a duo and a trio happening at the same time, you would hear things quite differently if you were over there, for example. That's how I would see it, otherwise I'd be like 'oh, what was it like?', Because I don't know. Or maybe I do know. Maybe I had some other kind of spatial sensing that ...

Improviser 2.

I also got a sense that when we got to the end of that, I wanted to do it all over again. But, I quite often have that.

Improviser 1.

I found the last five minutes quite difficult, because I felt that the piece had ended. And I was cross with you for making us carry on. But then actually it was a kind of nice coda and I went back and revisited some material and went back to the walking and put my case away. So I just did the whole process in reverse. And although it felt quite clichéd in doing it, once I had finished it felt like it did give it a nice sort of roundness. In fact the last thing I heard was the cleaner, which of course that was what that poster was all about (referring to a point in the improvisation) 'thank you for your assistance' so there was a compositional link to the whole piece.

Improviser 3.

I was just thinking about, well it is so obvious, but the whole nature of this was affected by the fact that we had no audience. Just as you were talking about somebody watching, but because nobody was watching we had, and because we were in this beautiful space, and we had lots of space. Somehow, it helped create what happened.

Improviser 1.

Although we did have an audience for a little bit. We did. I was lying on the floor with my violin on me, and I looked up and there was a woman standing looking in. But then I thought it was okay because we were in a dance studio, it is fine. You know it would be different in the other building (referring to Trinity).

Improviser 2.

But this has been very liberating, because I don't know if you know, TrinityLaban has this improvisation competition every year, and it was last week. And you are given a poem or a theme and you're given half an hour to produce. And then you have to come in and do something for 10 minutes in front of the panel. And I just can't do it it is just something that is absolutely makes me clam up and it is great to come here and just do something that is the opposite.

David

Did you enjoy the experience? And you can be honest.

Improviser 3.

Everybody is looking at me. (Laugh)

It does open up new doors into improvisation?

Improviser 1.

We have done this as part of our Wigmore Hall brief, where we come together in a group and we have different starting points. But I have to say that it was very new to be able to move as free as we could. Normally we have spare instruments and a large Orchestra of instruments that everybody brings, but we were certainly not playing each other's instruments.

Improviser 2.

Yes, I was wondering where the boundaries are?

David

You play violin as well don't you?

Improviser 2.

I do yes.

Improviser 1.

No, we wouldn't do that, but the singing and playing has come up and that is very difficult to do. And that is a group that has been looking at doing this for about 20 years. And it is not common amongst my other colleagues in the orchestra world and I think that there is a whole process that you'd have to, I speak about my generation not the younger generation, but there is this process of release. But you could actually go through this whole thing bit by bit discussing what it brings out. And then run it in a second workshop so that people can explore it in your own way. If you have a whole group of Classical musicians who haven't done this in the past you might find it is a challenge for them.

Improviser 2.

An afternoon at Dartington last year, we had a whole afternoon in the dark with no prescription at all and in a sense I am not sure about the sections as I decided to get rid of them. But the things that you talked about were very stimulating.

Improviser 1.

Yes, they are definitely worth knowing. It is very interesting to hear.

Improviser 2.

There are lots of connections they can be made about how musicians

Improviser 1.

I'd like to see a danced version of the same thing.

Improviser 3.

I wonder how parallel it is to the dance Underscore.

We got quite close once but there was always a sense of personal space. But it wouldn't be like that with the dancers.

Improviser 2.

That is because we don't have any background

Improviser 1.

We were intertwined with the sound.

Improviser 3.

I see the image but it is not exactly the same.

Improviser 1.

It is the whole relationship between time, space and energy. But what does that really mean? It is much more obvious with dance, because you are in the space, and this is something that we don't talk about as musicians, which I think we should.

Improviser 4.

Although we did a little bit of contact

Improviser 2.

Yes we did

Improviser 4.

Did you see it?

David

No, I had my eyes shut.

Improviser 1..

I've got contact jealousy

Improviser 4.

I really enjoy the bit at the beginning, and just doing the meditative bit. And it really changed the way that I, but not in a... I didn't think of it physically, I didn't think oh, my flute is like this. I just thought of the flute, as you said, as an extension of my body. And that was really nice because it was quite an abstract thought that sort of offered a direction and I thought about my head being here and my tail being over there (pointing to where her flute was in the room) and that was really nice. And it feed into when I did pick it up and then it became like it was like my lover, and I really enjoyed our date.

Improviser 1.

There was a lovely moment with your look on the face. Recounting a particular instance in the Underscore.

Improviser 4.

- Responded -

Improviser 2.

I'm really intrigued to hear what it sounds like.

David

Well, I thought there were some absolutely lovely moments throughout and I thought that because of our instrumentation we just had to play something like Stravinsky at some point. And there was.

So thank you everybody for coming.

P2S2 Transcription of MbUS at TrinityLaban 10/6/2014

Improviser 5.

I liked just taking time out and allowing time. Like waiting for my body to tell me what to do.

David

Recounts a situation from that day playing for a dance class where I was invited to improvise also, and acknowledging that the process takes a long time to get into, much more than usually offered was in most contexts.

Improviser 2.

I found the whole improvisation extremely difficult and I think my best moment was when I was playing viola.

As Philip Glass once said, 'if you want to learn how to paint you have to first learned how to see.'

I found it very hard to get away from that.

Improviser 6.

Talked about his experience as a dancer doing the Underscore and the level of energy, and everyone has a different level of energy and sometimes it comes together and make something, and sometimes you feel pockets. And here, you are hearing those pockets which was also interesting.

With the dancer is a feeling and with the musician it's a hearing

Improviser 5.

I felt really nice getting really immersed, really inside the piano. Becoming one with the piano, it was really pleasurable.

I felt doing melodies as quite foreign, they felt inappropriate

Improviser 2.

I think the most fascinating thing about this is the people involved. Because that makes it never the same, and that's what I think makes it rich.

Improviser 5.

The ephemeral nature of it is delightful it is the best thing about it everything is a well denier

David

I was left thinking who am I doing this for, is it for me? I'm questioning why am I doing this is it for me, and is improvisation something you can do with this.

Improviser 5.

I think it is a nice way of being intimate with people, and I just like the intimacy

Improviser 2.

The experience is extremely liberating

Improviser 7.

It is like a meditation

David

On whatever experiences you come across to bring it back to yourself and Ask the question 'What is in me that is making me experience this in this way?'

Improviser 2.

And that is why I think mindfulness is so important because you can face barriers in what you're doing at any time and I think it brings people out of themselves.

David

I didn't expect to move today

Improviser 2.

I didn't expect to play viola.

David

There is a shared knowledge and a shared experience amongst the musicians of the London improvisers Orchestra that relates directly to how they listen and give space to others.

Improviser 5.

I felt it was a framework that contained everything that happened but didn't control what was happening. It was like a point of reference and it helped me to inform

Improviser 2.

The level of the description is almost too much and could be explained in five minutes.

Improviser 5.

With the use of recapitulation in use of material from the past would be something in that he would like to see reflected in the score

David

The Underscore doesn't stipulate the material.

Improviser 2.

The question of leadership

David

Acknowledging that it is my response to what happened

Improviser 6.

It works as a personal practice because you're not relying on other people. But when it is a group practice you need to relate back to the group and you have to ask the question do you really want to stay in Skinesphere even when you are going against the grain.

P2S4 Transcription – Canterbury MbUS – 15 June 2014

Improviser 8.

Permission to walking around was very important.

There were moments in the Kinesphere, when I was saying, why is it that I do not normally do this? You are normally sitting in a room before you go on and you should be doing this, or walking atleast.

It was strange that I would consciously try not to do loops because that is what my set up is designed to do Loops and then instead I would walk Loops. I found myself going to exactly the same spaces. But for me the reason I was doing the walking was because of that telescoping thing. It was really lovely to have that sense to be just a listener, but hearing it from a distance (chairs moved)

It was almost like my setup was like a little station on my loop and I didn't feel under any obligation to play in the way the I would normally.

It makes much more flexible music doesn't it, but maybe that is also because of the newness. Maybe it's got something to do with this combination also. The fact of checking out the space was amazing, I mean you do it to an extent, but you are not always at a liberty to use the space.

2'36" – 6' Talking and preparation for sharing.

Improviser 9.

