

Abstract

This article reports on a research project entitled ‘Musicians in Space’ that aims, through the introduction of a spatialized approach to the performance of improvised music, to more fully realize the all-inclusive and heterarchical aspirations that are often associated with free improvisation. The research is introduced and briefly outlined, before the initial observations and findings are reported. The discussion in the final section will reflect on the connection between this model of improvised performance and deep ecology.

Musicians in place and space the impact of a spatialized model of improvised music performance.

Introduction

Free improvised music is often exemplified as a non-hierarchical musical process that emerges out of the precise acoustic, emotional, environmental, psychological, and social conditions in existence at the time of the music’s creation. But given that free improvisers continue to perform in conditions that involve the static positioning and formal separation of the performer and the audience, the extent to which these claims can be realized is questioned by this chapter.

This article reports on a practice-based research project, ‘Musicians in Space’ (MiS), that aims to offer insights into how the free improviser, through the introduction of a spatialized approach to the music, can exist as an all-encompassing and non-hierarchical musicking practice. An outline of the research process and the initial findings from the first stage of the research is offered, before the discussion is extended to look at the connection between spatialized free improvisation and deep ecology.

Free improvised music

Free improvised music emerged in Europe, during the mid-1960s, with musicians eager to strip away the performative expectations and restrictions that they were used to (Morris,

2012: 100). Inspired by developments in free jazz and contemporary Western classical music, the music is constructed through a dialogical process where ‘everybody’s actions and ideas impact everybody else’s’ (Vargas, 2013, p24–27: 25). Where the roles of soloist and accompanist are shared fluidly amongst the improvising participants, with the musicians utilizing any musical, technological, or structural means at their disposal to maintain the flow of the music. This is achieved with little or no reference to any identifiable melody, rhythm or harmonic structure. Instead, improvisers engage in a process of music making that pushes at the boundaries of the known and recognizable, which regularly involves subverting what is expected, with the ‘desire to make something important happen’ (Wachsmann, 2012, p16–25:20).

In 1975, free improvising saxophonist, Evan Parker suggested that his ‘music of the future’ would be played by groups of musicians ‘who improvise freely in relation to the precise emotional, acoustic, psychological and other less tangible atmospheric conditions in effect at the time the music is played’ (Parker, 1975, p12–13). This potential for free improvisation to respond to any aspect of the performative experience has become a prominent and widely acknowledged characteristic of the music. This all-inclusive nature of the musical process is regularly associated with the idea that free improvisation involves a largely egalitarian approach to music making. As Hargreaves, Miell and MacDonald (2011: 6), point out, the range of theories that have emerged, situating the practice of musical improvisation, have blossomed in recent years. with many expressing that the implications of the practice go well beyond the boundaries of musical performance and practice, but encroach on wider cultural, educational and political contexts also. This idea was championed, amongst others, by Spontaneous Music Ensemble’s founder, John Stevens, who referred to free improvisation as ‘free group music’. Stevens advocated for a music where the music was constructed by individuals focused on creating an immersive group sound.

I question the extent to which these two aspects are realistically possible within free improvised music, given the largely unquestioned and continued adherence to the static and stratified positioning of the musicians and the audience. It is argued that while the improvising musicians continue to perform, fixed in one position, the extent to which they can experience all the possible aspects of the performative environment is left in doubt. Additionally, the stratified positioning of the participants, it is suggested, does little to support the heterarchical aspirations of the musical form: as the implied fourth wall makes

the listener a mere bystander to the process that through their continued presence, nevertheless involves them. Stevens himself grew to feel that the collective principles of the music were later side-lined by an increased emphasis on 'individualism, personal instrumental virtuosity, and musical elitism, which he believed detracted from the more profound musical, spiritual and political implications of free group music' (Scott, 2014, p95–109: 104).

Musicians in Space

'Musicians in Space' (MiS) is a practice-based research project investigating the ways in which free improvising musicians relate to both the listener and the space around them. It introduces a spatialized approach to the performance of free improvisation, that allows all the participants the opportunity to move during the improvisation. Worded as an invitation, the participants are given the option to shape and regulate their individual involvement in the performative process without prescribing to a set behaviour or mode of action. Considering the intersubjective and unfixed nature of improvisation, the task of structuring the research was approached with a clear desire to protect the integrity of the improvisational process in all its complexity. To that end, an emphasis was placed on identifying a research design and method that could accommodate and faithfully celebrate the inherent polysemic nature of the practice of free improvisation without restricting the improvisational process.