I thought it was Fucking Awesome (laughter)

I really enjoyed it and I would love to have it at free range. This whole Underscore business, and to encourage people to use the space in a way that they would otherwise not, and that physicality is really good for transmitting it to an audience. A sat down audience might be a bit bored or might find it self-indulgent or embarrassing or something. But if you had it so that the audience could interact with the space in the same way that the musicians do. It could be a great theatrical experience for the audience.

Improviser 10.

When I was sitting back and thinking, you know as an audience member, being able to wonder over and see, both of you guys on the bass on the floor, so wondering over and engaging with that aspect of the ... It's a bit like your movement is a mixer. So you are mixing it yourself.

Improviser 9.

I noticed that when I walked and I didn't do anything, I still felt it had an impact
Yer definitely

Improviser 9.

So like where you are in the space like what you were saying makes an impact.

Improviser 11.

Like music in the round rather than theatre in the round. That sort of whole thing would be fantastic.. And that the audience can play musical chairs that would be really good.

Improviser 9.

Well this is um

Improviser 10.

You couldn't do it in the café

Improviser 9.

You could potentially

Improviser 8.

It feels a shame that it has to become an event. I know that you are right and that it absolutely would work, but there's also something about what we did today that feels complete. Like it is not a rehearsal, it's really rich. It's quite rare in this context that you feel a sense of completeness. Often I come away from a situation of playing in this way, Which is also a question because I don't normally I haven't done this sort of thing before, I haven't had the liberty to walk so much, so it's given me...

Improviser 9.

You looked like you were enjoying it.

Improviser 8.

I got really into it. I was saying that I always try to avoid loops and instead I ended up walking one. And went to exactly the same spots, but it felt great because it was a way to segment the time in that sort of ... Like you were saying, that you would go and you would mix the space. But I liked the sense of returning. But of course you had all moved. So actually there was nothing that was the same. But I liked that kind of circles within circles, and then also being able to go in little sort of secret spaces like... which are really like hide-away zones in a way, and really feel like the offstage listener. But that is the lovely thing in that ... you are quite right, if we had not had the sort of done the first three stages, we would have perhaps all stayed on the stage, and played for two hours as if there was an audience there even when they weren't there.

Improviser 9.

I think that liberty to move also increases the amount of space in the music, because rather than just sitting in front of your instrument and being silent. It's much easier to be silent whilst you're, and it's much more interesting to be silent once you are walking around. And it makes you listen more as well,

Improviser 8.

And your objects (Improviser 12) in this context feel absolutely right. In the sense that you know, it's all just material in the room, but, well as a musician sometimes that's ... it's great to let go of that baggage and it felt more like an installation or an exhibition.

Improviser 12.

I didn't realise that the billiard balls would start to function as a sort of linking, between the space and the instrument. I happened to play a sort of slide notes on the instrument. The actual status of the object and the peculiarity of them is really important with my instruments and that needs to be seen.

11'08"

Improviser 9.

It would probably encourage people to play their instruments or approach sound making in a different way

Improviser 12.

And that is why I am hoping that there will be a totally new type of sound, like a new paint colour and you can patent it.

Improviser 11.

You said right at the beginning (Within the Pow-wow) about the anger, and I think that gets confused with passion. Like the Americans confuse anger with serious passion and it comes out as anger. And I don't think it is anger.

Improviser 12.

You are right, the idea of passion is that you are passive to the eventual sensation which pass through you. That you as an individual is somehow to some how

Improviser 13.

And that sort of links with what your were saying about letting go of the ego. Some people use the religious term of something passing through you. But sometimes as musician you get to that stage sometimes when you feel that you almost don't exist but you act like some kind of channel for something. Which is a fantastic place to be.

Improviser 10.

But I think it is interesting to reconnect with that, your personality aspect of that because I think that is what allows to disrupt what is currently happening if you feel like doing that. I think that's what allows that. There is that emergent experience.

Improviser 9.

That is where the energy comes from.

Improviser 10.

Yeah, and that's why I think you shouldn't disrupt that, because that's how the bodily aspect comes in. Sometimes it's great to get away and have that immersive experience,

but I also think the bodily thing, reconnects you with, I don't know, something else that I am finding hard to put into words. But the gestural aspect of me being me and being able to influence or not others by, you know.' You can join in, set up a conflict, or something else' I find that very interesting, and I think maybe that's not to do with the, you know immersive thing, but I think that's great, but being able to go and dip in and out of that.

Improviser 8.

That's the thing that I was hinting at when I was asking, do you want us all to start and stop sections? In a way, it felt like we all had a rough idea of where we were. But we had also given each other the liberty to dip in and out of our own playing, so it meant that we didn't return at the same point. So you know. You play for a bit, you've had enough, you stop. And other things are happening in the music and, when you return you absolutely bring in a sense of freshness for you, that hopefully translates into the music. And if we all do that collectively, at different points, the music is being ebbed along quite consistently with renewed energy that is not ego, I think.

Improviser 11.

It gives it a sense of architecture of itself rather than an imposed architecture or idea ...

Improviser 8.

Sort of a modular thing.

Improviser 11.

It's like a lot of little arches then form a bigger arch.

Improviser 8.

And yeah, and then never quite meet at the same place. I think it's that sense of just being able to not play that means that the combinations are always shifting. And it's difficult to explain that feeling of when three instruments are playing, that what it pays back is much more. And I don't think I would have been as receptive to that, had we just walked in and said OK, we'll work in this rectangle now.

But it is interesting for me, because I'm always thinking about trying to work out what I would do at home, like if we all practice out instruments, and I feel most flexible at

home actually sometimes just doing things. And I realise that at home, I can walk only in a very small space, just stand up and walk around in a really small space. And the things would still be happening. And I can't do that normally when I am on stage or not on stage but you know what I mean.

It's lovely because I think it feels like you bring something honest from home with you that isn't ego. Perhaps sometimes ego comes from what you think should happen in public place.

Improviser 9.

your instrument by its nature is like you set something up and then you go out and listen. So that the way that your instrument is set up, it facilitates that.

Improviser 8.

Yeah. That's the thing you know. And most of that was samples of everybody else, so it's not really my sound. So the listening is part of playing, which it is for everybody of course. But in lieu of embodiment for me, because everybody else in some way has a much closer connection to their instrument

Improviser 9..

It was lovely (Improviser 13) that you could play the piano and the guitar, and I could play that the bass, and we were just swapping around with different things

Improviser 13.

That was the most liberating aspect from my point of view, to get away from playing saxophone for a change. It's a beautiful piano, It's a beautiful sonic space. It was fantastic. Just a few notes a little rhythm here you listen. That was great.

Improviser 14..

I thought it was brilliant that people joined in at the piano. There were three people playing the piano, it definitely bought a sense of community to the music, which I feel doesn't really ... It isn't there any more.

Improviser 9.

My friend is a theatre director and an amateur musician. He is often slagging off musicians because they are not good team players. And when you think about it, all the other performing arts don't have one-to-one lessons. Dancing and acting all happen in a group and that is reflected in our relationships with our instruments that become preciousness. And so the fact that we can kind of relax those boundaries a little bit is great. And it is mainly due to this process, David.

Improviser 14..

Yeah, I don't let anyone touch my piano at home.

Improviser 12.

The thing with the structure that we went through for about an hour, that it didn't really affect me in its complexity, but I think the process of sitting and talking about it was really good sort of introduction. Where we were all sort of inducted into a particular frame of mind. I think that was a real benefit to me. Because it gave me a sort of licence to act but to also feel liberated to do so, that I wasn't going to be hindered. But at the same time I was aware that I could easily make rock and raucous noises of really high volume, so I had to be really aware of those around me, so that I sort of tempered it a bit, and then I knew there was some leeway because I knew that I had to actually listen as well act myself. But at the same time I was to actually disrupt something and I went WAY!!

David

What I saw was that other people were turning you up.

Improviser 9.

I turned you up.

Improviser 12.

But then I started to use the volume knob just as a way of playing. Then I turned it down a bit

David

For me today had the clearest separations between the sections of the Underscore and I was loving just hearing the general balance of the room shifted energy Arh! We just changed gear. I didn't feel very sudden. I didn't have a sense of 'oh I'm in Skinesphere, now I'm in Kinesphere', I didn't have that sense of sudden switches, which I do sometimes. But today it was more like the balance of the room has shifted, and it has shifted again. And I was really enjoying that.

Improviser 9.

Actually regarding the low and high Kinesphere. He suggested that we could play for a bit, and then wait for the same length of time before playing again. I found it quite hard to play without listening to others, and then leave a corresponding length of silence. Because of course you leave silence and then you start listening. So that didn't really work for me, because my awareness would be this far, and then it would be this far.