These considerations led to a research method utilizing the phenomenology-based Heuristic research method combined with a pragmatic approach to practice-based research. Developed by Clarke Moustakas (1990), the heuristic research method places the researcher at the centre of the research process and emphasizes the importance of the 'tacit dimension' that Michael Polanyi (1966) believes underlies all knowledge. The pragmatic approach to the research reflects the inherent nature of free improvisation, and supports an open approach to the structuring of the research method that allows for the selection of methods based on what is considered most appropriate and 'fit-for-purpose' (Kupers, 2011).

A theoretical framework was used to contextualize the research which emphasizes the social and interconnected nature of musical activity. This comprised of Jacques Attali's notion of 'composing' (1985), Christopher Small's 'Musicking' (1998), and a broad range of ideas and

themes related to the link between musical performance and ecology (Borgo, 2002, p165–188; 2006, p1–24; 2007, p92–107; Clarke, 2005; Cobussen, 2014, p15–29; Davis, 2008; Di Scipio, 2003; 2015, p278–289; Nelson, 2011, p109–114; Waters, 2007). All three referents converge to support the idea that free improvisation can be seen to exemplify an individually-centred, but collectively-based means of self-expression and co-creation, that balances individuality and selfishness, and collectivism and totalitarianism (Fischlin, Heble, Lipsitz., 2013).

The research has been structured in two stages, with the first stage involving a series of public performances that occurred during May and June 2017. The second stage builds on these performances with a series of participant interviews. The five performances, in Canterbury, Liverpool, Oxford, and two in London, all involved improvisers



*fig 1. London improvisers Orchestra (LIO) performance, 21/5/17
Photo credit : Séverine Bailleux www.missevshots.com*

experienced in large group improvisation with most of them affiliated to improvising orchestras such as the London Improvisers Orchestra, the Merseyside improvisers Orchestra, and the Oxford Improvisers. This ensured a broad level of representation of experience and skill from across the improvising community.

During three of the performances, the improvisers were initially split into smaller improvising ensembles, which preceded a large group improvisation. This gave the improvisers the opportunity to experience the spatialized improvisations as both performers and audience members. The instructions offered to the 49 improvisers simply involved an invitation to move, but only if they felt motivated to do so, to enhance their listening and playing practice. The public audiences were also invited to modify their spatial relationships to the musicians just as they would within a sound art installation that incorporates an array of loud speakers. The intention was to allow the participants the freedom to interpret the invitation as they saw fit, and it was emphasized that it was in no way obligatory that they moved at all.

All the improvisations, and the post-show discussions that followed each performance, were filmed and recorded binaurally from various positions in each venue, to provide a range of listening and viewing perspectives for future reflection. The post-show discussions, that involved both musicians and audience members were all transcribed, along with the footage served as the source of data for the reflections reported on in this article. A subsequent set of interviews, with a small number of improvisers, have since taken place. These will develop the themes that emerged through the initial process and will constitute the second stage of the research. Footage of all the performances is available for viewing via www.dafmusic.com and on an associated youtube channel.

Observations and experiences.

The various approaches to the spatialized performance process, employed by the musicians, can be seen to correspond to two headings. Firstly, the ‘added affordances’ that resulted in a greater level of diversity of interactions, activity, and ways of listening, that all contributed to more visible relationships and connections within the improvisational process. Secondly, an increased level of ‘inclusivity’ amongst the improvisers, the audience, and the physical and sonic elements present within the performance environment. Encouragingly, a definitive set of actions and responses, by the musicians, were not observed during the MiS performances. Had this occurred, it may have indicated that the improvisers felt inhibited by the process. Instead, the actions of the musicians were seen to exist on a continuum of possible responses to the complexity of the process. This, encouraging, demonstrated that they were taking the opportunity to move as just another improvisative parameter that they could choose to utilize, subvert or ignore. This meant that while some musicians chose to remain in the same place, or moved just once during an improvisation, others embraced the idea of engaging with the ensemble from different locations, making the shifting topography of the performance space a central focus for their improvisation.

Added affordances

Despite an established tradition of improvising in a close spatial arrangement, no specific distance was observed as being preferred over any other. Musical connections were made both distally – from opposite sides of the room, and proximally – with musicians right next to

each other (fig. 2). The movement of the musicians was generally guided by their personal interests, coupled with a pursuit to maintain a clear perspective on the whole ensemble. This meant that musicians moved towards or away from what they wanted to engage with, while facing into the room and open to the group.