Improviser 10.

In that early stage, I couldn't help but be influenced by what I heard around me. I was trying to keep it separate and trying to keep it 'in'. But yeah, it's there, and you are responding to it regardless.

David.

I'm having a love hate relationship with the Kinesphere at the moment, for exactly that reason. Accounts the experience of classical musicians who found it easy to separate themselves to the others in the group due to their training, in contrast to free improvisation musicians who tend to be more magpie-ish, taking and responding to the sounds around constantly.

Improviser 10..

Because, in the Kinesphere I felt that we had gone into the high Kinesphere when I heard you two do something. And I heard that and I decided that 'I'm going with that', and it was almost like I couldn't help but go there, through being open to other people's bubbles.

David.

For me what I found was that [Recounts experience in Germany of playing the piano while my hosts were getting ready in the morning. And playing a chord and allowing the conversation to float over the top of each of my placed chords. It allowed me to listen in a more concentrated way incorporating the sounds of the birds the conversation the coffee machine.]

Improviser 11..

It's this thing of listening and hearing. You have listening and hearing, and when you're paying so much attention and you're focusing in on something you are listening. But when you have this general hearing. And when you put those two things together that's quite curious.

David.

What I am finding is that listening... Hearing... And then I would bring my telescopic awareness back to me, and I would say I'm back in my bubble and I would ask myself 'what do I need now?'

Improviser 9..

I was trying hard not to respond to the other stuff, but it was hard not to respond.

Improviser 10..

The same thing actually, at times it made me hold back in a way that I may not have done otherwise. So just thinking in that way, in the form it made me hold back in a way that I might not have done. And sometimes I might feel the itch to do something but I would hold back and think maybe it would be better at another time perhaps. I think that has something to do with the idea of the form.

Improviser 11.

The one thing that I was considering was the fact of, when to play and when not to play. I was considering that more than anything else. And I felt I was playing too much. Always feel like I play too much (laugh). But that was the thing that I felt I was considering more than anything else.

Improviser 9.

The great thing about this is that it offers another way of contributing other than playing.

Improviser 8..

There was a really interesting moment as well for me, where, I could have got into what I do and what I think I know. And this in a way forced me to, do like the first gesture that would get me into that way of thinking and that would be enough. Fine. I could just hint at it. Maybe for me it is like, 'yeah, I would have done this thing, but that was then, and I wouldn't do it again.'

Improviser 12.

It was almost like little passages that you could then drop into.

Improviser 8..

Yes, there was such lightness there, and that gives each gesture more gesture in all of what we were doing. Weight is the wrong word, because it was a very strong experience but it was made from feathers.

Improviser 9..

Yes, I have never heard you play like you did today.

Improviser 8..

Well you have never had the opportunity. it is sort of like a drummer, you build this wall around you. And what do you do? He sits behind it, or you hit it. And that liberty to listen much more was great. I just need to remember that so if I'm ever in that situation again - I need to walk. You have to mentally walk if you can't physically.

Improviser 14..

I felt myself start to get into really bad rhythms that I would normally feel comfortable doing. And I would just stop myself and got up and walk to the other side of the piano and do something else. The act of walking to the other end ...

Improviser 9..

There's a real sense of wiping the surface clean when you move from that traditional space of sitting at your instrument. And every time you get up it's like you wipe it clean in a way that you can't if you are stuck there. Somehow if you stay sitting there you always have a residue of what you have just done behind you.

Improviser 8.

For me, it is often a case of 'I want this record, this record' so you would think that you could discard baggage, but after a while you realise that the baggage is 'you can pick up records.' (laugh) So the thing is to leave that whole process behind.

Like for me, the whole first part was all about the gestures that I use. But that meant that they are much more than sound. And I don't know, it gives you a deeper understanding of what you think you are doing.

Improviser 9.

The beginning bit in comparison to when we did it with the Scratch Orchestra. In one slightly positive but unintended byproduct. Is that I get really frustrated in talking so long and I really want to play. But actually that is really good.

Improviser 8.

And then the fact that you think it has started but it doesn't. It is this difference between playing what you know and finding. They are two different things, because often I feel that we, even in a free context, play what you know might happen. And there was that sense of finding, a lot more finding.

Improviser 9.

We talked in such a sort of blissed out and hippie kind of way, and played like fucking maniacs. (laugh)

Improviser 14.

I sensed that we had a sort of unconscious decision that we had finished halfway through the time. Then I looked up at the clock and saw that it was 10 to 6. What! I still feel like no time has past

Improviser 16.

Yeah, I felt that. What, is that the time?

Improviser 8..

But it does feel like an object, in a good way. It is something that has an integral shape to it. And it felt sort of...

Improviser 14.

Right.

Improviser 8.

Yeah. There is something quite strange about the duration. The amount of change in the material, the sense of calm that I felt from everybody even if they were playing like nutters. But also the sense of it being as absolutely natural as silence. And then also that sense that while people were listening they were also hearing. Like I was occasionally listening to 'what I could play' which was playing like a nutter, but I wasn't doing that. So there was a lot of fast listening going on, that was silent in the room.

Improviser 11.

That's great, That fast listening. That's a really good phrase. Fast listening and slow listening that is really necessary.

Improviser 8.

It is part of that telescopic awareness.

Improviser 12,

[He mentioned the tweeting (parallel thematicism) thing and another way of looking at that is like call and response, and where one person plays something the other says something and it is almost like a negotiation and a claiming of space.] And that sort of draws a line with that sort of imagery

Improviser 9..

I sat for a long time just laughing, because the energy in the room was slightly overwhelming.

Improviser 8.

Yeah, there was an ecstatic quality but with a slow release.

Improviser 9..

But this process I think rather than what normally happens is I think people kind of generates stuff in improvisation. But this felt more like it was releasing energy, do you know what I mean? So that when all of this was fizzing, I just kind of laughed.

David

A beautiful example of that was when you (Improviser 15) just went (gestural - blast) and I was just here (pointed) . It felt such a release of energy.

Improviser 9..

I thought that was a reaction to Tim, and an adjustment to the way that Improviser 12. was playing music.

Improviser 15.

It may have been, often I don't It's just a response when everything is just working subliminally.

David

It gave such a sense of liberty when you where doing that.

Improviser 15.

What I think I was doing was trying to overwhelm the resonance of the room. It has a resonance but I was trying to destroy that resonance in a way, through going as loud and sonically as I could.

Improviser 11.

I loved the interplay with the tide of groups and how everybody was going towards each other in this huge new sandpit. And that was fantastic. And like three of us together, and you and I, and all the other bits and pieces. And that was fabulous.

Improviser 14.

I couldn't help but smile and laugh

Improviser 13.

Well we sort of gravitated together a couple times, the wind instruments.

Improviser 11.

Yeah, And just laying there, kind of, three blokes.

Improviser 13.

Which was lovely but in a way that was sort of easy and in a sense what we would normally do. I enjoyed it very much but it was in a way much more interesting connecting with sounds and instruments that we wouldn't normally have the opportunity to meet.

Improviser 9.

But generally it was sort of free. (Improviser 14) there was a bit when you played an A major scale exercise and it actually worked fine, and like you were doing counterpoint with the wind and that worked fine as well. So all of those moments seem to have a place.

Improviser 14.

It was C major.

Improviser 10.

We have got to recording, you better be right.

Improviser 8.

It will be interesting to think about the recording because it will be so flat in comparison. Because of all of that thing about mixing

Improviser 10. (carrying on thought)

all that stuff going on, right over there, you know all that stuff you were doing over there.

Improviser 9.

I find recordings of improvisation is pretty boring, actually.

Improviser 10.

Yeah, that's it. Just recording it will lose the ... I mean why bother?

Improviser 11.

In a funny sort of way when you record, it is for us to listen back to the experience and to consider what your participation was, and that's the element of consideration that the after part of the actual doing something, is to like the writing. If you write something -- loads of ideas and then you can consider and restructure. But it gives you an idea to consider how you would then go about something the next time.

David

It's a reflection tool.

Improviser 8.

If I was to listen to it, I would have to walk. Because there is a difference in that I think, because you need less sound if you are walking.

Improviser 11.

But it is an exercise in consideration, and then knowing how to consider what we have done collectively and what you have done as an individual within that collection.

Improviser 8. (on considering the prospect of forming a Kent-based improvising orchestra)

I think this is way better than an orchestra, and I think if we play and there is public involved there has got to be something about it where they can feel that they can walk, and that they can see objects being made and that it has this spirit about it.