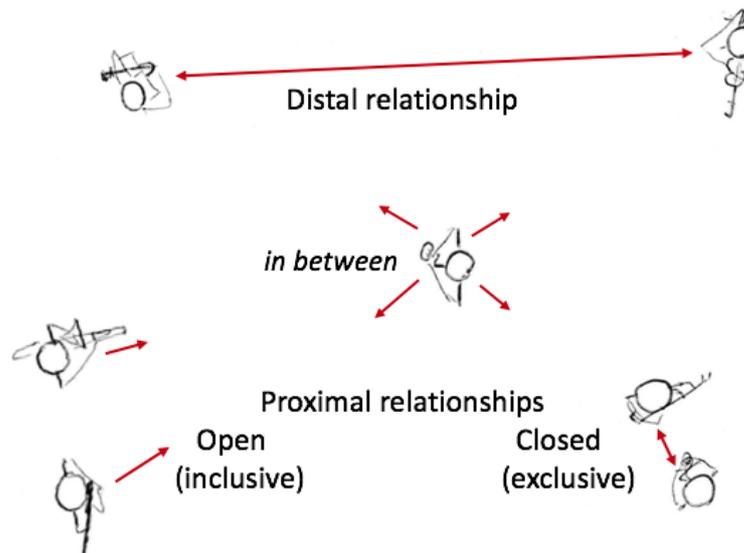


fig 2. Possible playing positions observed during the performances.

Only rarely was it observed that musicians chose to block out the other participants by playing proximally close together and facing inwards. The other musicians chose to respond to this exclusivity either by stopping and waiting, or by encroaching musically and/or physically on the closed dialogue.

Musicians readily took the advantage of small pauses in the music to move and reconfigure their spatial relationships. This had the effect of making some of the improvisations feel episodic in structure. Musicians were regularly observed coming together to form subsets of the larger ensemble (<https://youtu.be/ObHfbO4aW70?t=4m15s>). These subsets continually formed and reformed as improvisers moved towards or away from one another. With musicians taking the moments when they were not playing to listen or move. Thus, a cascade of musical activity was sometimes observed, with one group leading the ensemble, while others took time to listen or regroup in preparation to establish something new. This grouping strategy was also noticed (fig 3) at times of adversity when, for instance, the volume of the music increased and the quieter instrumentalists would come together for solidarity (<https://youtu.be/QvtyJ57Tilo?t=6m55s>).



fig 3. String solidarity - London improvisers Orchestra (LIO) performance 21/5/17
Photo credit : Séverine Bailleux. www.missevshots.com

But just as much as the improvisers chose to group together, they were also seen to remain separate from each other. This afforded a greater ability to hear the entire ensemble and to see the various disparate subsets of musicians that made up the whole. In fact, the option to play spatially isolated and ‘in between’ different subsets of the ensemble, listening and responding to multiple groups simultaneously, was an option frequently taken by musicians (<https://youtu.be/AQ5Uhb08Ew?t=4m31s>).

To maximize their ability to hear and see everyone in the ensemble, the musicians naturally formed a circular arrangement (fig 4) and (<https://youtu.be/BCjFMv3ZQfw?t=4m55s>). This corresponds to research by Healey, Leach, & Bryan-Kinns (2005) who found that the musicians, without any instruction, orientated themselves in a circle to support a co-operative ethos where all the ‘participants have more or less equal ‘speaking’ rights’ (Healey et al., 2005). This positioning was then maintained throughout the improvisations with other musicians moving into the free areas when gaps appeared. However, when a musician/s decided to enter the circle or cross through the central space, this action regularly resulted in the subsequent actions of that musician gaining added gravitas and poignancy (<https://youtu.be/p3eGT9UoxGs?t=14m25s>).