David

Response was a consideration of the role of the facilitator and the need to prepare the audience as well.

Recounts the situation of the previous Tuesday where someone expecting to play 'Jazz tunes' came along with a dancer who decided to play music without understanding the underlying considerations in a group music improvisation.

Improviser 8.

Music is such a small part of sound it is a really tiny nugget but as musicians that's the thing but of course there is so much more that is interesting.

Improviser 14.

It is taking me a year to get to the question what is music, what is sound

David

Are well you have the rest of your life to get to the answer of that

Improviser 8.

You need a space that can allow you to move around, to hide, to mix space and allow the audience to also experience that.

Transcription P2S4 Cheltenham 24/06/14

Improviser 17.

I started off trying to keep in the Kinesphere and not pay attention to anyone else. And I thought was really actually a good start, because to me it came at the appropriate moment to come in and joined the group. But having that time to just start and get the feel for how you are sounding was great.

David

I enjoyed our preamble, the last one that I did in Canterbury we didn't really have one. I really enjoyed just hearing the sounds

Improviser 18.

Yet it felt quite relaxed.

Improviser 19.

At times though, it was difficult because of the length of the performance, without any kind of... there was no instruction as to anyone leading it at all. And people do come in and out, it's kind of hard I found it difficult that length of time.

Improviser 17.

There are a couple times when I thought if we were playing with the improvisers Orchestra it would have come to its natural close. But because we had that time ...

Others

We expended onwards

Improviser 17.

Yeah it did feel like that, very cyclical with these four improvisations.

Improviser 20.

What I actually found liberating with it though, was being able to move around the space. It's a bit like being at a party where sometimes you just want to go out into the garden for a bit away from everything. And then you come back, there's an interesting

conversation going over there so you go and join in with that for a bit. Then you wander into the front room and something else is going on in there, you know. And I like that sort of organic feel about it. And so it didn't feel like there was just one thing going on, that would come to its natural close. It was a continuously shifting ...

Improviser 19.

It did end up in the kitchen though didn't it (laughter)

Improviser 18.

It did feel like there was lots of different things going on at times, More so than when I have done other big group ensembles, although there were times when it was like everyone's doing something or other.

Improviser 20.

But usually that is structured into something, like you have small groups that are working around. But in this one, the groups were playing and then it sort of just evolved in different ways.

Improviser 18.

But it was interesting how you could just move around not just follow your ears, so often that happens when you are, for me it happens when I'm sat behind stuff. I kind of will get involved with other people through my ears, but now you can actually do it physically by moving into the other room, which is different.

Improviser 17.

I felt sorry for the guys with Leads.

Improviser 21.

Serves them right (laughter)

It's weird. Because I got all of that, but I suppose in the language, the gap, in me I was actually analyzing whether we ever got to move towards an engagement, or just continually grazing. And I don't know if that is good or bad, but ... 'cause it was the same feeling, that we kept on going off into little bits, and exploring that, disengaging from that, and whether we got into a whole group engagement, I'm not sure.

Improviser 20.

Was the success of that mean that everyone was engaging at the same time altogether?

David

Not necessarily. I talk about the comparison and what happens in a danced setting and how contact usually involves just a dueting partner.

Improviser 20.

Well, one of my gripes about big group ensembles improvising together is that you can't listen to the whole ensemble. You always end up listening to 2 or three people who happened to be near you. Otherwise we can all then play the same rhythm and engage in it that way, but it's very difficult to listen to lots of different things going on at the same time.

David

Speaking about the rhythm, I found myself going against it quite a lot of the time.

Improviser 20.

We didn't all get into a groove though, which can happen. And then it's, 'slave to the rhythm'.

Improviser 18.

One of the things that I found quite liberating was the Skinesphere. And in the Skinesphere I decided to focus on my voice. So was a way of comfortably experimenting on my own. So that was kind of quite nice. Normally I'd be listening to it too much and I would stop quite quickly. But it was quite nice to do it a bit longer and push my voice a bit. I think.

Improviser 20.

I found interesting because I was actually thinking about the movement that I do that goes on when you play an accordion without actually having an accordion on and it was just quite interesting just thinking about that. So when I came to the actual accordion it made me think about it in a slightly different direction.

Improviser 19.

A bit strange doing it without the accordion though, don't you think?

Improviser 20.

Yeah, I was hoping nobody was looking (laughter).

Improviser 21.

That was one of the invitations in it wasn't it, to actually to use your body more, to do more movement, irrespective of the normal movement that you do to make a sound. The invitation from the beginning and from the Anne Stevens practice that we just did, I felt that that was really a really good thing. Particularly as we had some space to do it, and I welcome that and I did like the beginning that because I liked that and it's just something that I like to be able to start from within yourself and work out, I like that.

Improviser 20.

But there is a physicality to playing an instrument, which is, you know, we all play air guitar when we are at home, Don't we? (Laughter). But there is something and that is what I quite like about the accordion, that you suddenly feel liberated from sitting in front of a piano.

Improviser 22.

I liked a lot of your comments. For me perhaps the engagement is the most dangerous and hardest part of it, because certain things can take over that perhaps aren't in keeping with the whole thing. I found the space to reflect the physical space, particularly near the beginning it gave me some different approaches to playing. I think the length of the whole piece makes it very difficult. That becomes a very powerful factor in, musically, in what goes on which could work against the experiment.

Improviser 17.

It very much changed the dynamic of it, the length of it. and I haven't done half as much as these guys have, but that extended period of playing where as you say, engaging and disengaging and having the time to do that, was in some ways liberating but other times I thought 'oh, I just feel like stopping fully now'. Then you find yourself

coming back into it, I found myself feeling less self-conscious than I have done in the past. Probably because I didn't feel obliged to be trying to be engaged continually I felt less self-conscious about what I was doing.

Improviser 22.

Yes, it's sort of more positive when you're disengaged.

Improviser 20.

Doing that it's sort of makes it feel more analogous to life in some way. You are not doing a set piece, but there are moments when you actually don't really know what to do, and then something comes and I quite like that. I quite like that it's not a performance, because in a sense even when we are doing a workshop it is like a performance. And I didn't feel sort of much of that, it's sort of went up and down.

Improviser 21.

Yeah I like that, but I don't think that But I think on the negative side ...

On the other side of that, there's a group of us here that, I don't think we ever made as much of the collective through that whole couple of hours as we might have done. And that doesn't mean getting to the pitch, getting to the Ascension pitch where we're all just playing at full volume and nobody can hear anything. So I don't mean going that far, but I think there was a reticence in the group as a result of that ... that we could have made a more joyous sound together. And we might have done had we not been concentrating so much on the other bit. And I mean they are not opposites, I don't mean that. But I just felt that that was the dissatisfaction for the two hours to me, That this should have been a point which we made a bit more of a joyous noise together.

Improviser 19.

That we engaged

Improviser 21.

And I don't know if that was because of reticence or we were enjoying so much all of the things that you just said. Because I enjoyed those things to.

Improviser 19.

Not everybody knew where we were. We weren't all engaging at the same time, and that's because of the length of it.

Improviser 20.

For me I didn't miss that in a way, probably because I just enjoyed the difference from what that would normally be, and as I said the moving around. But yeah you can't be always I guess.

Improviser 22.

It's interesting how being together can be achieved in so many different ways, often by not being together. And in a way, Oh, I have to say that I really enjoyed hearing you are obviously a group that have played together a lot. And I really enjoyed what I heard, and a challenge. Terrific. And um, and I thought the continuity very surprising. The way in which despite it being so long and so many different things happening, that there was a continuity which I suspect comes from a shared mindset.

Improviser 17.

I think in the very beginning though there was a point at which, everybody did sort of move out of Kinesphere and into a group possibly. There was a point when I really felt like everybody had ... was paying attention to everybody else.

Improviser 18.

I think very early on

Improviser 17.

And that sort of came in very naturally. I half expected there to be almost a gap between people playing for themselves and then playing to the group. But they didn't seem to be the case at all.

David

It can be it can happen that way.

Improviser 20.

It did feel, it just occurred to me, that it was like when we went up to Sheffield to this gig. It did seem like a bit of a gentleman's club.

Improviser 18.

Well we were hoping for some other genders but they didn't arrive.

Improviser 21.

So does it come out different every time? I presume because there's different musicians every time.

David

yes

Improviser 20.