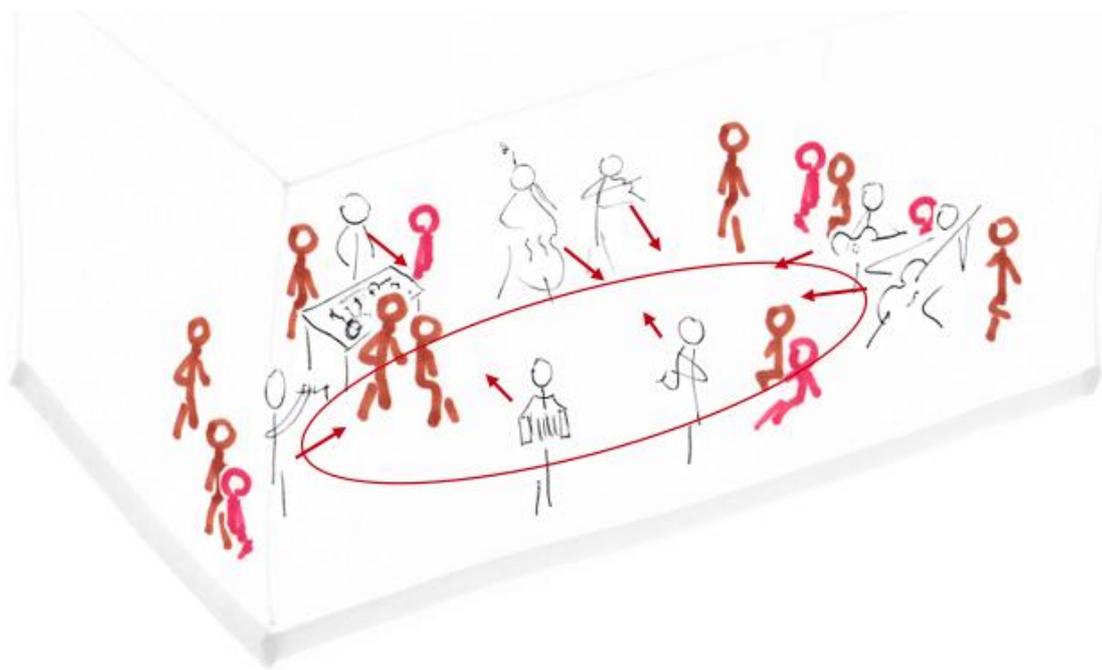


fig 4. The musicians naturally chose to perform in the round, optimising their ability to hear and see everyone.

Musicians frequently reflected on having to change the way that they approached the improvisation process. In particular, they could not close their eyes whilst playing, as they would normally. This was not always seen as a negative aspect to the process, but rather as an unexpected point of departure for exploring the ensemble in a new way:

I found it very illuminating in this environment to be encouraged to use my sight. And that also led me to different kinds of relationships with the other musicians. And the ability to move around also. But ... the aspect of sight and being able to move, I thought, was really exciting because I felt that I could explore the geography of the acoustics of the space. (Improviser 1, Canterbury performance)

Others commented on needing to adapt playing techniques to account for standing up and walking, while others chose to leave parts of their musical equipment in different parts of the room (<https://youtu.be/qqpt1lhdOY8?t=4m49s>). In two instances, both voiced by trombone players, the need to remain more proprioceptively aware, of the other people in the space, was seen to have a detrimental effect on their playing. However, most musicians appreciated that they could always return to a static position, with eyes closed, to reduce the complexity of what could at times become a cluttered performance environment.

Where the performance involved established groups, such as the London Improvisers Orchestra, the spatialized practice led to a confounding of the expectations of the more static musicians. They found that the sounds of various instruments were not coming from where they were expecting them to.

What was surprising to me was that, the sounds kept ... not coming from where I expected. Although I didn't know that I was expecting anything until they stopped doing that ... (Improviser 2. LIO performance)

It was regularly remarked that this approach to performance impacted on the overall nature and sound of the improvisations. The improvisations were felt to be less cluttered possibly for two reasons. Firstly, as the musicians instinctively faced what they were listening to, the other improvisers could gain more understanding of the relational dynamics at play. Secondly, the spatially dispersed arrangement of the musicians afforded, as noted by Henry Brant (Harley, 1997, p70), more clarity and ease in locating the various sonic contributions of the participants (<https://youtu.be/zqzc6nRCqA0?t=9m25s>). These factors meant that the improvisers could enter and exit the music with more understanding of the unfolding relational dynamics, with many choosing to also not play and just listen more frequently.

Inclusivity

The MiS performances allowed many improvisers the opportunity to focus on the variability of the acoustic topography of the space. This led to an engagement with the physical and spatial qualities of the performance environment rarely seen within free improvised music. Frequently, musicians chose to; play into the corners of the room, into the floor, towards different surfaces, or moved outside the room entirely. Sonic qualities of the rooms were also taken advantage of with resonant or creaking floors boards and walls being played, and extraneous objects that were lying around being incorporated into, or used on, instruments (<https://youtu.be/zqzc6nRCqA0?t=20m49s>).

This added playfulness and inquisitive approach to the performance environment and the musician's interest in the varied characteristics of the aural architecture profoundly affected the quality and nature of the listening process. The focus of the participants was no longer limited to the musical activity on the stage. Instead, the listening experience became spatially specific to the individual and could go from encompassing the entire space to being narrowed

onto a specific location. The term, ‘Telescoping awareness’ (Koteen et al., 2008), which comes from the work of dancer Nancy Stark-Smith, and her framework for contact improvisation - the Underscore, possibly describes this diverse range of possible listening experiences that can exist. Stark-Smith uses it to refer to the ability, of the dancer, to focus on anything from the macro to the micro, in terms of ‘personal awareness to sensation, activity and any other information or aspect of your improvising practice’ (Leahy, 2014: 43). Similarly, the nature of this adaptive listening process can be compared to ‘Deep listening’ (Oliveros, 2005), which emphasizes a more expansive and inclusive approach to listening to the world around us. This wider listening awareness, it is suggested, resulted in the music regularly becoming increasingly quiet, as mentioned here:

I was really ... taken by the sensitivity of everyone’s listening. And the fact that we could ... really hone to each other and play very, very quietly and still keep a kind of intensity to what was happening, with such space. Personally, I found that very engaging. (Improviser 3. Canterbury performance)

This greater sensitivity also developed an increased awareness to the multi-sensoral nature of the musicking process, emphasizing the link between perception and action (Clark, 2015; Clarke, 2005; Ingold, 2011; Thompson, 2007) and the physical body, as exemplified here:

Immediately, by the sounds that were being emitted and the energy that was being constructed from almost everybody, I was immediately, (click of fingers) kind of, triggered to start dancing, and to start moving. Maybe not necessarily like ... (gesture) but like start to actually allowing my body to express itself. Which is something that I hadn’t really felt in a lot of spaces, so that was great. (Audience member 2. LIO performance)

Regularly, both musicians and listeners remarked about the pleasure of moving very close to players to hear from the musician’s perspective:

It was also nice for musicians with louder instruments that you can go right up to someone who has got a quieter instrument and, sort of, hear it from there point of view, and tune into that. Even against the sound of your own instrument or ... the whole sound. (Improviser 4. London group performance)

While the positive aspects of these performances were widely discussed, the possible negative implications to spatialized improvising on the listening process were also raised. It was suggested that the movement and spatially divided positioning could detracted the

listener and performer from the focused and ‘reduced’ (Chion, 2012, p48–53:50) listening experience more common to free improvisation. But this I would argue, is offset by the added possibilities that this approach to performance provides.

In relation to the audience members, while the free improvisers have focused, for the last fifty years, on questioning and subverting the musical forms, techniques, and meaning of musical performance, they have expected their audience to remain as polite and silent bystanders to the process. As stated initially, I argue that the objective of the improviser to arrive at a unique musical experience, that incorporates all the possible aspects of the performative environment, may remain more elusive while the presentation of the music continues to support a stratified and hierarchical relationship between the musicking partners. The MiS performances effectively demonstrated that it is possible to afford a level of freedom to the audience without adversely affecting the musical process. This results in an interesting bridge between the realms of participatory and presentational music making, as outlined by Thomas Turino (2008). As the performances progressed the audience gained more confidence in exploring the varying acoustics and spatial relationships present within the performances. Like the musicians, some listeners enthusiastically explored the ‘psycho-sonic’ (Improviser 13. LIO performance) nature of the performance; lying on the floor, turning their heads or circling on the spot to highlight the immersive listening experience. One audience member remarked that:

... it was really nice to see how there was this organic, kind of, conversation happening that was generating a topography of sound around the space. ... And it made the music, and the playfulness of the music, really ... characterize the space that it was occupying. (Audience member 10. LIO performance)

The audience appreciated the freedom to self-regulate their relationship to the musical process, modifying their position in the room depending on what interested them. As expressed here:

The option to detach a little by going to the outer edge of the space made it quite relaxing. Equally, there was a choice to enter into the space a little more and in doing so, it felt like I was having a more active influence on the performers. (Audience member 9. LIO performance)