Do you have a view on doing this with a different set of musicians is there a specific aesthetic? Say if somebody suddenly felt that the appropriate thing was to sing an Abba song would that be frowned upon?

David

This process has been filtered through me and I am a free improviser. That said when I have done this at TrinityLaban students who are not free improvisers including classical musicians have come along and they have enjoyed it.

There is a problem with words insofar as if you are a singer and you start throwing in words you can potentially start to take space away from other people's creativity because the words have different connotations to different people.

Improviser 18.

It is interesting to think about this process in relation to Improviser 19. Stevens' 'search and reflect', You know that very different approach which is aimed at musicians and nonmusicians, but us all as sound makers. But it is very different because it comes from dance it has a completely different starting point. I'm just kind of interested in the kind of language, and what Stevens was trying to do with it, with like 'how can I practice improvisation when I'm not playing with other people?' Or I'm not at a gig? What is it?

What is this improvisation and trying to think about what it was. So it's just another take on thinking about what actually is going on? What are we doing?

David

And I think that discussion is a very good one to have and to keep having. Because there are as many answers as there are people practicing it.

Improviser 21.

There was actually elements that I thought were like 'search and reflect', the Kinesphere thing lots of Stevens' exercises in that book making your own sound and not being put off by someone else making a sound. Even in quite a tight space with you in the sense of overcoming self-consciousness about being free. So there are a lot of exercises and Stevens's book about Kinesphere and grazing because that is about being confident in the space with the lack of any rules.

Improviser 18.

Is something about the language as well. Like the scribble, you know it's a movement

Improviser 20.

But for me, one of the central things that, you know I've got a pretty inclusive (laughter) anything goes! But for me what marks free improvisation apart from anything else it's not the actual content of the thing, but it's the acceptance that everything can change at any moment. And there is a possibility that any person within the group might suggest a change. And when it gets to the point that you have a bass player or a drummer who is suddenly setting the agenda, then it is no longer free improvisation.

Improviser 22.

Yeah it really butts in on listening if somebody dominates the thing. The other seven days of Stockhausen has quite a lot of ideas but more primitive perhaps from 1968 especially if you read the Liturgy as well that makes links.

I have a perverse question what about watching or listening? How do you present it and what is the response from someone listening and not participating?

David

This is a question and a point of discussion that has come up a number of times during these sessions. I explained that is not usually a performance.

Improviser 22.

It is interesting because it actually gave me a bit more courage and a few more ideas about playing on my own. Because I like interactive things, but actually to be in a room and play and explore things. It gave me a new sort of timescale for that.

Improviser 20.

The closest that I can see is like the relay thing that we did. Where you are moving around, and there were people moving around who happened to be in the museum experiencing this and not actually knowing what was going on. Recollection the envisage this being like that.

Improviser 22.

Is there a part that you find difficult?

David

[Discussion about the Kinesphere, grazing – I haven't got to the stage where I can see the different connections yet.]

Improviser 22.

Probably make more lateral connections than dancers

Transcription of MbUS 5 - Oxford 25 June 2014

Improviser 23.

I don't think that anything happened that was radically different to what would happen in a normal improvisation. Perhaps what was nice about it was the way not just because it was a structure, or a sort of narrative, but also because there was no audience, who being a long time to work in, there being a lot of space, you could leave space, you could drop out, and you could jump back in again.

Which very often in improvising situations you feel constrained to take part more often, and to contribute. Whereas here I didn't feel I had to contribute. I could if I wanted to, or could simply just go back around the circle if you like. Or I could do something very different and ignore everyone else, and then come back in again. With that circularity, of going in – out, that almost breath-like thing was nice.

Improviser 24.

You are right it didn't sound very different, but it felt very different to me. It was less ... because normally when you're improvising, I would say one's aim is to make music as good as possible, but I felt that this helped you get away from that. Which is all to the good I think, in some ways.

Improviser 25.

I think some of the stages that we went through, we naturally go through anyway as a group. The state of you, identifying yourself and then you find techniques that you can communicate, and then you engage with the group, and I think that process is the basis of a lot of group improvisations. But what I think that was different is that, if you are going through that trajectory on your own, rather than on a group trajectory it creates a different atmosphere. But normally, I would say that most group improvisations actually go through that, it's just that you try to do it collectively, in some ways. Even though you are trying to find your own voice you are still collectively trying to communicate and build, and then engage. And then usually the engagement breaks and someone start something else. It seems to go through that cycle. But it's just the fact that the cycle isn't a collective thing. Yeah and it is not a collective thing and that's what's interesting about this, you think- 'I've had enough of this...' I will go and Graze

a bit. And I think that's quite nice, that kind of breaks it up a bit more and gives it more overlap, and more variety.

Improviser 23. (not transcribed)

[The thing I mentioned before we came in The importance of getting out of the improvisation a statement about a workshop that Improviser 23. had been to the idea of going out of the space and in coming back in again.]

Improviser 24.

It is kind of obvious but I think that just sitting down and being silent at the beginning was lovely. In a way it's kind of the most obvious thing of the whole lot, but it's also ... 'cause the thing is that, then when we were in the 'Engagements', it meant we all did that a few times, and I thought that was very powerful.

Improviser 23.

It happen quite quickly the first time, didn't it as well? It was quite early on that this sort of engagement (pointing to the Underscore on the wall) happened.

Improviser 24.

Because I think that raises it to another level, because if there is always a kind of activity then, I think it can be a bit banal. And you know, this idea of collective silence. Which didn't feel uncomfortable, I think raised our game. Or should I say, it raised the collective game.

9.31

Improviser 23.

How would it be like, to play that in front of an audience?

Improviser 24.

I suppose you'd feel, probably more uncomfortable with it. You shouldn't and you should probably learn to not feel uncomfortable.

Improviser 25.

I would have thought that it would be more interesting for the audience to have that level of variety.

Improviser 24.

Absolutely ... I agree

Improviser 25.

And I think that it's just that you bottle out of that sometimes. And you think you have to do more. But it's kind of much better when you have that space.

Improviser 26.

Something that was a bit different was trying out things that were nothing to do with anybody else. Which it was a part of the cycle, so, you've got the sound from coming outside with the birds and all that kind of thing, and then also in the atmosphere, all these other things that you weren't taking notice of, because you've got to concentrate on your own sound. And then you've got this idea of going on to pick all of those up.

David (not transcribed)

[talking about capacity of how much you can listen to one time following on from a conversation that I had had with Improviser 22. in the car. Reflecting on my ability of hearing different disparities sounds within the space during the Underscore. I felt that this conversation resonated through some of the process and I was really able to hear some of the connections.

Question about where the first engagement was.]

Improviser 22.

Today I felt, for personal reasons, concentration difficult because I was tired.

An area that I felt was dangerous and difficult was being reactive. Taking time and not to react to a sound. Because I think that is something that I'm personally try to deal with in any situation. Perhaps being reactive is claustrophobic spatially. And maybe the ... You know I think the thing that can come out of it a lot, is redefining silence. You know, the bits in between and there were moments when the bits in between where there in their own right.

17.00

I think it possibly was difficult in that this group was very good. I thought as a group, things that happened were terrific.

Improviser 24.

I would have thought, I know it's terrible, but it would have been ruined by a saxophone, I can't imagine ... (interrupted by laughing)

Improviser 25.

The group was really good because it was mainly string players.

Improviser 24.

I just thought a saxophone would have been the last thing that we would have wanted.

Improviser 25. and Improviser 23.

It just depends on the player surely.

Improviser 24.

it's quite hard to play the saxophone really, really quietly. I mean I know you can make key noises and stuff, You can play out the door A flute would have been okay.

Improviser 25.

I think it depends on the player, I don't think any instrument...

Improviser 24.

Yeah, but I don't think the saxophone can play really, really quiet.

Improviser 22.

It has a really high frequency spectrum.

Improviser 22. recalls an anecdote from the 1970s.

David

Any thoughts about the length, the duration?

Improviser 23.

I think there were moments which would have been really good endings, and then things carried on and then there was another good ending. And so it happened a few times. Perhaps in a performance situation we would have stopped more quickly.

Improviser 24.

I feel we went through the first couple of stages too quickly.

Improviser 22.

Maybe it's also a question about what is the objective for each of us, about this occasion? Is it to make music or is it to explore something else? I'm sort of wondering out loud.

Improviser 25.

I think it also depends on how you define making music. Because that's the trouble.

Improviser 22.

Because in a way, this implies an area that is different.