It was initially imagined that audience members, inspired by their new-found freedom to move, would decide to join in musically. This only happened once, however, as it seemed

clear that the shared understanding of what constituted a free improvised performance provided enough of a guideline for all the participants to follow. Therefore, the MiS performances did not involve the disappearance of the roles of audience member and improviser, but rather facilitated the boundaries to be blurred, played with, and mutually subverted. Collectively, everyone seemed to benefit from the more heterarchical dynamic that provided new possibilities for sonic and social engagement. The audience appreciated the more active listening experience, while the improvisers gained an increased appreciation for the contribution made by the listener to the performances. This shared sense of responsibility for the creation and maintenance of the performance process, has subsequently emerged as an important area for further investigation. In the limited space left, I will address some of the wider implications of this spatialized approach to free improvisation, by relating it to deep ecology.

Deep ecology

Deep ecology emerged in the 1970s, through the work of Arne Naess, as a way of combating the ecological destruction resulting from excessive human action and intervention. It emphasizes the intrinsic value of all life forms and environments, separate to any material or monetary value that may be placed on them by interested human parties. Built on a deeply-felt understanding of the interconnectedness of everything and the right for all life to flourish, deep ecology promotes a ‘process of ever-deeper questioning of ourselves, the assumptions of the dominant worldview in our culture, and the meaning and truth of our reality’ (Devall and Sessions, 1985: 8). The dominant worldview referred to emphasizes an anthropocentric, hierarchical, reductionist, and rational mode of thinking and being, which leads to modes of behaviour and action based on the belief that the world is inherently cruel, competitive, and something that can be reduced to ever smaller parts which can be engineered and manipulated by man.

The deep ecologist promotes an alternative, more holistic worldview that does not see man as above or separate to other life. It emphasizes qualities of equality and cooperation, while attempting to balance rational reasoning with intuitive and tacit forms of knowledge and understanding. Only by targeting the underlying assumptions and values, the deep ecologist argues, is it possible to facilitate a sustainable change to the way that humans live and interact with all life on earth. Fritjof Capra expresses this by saying that:

the connection between an ecological perception of the world and corresponding behaviour is not a logical but a *psychological* connection. ... if we have deep ecological awareness, or experience, of being part of the web of life, then we *will* (as opposed to *should*) be inclined to care for all of living nature. (Capra, 1996: 12)

Interest, inside and outside academia, in the connection between ecology and music has greatly increased since the 1970s, and the time of the World Soundscape project (Schafer, 1969; 1977), with an ecological perspective on music seen as particularly useful in highlighting the social and interactive nature of music. Ecological approaches to music have emerged from a variety of musical and musicological fields. These include; Steven Feld's 'Acoustemology' (Novak and Sakakeeny, 2015), 'Acoustic ecology' (Schafer, 1993) and a 'Performance ecosystem' (Di Scipio, 2015, p278–289; Green, 2014, p59–70; Waters, 2007) to name a few. Each approach has appealed to different areas of musical endeavour and have been used to frame a host of composition, improvisation, sound art installation, listening, and virtual AI-instrument experiments and practices. While free improvisation can also be contextualized within an ecological perspective, as pointed out by Marcel Cobussen (2014, p15–29), the expansion of the improviser's practice off the stage and into the performance space, as seen in this study, has facilitated a subtle but profound shift in the dynamics within the performative space. This shift is both intuitively felt and socio-political and is something that, I am willing to admit, I am only beginning to understand. It is for this reason, however, that I have been drawn to deep ecology specifically, as it focuses on the deep-rooted beliefs of the individual that stem from one's life experiences, cultural surroundings and education, which is the same source for an individual's personal connection to music.

As 'the way we see things is affected by what we know or believe' (Berger, 2008: 8), the way we engage with music also corresponds to the set of values and assumptions that makes up our ontological perspective and worldview. This connection is outlined by Small (1998) who suggests that, the specific music that an individual engages in corresponds to a particular view of the world. Moreover, playing and listening to music with others provides us with an opportunity to congregate with like-minded individuals, to affirm, explore, and celebrate our desired version of reality (Small, 1998: 183). I would argue that the version of reality that the musicking partners in the MiS performances bring into existence, reflects the egalitarian, interconnected, and collaborative values of deep ecology. This, therefore, could signal to the deep ecologist that an appropriate means of addressing an individual's deep-rooted belief