Improviser 25.

But that is a sort of compositional aim, that most people have that as a compositional aim. It's just like when a group adopts compositional aim so to break up some of the habits. And so it is kind of about making music, or, it's about creating a sound world that is interesting to listen to, by using different parameters that break you out of conventional patterns. And I would put it in the same category as any compositional structure that aims to do that.

Improviser 22.

Yes, if somebody suggests something then, one might think more about using something different.

Improviser 25.

But it is about having a musical aim, but musical aim isn't necessarily about 'I'm going to realise this through playing this or this'. It's actually on a macro level 'I'm going to set up some kind of infrastructure, or I'm going to participate in an infrastructure that creates something that's interesting. And what I do in and is actually not particularly significant in a way, or I'll just participate and follow these rules and see what is the group effort. I think that is different.

Improviser 22.

I think somebody said that it made them feel different, was it you?

Improviser 24.

Yer, completely different. I mean that's precisely what I was saying in that I kind of enjoy improvisation when I feel that it is quite intense.... Yer and What I hate is when I feel that people are kind of playing with no intention. I mean in a bad way. But I found here, there was a lack of intention, which was wholly positive.

It did feel very different, because you know, I felt it can be very exciting if you feel that everyone is kind of sparking. But because I felt our intention was deliberately directed elsewhere that ... I agree that the results were not musically startlingly different, although maybe they were quite different?

Idiomatically they were startlingly different.

Improviser 23.

Maybe. I think it was not the things that did happen, it was the things that didn't happen.

Improviser 24.

Yer possibly, yeah maybe you're right.

Improviser 22.

Can you have the same music with a different meaning? And communicate it?

I don't think you can. (hubbub)

So if you were feeling a certain way, the same music could ...

Improviser 25.

Well, I feel you can play the same phrase, with a slightly different inflection, and it can mean something totally different. Because your intention comes out through the way that you play that phrase.

Improviser 22.

But even then it is strange that how body language, well not exactly body language but some kind of context or attitude or, will have an impact or communicate, even if the phrase and the notes were, on an oscilloscope exactly the same. It's an uncanny way, or aspect of human communication.

Improviser 24.

I did feel that it was much less, even though well, you are not egotistical players any of you, but I felt it less driven. Kind of less personally driven. And I liked that.

Improviser 26.

I liked what you said about your attention being directed elsewhere, I felt that it was not about doing this particular piece and achieving this sort of result together. It is because you've got something else to do. You've got to get to the next stage, because next you're going to the grazing all whatever, you've got to do the breathing was something. She can't be thinking about all of us moving together some goal. And things glance at each other, here and there, and then you're off in a different direction.

David

With regards to my objective for translating the Underscore, is primarily related to the fact that I find the danced Underscore supports my practice but it doesn't impose things, it frames what I do as a dancer. I feel that because there is a sense of frame, I can focus on this now and I have a sense of permission to do things. I get more out of the practice and it is of a higher quality. And I think that is my objective for translating this.

However, your comment relates to how I felt about my practice today.

As a facilitator, it is always a question of how am I ... I got to be aware of the group and I feel I have to make sure the group is working together. And so your point about being quite reactive made me think ... 'Yeah, maybe I'm being quite reactive.'

Improviser 22.

But it's inevitable that every participant will interpret an objective.

(Gap)

David

How was the aspect of moving around the space?

Improviser 24.

I love it, I don't know why everyone doesn't do it all the time.

Improviser 22.

I don't usually like it, but I liked it today. It felt right.

Improviser 23.

It seemed quite natural to me.

Improviser 22.

I mean, it had a real impact for me. Well, it was significant.

David

directed towards Improviser 26.

it is not about sticking to the score. If you could imagine having done the_a number of times do you still feel you would be restricted.

Improviser 25.

I think I would adopt it as a useful checklist, because some things up there I do anyway, and you do kind develop techniques like that naturally. But I think having a formal arrangement of tasks is quite useful to have as a checklist, to every so often have as a technique to perhaps get you out of a position that you are not happy with.

Improviser 24.

It is hard for me to imagine this as in any way constricting. And I know routine is not good in free improvisation but ... It depends ... I suppose if it was the same group, in the same room, it might get a bit ... Seen artificial.

Improviser 22.

There is something in it that I feel I would like to get better at. Which means it's some kind of experience that I don't normally focus on.

You know, there must be something different about it, to normal group improvisations that ... You know maybe it has a lot to do with how experienced the players are.

Improviser 24.

It's not obviously music focused, which is a good thing I guess.

Improviser 22.

It's something ... you know like, Keith Tippett always used to talk about, and he still does 'It's not the notes, it's the music behind the notes that matters.'

Improviser 24.

Absolutely. It's partly why was talking about the focus being elsewhere. Which can make it more musical. Potentially anyway.

Improviser 22.

I think it's hard work. I find it hard to try and tap in. Do you find that?

David

Because I've been doing it so long? It's hard work at the moment because it is new, with the instrument. But it's not an onerous sense of rigour. It's a challenge, it's a game.

Improviser 24.

Do you see it as a performance?

David

As dancers not generally, it is a practice that is not a performance and it is not a class, but something in between. Something for the participants.

Improviser 23.

I think you could see it as a way of learning to better focus on detail.

Looking back on the hour and 20 minutes or so that we played, I'm not quite sure. I was very, very conscious a lot of the time, on a level of detail of what I was doing in what others were doing. And not just of the sounds but spacings, everything. It was as if very ... everything was in focus. That was interesting.

34.30

David - Thank you.

Transcription of London MbUS. 17 July 2014. Studio 1 Laban Creekside.

David

My first comment is that compare to Cheltenham where you commented that we didn't come together, I thought that we did today

Improviser 21.

we did that, absolutely. So we were in a room experimenting, the first time that I did this. And I felt we did lots of beautiful things in small groups, we never actually came together and did what free improvisers do, and I felt that we did do that today.

And also your challenge about the audience, I thought it was uncomfortable at the beginning within the Skinesphere, because you knew they were there. I don't know, maybe it is the performer in me. But later on it was beautiful to have the audience members coming in and out. And I thought that was a really good experience. So that was my thoughts anyway.

Improviser 28.

do you think the space contributed to the difference? In the music from when you did it previously?

Improviser 21.

No it was a different group of musicians. The space was great to play in, but I think it was just a different group of musicians.

Improviser 29.

In terms of the audience coming in, were you part of the thing that was going on here, where we kind of locked an audience member in?

Improviser 21.

Every time I looked up, there was a different member in fact it was three at one point.

Improviser 29.

It was great.

Improviser 30.

That's the thing. I was half in, eyes shut, eyes open. Because, I kept looking up and thinking 'I don't think they've ...

Improviser 29. (interjected)

who are they?

Improviser 30.

... musician? I don't know. - Maybe you are, maybe you're not? it doesn't matter. It was great. I liked it. I thought "I don't know who you are, but you come in my way" (laugh).

Improviser 29.

Were they invited? Or did they just feel they could in?

David

I'm sorry to say that after, well over half the time and no one had entered the space I invited them in.

It was very interesting to me to see how conditioned they were to not come into the space.

I just decided to mention it to Susan, and then thankfully Susan and others came into the space.

Improviser 27.

So it wasn't spontaneous?

David

No it wasn't. But I wanted to experience what it was like with audience members in the space with us.

Improviser 27.

That was great, to see them in the space. Coming in and walking around and interacting in their own way with the music and what was happening. And one sat down with the piano, luckily it was after the string broke.

David

Did it break during this?

Improviser 21.

Yer, right at the beginning.

Improviser 27.

But now I think that on several levels it worked, and the objective of going through those different stages, quite clear to me. And the way that the group was reacting to the interactions without having to think about it ... 'Oh, that is happening now!' So it was all sort of on an intuitive way of approaching the group performance.

So that was actually working as a group, I'm not talking from a musical point, I'm talking from an interaction of what we are here to do. It's not a performance, it's not a work of art as such, it's just an exercise in relating to the space, to the group, to yourself and the sounds around you. Which is not necessarily a musical concept you know. It's just another experience of producing sounds. And for me, that part of it worked quite well.

For me, the most difficult part was actually the last one, disengaging. That was very difficult, because you are so drawn into the whole thing that you felt, 'okay the lights went out. We've got to finish, okay. Resolution...' And then there's this disengaging process. And that was difficult, because you have to ... If you're doing a performance, then the performance ends. The audience applauds, or not. There is a definite ending to that, and it's finished. But this one went on, and you kept being dragged into it. You know, even when there are no more sounds, it was still happening.