structure could be through music. This does not mean that the ecologist should pick up a guitar and write songs, although the social upheaval of the 1960s that saw the emergence of free improvisation also provided us with many musical eco-warriors and troubadours. Instead, I am suggesting that the ecologist should look to musical practices that share their egalitarian and ethical beliefs. From a shared commitment to questioning the basic assumptions and behaviours of our dominant worldview, deep ecology and spatialized free improvisation also entertain similar preferences towards; diversity and adaptability, complexity rather than complication, and a sense of inclusivity and equality that comes from seeing the inseparability of all things. They both aim to construct something sustainable and meaningful through a dialogical and dynamic process that includes, not excludes, dissenters. Seeing idiosyncrasy and difference as positive points for creative departure, rather than as adversities to overcome. The free improviser also joins the deep ecologist in seeing a healthy level of diversity and variety as positive signs of a rich and resilient system or community.

The MiS performances revealed a middle ground between participatory and presentational modes of performance, which respects the separate roles of improviser and listener but within a less hierarchical environment. It provides a forum for divergent and creative excellence, while also cultivating an environment that empowers all the participants by promoting an active and self-directed engagement in the musicking process. By drawing parallels between deep ecology and the MiS performances, I have attempted to show that the subversive, resourceful, and adaptive nature of the spatialized free improviser has implications beyond just the musical. The wider implications of the MiS – free improviser’s skill set is something that, I would argue, begins to resemble the original vision for free improvisation of John Stevens, who said ‘spontaneity between human beings is a way of serving the community’ (Scott, 1987). This also relates to the political dimension to music as emphasized by Fischlin, Heble, and Lipsitz (2013), who see improvisation as being ‘more than an artistic conceit, more than a spontaneous creation of notes by musicians’ (Fischlin et al., 2013: xii). They go on to say that ‘improvisation is the creation and development of new, unexpected, and productive cocreative relations among people’ (2013: xii).

Like any complex self-organizing system, free improvisation exists as a constantly emerging process, where ideas are; shared, tested, developed, and discarded. It is then the responsibility of all the participants to make sense of the experience for themselves, given what is known from previous experience, what is unknown now but just under the surface, and what is

unknowable. Improvisation keeps music pliable and able to adapt: It does the same to the individual. By inviting the audience to engage more fully in the musicking process, the complexity, diversity and vibrancy of the improvising experience was increased. Therefore, the free improviser's primary objective of creating a musical expression, that balances new with old material while avoiding habituated responses, was also made easier with the invitation to move in space.

Conclusion

The Musicians in Space performances made visible the inseparable link between the improviser, the performance space, and the audience. By building on the existing practices of the free improviser and inviting them to explore the performance space, a range of added affordances became available that provided further clarity to the musicking process. At the same time, in allowing the audience the opportunity to shape their own spatial relationship to the listening experience, they enjoyed an increased degree of freedom to actively engage in the musicking process. For these reasons, it is argued that this spatialized approach to performance comes closer to realizing the claims that free improvisation is an all-inclusive and heterarchical musical process. Additionally, it is suggested that the deeply rooted connection that is universally felt towards music can provide a key, for the deep ecologist, to tap into and challenging the set of values and assumptions that can otherwise remain difficult to reach. It is hoped that given favourable conditions, such as room to move, spatialized musicking processes, like Musicians in Space, can be used to establish more inclusive modes of performance. Approaches that not only blur the boundaries between the separate roles of the musicking participants, but also exemplify a sustainable and ethically sound approach to relating to ourselves, to those we collaborate with, and the world around us.

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Researcher biography

David Leahy is a Kent (UK) based musician (double bass) and dancer specializing in free improvisation in music to contact improvisation in dance. He performs regularly, both in the UK and abroad, as a music and dance-based improviser and has been fortunate enough to perform alongside many of the leading names in both disciplines. In 2014, David completed a MA in creative practice at the dance faculty at Trinity Laban, where he continues to work as a dance accompanist.

David has regularly conducted the London Improvisers Orchestra, which he has been a member of since 1999. This has led to opportunities to conduct similar ensembles in the UK, Spain, and Germany. As a composer and collaborator, David continues to work with a range of folk and Irish musicians, choreographers, and theatre companies such as [Fevered Sleep](#).

In 2016, David was awarded a scholarship from the Centre for Research and Education in Arts and Media (CREAM), at the University of Westminster, to complete a practice-based PhD. David is using this opportunity to further his interest in music as an embodied performance practice, drawing on his experiences from across the arts.