That for me was the most interesting aspect of it. You know, the resolution, and then breaking away from that.

Improviser 28.

Do you think it would have ended around about the similar time, if we hadn't had a signaling to end?

Improviser 27.

It's hard to say. Again, it wasn't a performance. When you're actually performing a piece or an improvisation, you tend to approach the different ways of ending the piece, and

it's usually for experienced improvisers and intuitive thing. You feel that the end is coming, and then you take the plunge. And sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't and it carries on. It depends on who you play with and how the interaction with the group is happening. But since we were doing an exercise here, we didn't have to solve that problem of ending the piece. It continued into the disengagement, we were still playing, even though we were disengaging.

And also, exploring the acoustics of the room was interesting, especially with a string instrument, the cello. It does change a lot where you are sitting, against what wall you are sitting by, the Perspex responded in one way, the plaster wall you know, in another way. The glass was fantastic, so that was interesting.

Improviser 28.

Each individual improvisation also supported me in my creation of ideas, for want of a better term. Because, ordinarily as a performer, I'm not normally playing for two hours solid. And even if I'm not playing for two hours solid, I'm certainly not in that creative sphere for two hours, and that was quite long. And so the shift in between the various sections they worked and definitely helped me.

Improviser 27.

Just the fact that we were spontaneously forming into new, spatially near each other at times. You would naturally form into a duo or a trio. Even though we were absolutely aware that we could use every sound that was happening. Even when Tim dropped the bottle at the very end. Um. And the sounds outside you can hear absolutely everything, and you could play around with that. And so the acoustics played an important part I think in the structure of the whole thing.

9.44

Improviser 4.

I found myself really exploring listening. That was really interesting because Um... I was really inspired by ... Well, first of all my vision was like overwhelming me. So I started to think about just my breath, and the shifts of my weight, and when I wanted to let out a breath, and things like that. But in relation to ... So say I was listening to Improviser 21. through my breath, and I was responding. So I was just having a good time, just changing how I listen. Because sometimes I did get stuck at the beginning because as there was an audience things really changed, because it felt really wrong. ...

Because, It felt really wrong not to include them, and I felt just (physical and verbal exclamation) 'no, I can't do this', and so I did. And that's how I kind of got around the difficulty by changing the sense of how I listened. If that makes sense?

It's really interesting to try and imagine how each other person listens. So I was trying to understand or play around with how... When am I actually playing a duet with you? Or when are we in the same world? And when we clashing, and when are we doing this and that. And always kept changing, and that was really interesting.

Improviser 28.

I don't think I was ever actually sure when I was playing a duo or a trio. Not really I think I may have been, but I'm not sure if I was will not. Because something else would happen, or someone else would move very quickly. Sometimes you would be engaged in a duet, and then all of a sudden that person would leave because they want to do something else. Because they don't like what you are doing, maybe? Or, because they don't want to play, so...

Improviser 30. (interjected)

Because they thought they were in a duo with someone over there. Oh, I'm sorry man. (Laughs)

Improviser 27.

Well it's all part of the full details that are up on the wall. These are all things that were happening, unconsciously or ...

Improviser 28.

But you couldn't pin someone down, but just delay ...

Improviser 27.

No you couldn't ...

Improviser 29.

We sometimes did, with the arrangement of chairs. People sitting opposite each other and kind of purposefully

Improviser 28.

It was a way of kind of forcing it,

Improviser 29.

It's fun to try and force it. I sat next to you for quite while over there (directed to Improviser 31.) and we both just sat there in silence for ages, against the wall. Yeah. It was nice.

And I sat behind you (Improviser 28) because I thought, I've never heard the guitar how you hear it. And I thought this was my chance. You're behind the guitar, and I'm usually in front of it or to the side, or hearing the front of it

Improviser 28.

And what was fascinating about that was that he was playing the clarinet under my chair, and I could feel the vibrations coming through the bottom of the chair. And that was very strange, it was very odd.

Improviser 4.

Were you having a duet with him then?

Improviser 28.

I'm not sure. No, I thought that we were, but then I think that he wasn't. So... I think we were. For the moment anyway.

Improviser 30.

That is why (Drowned out)

Improviser 27.

Derek Bailey always said to me, two people could be playing completely different things, right next to each other, and it still works. Three, that's different. But with two it always works, because they can contrast, they can go away. With three the balance is broken.

Improviser 4.

I only just thought about it at the end, at the beginning of this, that there were some points when I felt that wasn't how it was meant to be. But now I think they're all parts of the grazing, when I thought... 'Play with me'. But then I thought, oh but now, 'I am playing with him, and that I'm not'.

And so all those small fluctuations, were kind of bringing up how I feel as a performer towards another performer, or whether and what we are doing. If that makes sense.

David

For me I did feel the shifting between the duos and trios, and they were incredibly clear. And usually I am someone who agrees that you can only listen to only a few people in the room at once. But I felt today, I could hear what was happening over there, I could hear what was happening over there, and there is something else just starting up over there. And the sense of development, I was really enjoying – 'I'm supporting what was going on over there (pointing), and I like that (pointing), and I felt I could just embrace both. Rrrr – scraping, and some pitching, - 'D's', there are quite a lot of 'D's', and then you (pointing) on the piano, you know the percussion and the knocking and whatever. I just felt that yer, there was so many different layers, and I can pitch in and I can support this, this, and this at the same time.

Improviser 28.

So the duos and trios can shift very quickly?

David

But, I didn't have a sense of 'I need to change'. 'No I'm sticking to this, but I'm incorporating this'.

Improviser 30.

You can create this nice multiplicity when you have quite complex duo's happening, and quite personal at times, but because of the setting of the Underscore, I really feel ... And that ability to move and be free to go where ever you want, and that ability to listen to ... And also there's that element with this score idea that, where you can , without being selfish you can hone in on what you're trying to do, so that it gives you, it gives me an ability to play between people perhaps. And then because you have that personal duo perhaps, and that personal trio over there, and the personal duo happening here, you

can play between all of that, you say, and you get that wonderful kind of complexity as one structure.

It didn't even feel that it was lots of different things happening here there and you know. Just one overall ... But I think that's partly because maybe you're thinking in line with elements of the score.

Improviser 21.

I think that's the thing I felt this time. It's that structure up there on those pieces of paper gave freedom. Where as the first time that I did it, it felt in some ways like a constraint. Like you'd be somewhere in the middle of an improvisation and you get to the point at which you would have the opportunity to stop, and in a performance you might take up that opportunity. But here there is another hour and a half. And that felt a bit, oppressive is too strong a word, but that hung on my shoulders the last time I played. This time, it was just another opportunity to just go off somewhere else, and take that moment and go off somewhere over there.

17.49

Improviser 29.

And the opportunity to not play as well. You know you can just lay down and go back to Skinesphere, or Kinesphere, and as you say you can just kind of working out what do I need? And, rebuilding everything, and that's a nice opportunity.

Improviser 27.

I had meant to say this previously, just to play completely away from whatever is happening, into a totally different niche, and still make it relate. I don't know if that's up there but it's probably included one of those things. But that is something that I explored, listening to the different things and playing something that was not related at all to any of the groups, you know. Perhaps something more melodic, or something completely noise, you know trying purposefully not to interfere with what the other groups were doing, but being aware

Improviser 30.

But it's also like, taking that on, it's also nice that you have the freedom to engage, but also to deliberately refuse. And it's not an aggressive thing, I'm not saying 'I don't like

the music, it's just that deliberately don't want to go that way'. And that is interesting because then you get that very interesting cadence, without being a bastard as it were.

Improviser 27.

And then you find that you are doing something different, and then someone latches onto what you are doing and then you have to change again or go along with it. So it is all part of the dynamics of an improvisation in a group, I mean, the thing is being aware of these mechanisms are occurring and that you can make them work musically. I mean, in the end that's what I think is the most valuable thing, is to develop that in a musical way.

But it would be interesting to see what would happen if we had dancers at the same time. Ah, because then we would have the visual part of, the movement to relate to.

Improviser 29.

You mean the dancers that were only dancing?

Improviser 27.

Who were doing the Underscore.

Improviser 29.

Alright. But not dancer/musicians doing both at the same time

Improviser 27.

No I don't mean dancing musicians, I mean dances, who are also doing the Underscore. And how that would influence what we are doing.

Improviser 28.

But the physicality in actual fact that was incredible just moving around and seeing the others moving was really nice

Improviser 27.

And just having those two people that actually did venture into our space, and broke the barrier of audience/performers, you know. I think changed a little bit of what we were

doing, in a small way. It wasn't anything big but I felt there was a slight difference in the imaging of the group. And that was especially when they were moving around, after they settle down it's kind of melted into the background, but as they were moving around kind of felt things were changing a bit.

Improviser 29.

I think it was a kind of caretaking, when someone is in the space, who wasn't here for the talk, and so wasn't here from the start. Hasn't been through the arriving energetically and as the audience. And so they feel 'the other', and we are a group and they feel slightly 'other'. And I felt kind of almost protective of the group and also protective of them. And I did want to do anything too violently sonic around them.

22.09

Improviser 4.

Talking about violently sonic. I subjected myself to Improviser 21.'s piano but my ear was right next to the piano. I just felt that he needed some kind of inspiration. That was funny.

I really enjoyed the spatial, the merging of space and playing music. It really makes sense to me, I get so inspired by the textures of the walls and how they feel. And like how my feet feel and how I can go right up close to you on the piano or someone and really listen. Just walk around and listen to how different the sound can sound.

Improviser 29.

Because space and venue and textures are always present when we play and do a gig, but rarely do we have the opportunity to really explore those differences. I don't know why but ...

Improviser 30.

We sit in our seats.

Improviser 29.

We sit there in our seats and just kind of ... It's almost appropriated from classical musical culture isn't it.

Improviser 28.

Well, that's what I was going to say about the interactions, even though they were eight of us here playing and moving around. If you are doing a gig with eight musicians, there is no way you would have got those interactions that we got, into those duos and trios. You would get breakups within the band as you do, but there is no way that it would have occurred like that.

Improviser 29.

Do you mean if we were sat down?

Improviser 28.

Precisely, you wouldn't have got those interactions.

Improviser 27.

Different mechanisms come into play, you know if it's a gig or a performance. But this is a workshop situation. I mean we were here to explore things. So sometimes it's a much more creative process in a way because you don't have to deliver. You're exploring the things ...

General-Accord

Improviser 30.

More freedom

Improviser 27.

Yeah, Even though there was an audience there, but it wasn't ... They weren't expecting a performance, which puts us in a totally different situation.

Improviser 31.

I found the beginning quite uncomfortable, like when the people came in. And ... I got there eventually but it took me a while to get to, what's it called?... Skinesphere. It took me awhile to get into the Skinesphere, and then I had this moment where, I don't even know what it's called that's John Cage piece, where the audience it's all just that (4'33"). And I was wondering if they were thinking that this was it? And I had and in a voice

saying 'oh, those poor buggers, just sitting there', and then I shut all those voices out, and you know, then it was good from there on.

But I definitely agree with you, that that beginning part, of just being, took me quite a while to be comfortable, just 'being' and having people watch me. I had to think 'Just Be!' and let go of them being there.

Improviser 29.

It seemed difficult to let go of the preamble, because of that. Because we knew that we were going to go into that state. And then, you (Improviser 30.) stayed in the Skinesphere for quite a long time didn't you.

Improviser 30.

Yeah, because I was really enjoying it (laughter).

Actually I was going to ask, because I couldn't gauge about ... I think it felt to me like, ... doing the dancers Underscore, which have done a few times with you guys. And the one that we did the three of us, ... and having people watching. I'd be interested to see the trajectory from ... to where it got to a musical point.

It seemed to me that it was quite a sharp angle. Yer, Quite quick. I don't know if that was to do with there were people there, and subconsciously in the backs of our minds. So I don't know if, it's not a good or bad thing, it's just that it was interesting. It's just that it felt that got to a musical place quite quickly, which...

Improviser 29.

A sound place you mean.

Improviser 30.

Yeah the stereotypical music since I mean, which I wonder if that was the effect of having people sitting and watching.

Improviser 29.

it's the concern of them having a good time, and us wanting to entertain.

Improviser 30.

So I was just trying to... Chill (laugh) have a little sleep.

Improviser 28.

In relation to what you were just saying. I think those kinds of situations can bring out the type of character you are. From 'I've just got to get to my instrument' to 'just relax, chill out', I know that that's not the point, but you are who you are. And that can come out quite obviously, in those situations.

Improviser 30.

I also felt that the space, that you guys were saying, almost became a really useful tool, a creative tool. Because it was so long, and we had so much time. That if you were in an improvisation and you were getting a bit ... Whatever, with your own playing. You've got this great tool and you can just go outside, and it's not so much about just exploring, it just a kind of refresher. It cuts through, and instantly you're put into a different place, whether you are looking for a different sonic quality or not. In the space and the material you will instantly be in a different place.

Improviser 28.

It did not feel like two hours.

Improviser 30.

Yer exactly

David

[Question regarding the non-sequential aspect of Physicality.]

Improviser 29.

I spent quite a lot of time at the start within the Skinesphere and in the Kinesphere thinking of me and my clarinet. And I spent quite a lot of time just feeling the weight of it. And how does it feel to have my fingers on the clarinet, and having it on my lap and thinking about it and then, trying to emulate some of those feelings of having the clarinet and seeing how that matches and going through those processes.

The thing you said about, once you think it the neurons are already firing, and that even the thought is enough to activate it. So I really tried to get engaged with that idea.

29.36

Improviser 28.

It makes you very aware of your instrument in a sense that ... how maybe limited it is physically. Someone playing the clarinet for example, can go wherever they like, and play.

Improviser 27.

Absolutely

Dan

I have a certain way of playing , I find it very, very difficult to stand up and play freely without any support, very difficult. Without a strap as well. So, I became very, very aware of those limitations.

Improviser 27.

Same here. The cello is hard to move around with while playing.

Improviser 28.

And I envy the people that can do that, a lot actually.

Improviser 27.

But you could have a strap.

Improviser 28.

I could.

Improviser 27.

It's a bit difficult with the cello. I have tried, but it doesn't work. Just don't do it. You could do it with a bass, I have a small Czech bass, and it is used for weddings. And so they are walking and you can strap it, and it is small it's half-size.. But with the cello it's too small actually to get proper

Improviser 29.

It reminds me, of that Woody Allen scene when he's playing the cello in a marching band. And he's pulling the chair... and he has to catch up again.

(laughter)

We explored physicality over there a bit, didn't we. Leaning on you and just trusting that you knew. Because I know that you are aware, because of seen you dance a lot with your instrument and with other people. And so I just trusted that you know, and when I felt that I was doing this thing (hand action) you know. And you were playing at the same time weren't you.

David

Talking about limitations, I was enjoying ... 'What can I do from down like this? (bending over) with you my back. It was really nice.

Improviser 29.

And we had a duet over there, and you were playing with the chair. It was great. And I was on the chair and sometimes I would be thrust forward and sometimes I would be lulled into rhythm. Yer, it was nice.

Improviser 28.

Coincidental moments when when we bumped into each other, because I was walking backwards, and I bumped into her because she was crouched down, and we both went into a spiral thing. Because coincidences happen all the time, but that was a very, that was almost accidental

Improviser 4.

it's all part of it.

Improviser 28.

And the piano moment, when you lay and trapped my hand. But you know that was brilliant.

Improviser 31.

You know I was going to say, David, that you know I haven't sung, and I haven't used my voice like this for, like years. Even though, I sing every day as part of my job, I haven't done that kind of singing for a long time, so I was quite scared about what might kind of come out. And so, it felt it was quite a personal exploration at times, while obviously at the same time, I was trying to listen and move and be aware.

But um ... I did have a moment with you on the piano, I don't know when it was, but maybe it was about halfway through, or something. Where you were playing something and I was doing something, and I suddenly felt really emotional. Like something really came out, that I don't really know what it was ... It was 'otherworldly', and it just felt like something was coming out. And I just had that experience of release and 'oh there's my voice!', I don't know, I can't really describe it. It was just very huhh (sigh) . 'I'm okay', and it was that level of feeling empathy, and I can hear what he is doing and I can hear my voice, in amongst it all. So anyway, it was just a bit of an emotional moment. Cathartic.

Appendix 4.

Music-based Underscore – Supporting Media.

Contained on this USB stick are the sound recordings from the 6 MbUS's with each folder containing the music and the final sharing discussion as separate sound files. As well as this, the filmed record of the 6th MbUS is included as a mp4 file. This MbUS appeared as part of the 2014 TrinityLaban Graduate Showcase.

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