African Heart, Eastern Mind:  
The Transcendent Experience Through Improvised Music.

By

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is the result of my own work and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.

I also certify that any material in the thesis which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by any other university or institution is identified in the text.

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Signed. .....................................................................................

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Introduction

Melbourne cartoonist Michael Leunig said about his profession, 'Cartoonists need to be able to advocate for messy humanity.' Similarly, musicians, contrary to all of their training, need also to advocate for a 'messy humanity' because, 'we need the biodiversity of human beings and their approaches, not this overwhelming pressure towards conformity.'

The subject matter of this study and the manner in which this study was pursued represent a 'messy humanity.' This study is an investigation into the way in which a musician experiences moments of transcendence through jazz-based improvisatory practice. What is the transcendent experience? Can a musician enter that experience at will? It what ways does improvisatory practice in music facilitate the transcendent experience and, conversely, in what ways does improvisatory practice work against entering into the transcendent experience? Can the transcendent experience be expressed in words? Can an intellectual understanding of the transcendent experience work positively to effect change in a musician's practice routine?

A study such as this is messy because, arguably, there is no empirical way of 'knowing' the subject matter, that is, transcendent experience. For the purposes of this study, transcendent experience arises through improvised music practice which itself is a messy subject because, in the way improvised music is understood in this study, improvisatory practice cannot be reduced to a recording and subsequent transcription, for to do so changes the essential nature of improvised music. Further, identifying oneself as a
'jazz-based' improviser creates more messy aesthetic problems due to the lack of agreement amongst 'jazz' practitioners and theorists about what constitutes contemporary jazz practice.

There is, however, a natural synergy between the transcendent experience and the process of musical improvisation. The commonalities that these processes share include qualities that may be loosely described as non-linear, chaotic, asymmetrical, spiritual, unknowable and imperfect. These qualities are more usually considered negatively in an age which values clarity and reason above all else. However, when reason and clarity attempt to illuminate these qualities, important, and almost invisible, aspects of our musical nature are revealed.

My research interest, expressed here through a ‘performance – exegesis’ model, has emerged through a process of journey. The journey began long before I commenced my Ph.D. candidature in 1997. The magic of playing, honking, plucking, beating that first sound out of a musical instrument creates for the player an attitude of discovery that is driven by the question, ‘can I do that better?’ without necessarily knowing what ‘better’ is.

For me, my Ph.D. candidature, not withstanding my interest in the transcendent experience, has been a serious attempt to understand the concept of ‘better’ from the perspective of my own evolution as a creative artist, and, a consideration of the implications this study may have in realising a deeper knowledge of improvisational processes. Does ‘better’ mean: more truthful, more expressive, more in-tune, better rhythmic placement, more vibrato – less vibrato, louder or more softly? Perhaps these elements are all tied up within a deeper realm of musicality where ‘better’ equates to discovering a more ‘authentic’ musical self, or to use a common notion in jazz, ‘finding one’s own voice.’

Musician and author Kenny Werner expresses a deeper purpose for the musician; he states:
As musicians/healers, it is our destiny to conduct an inward search, and to
document it with our music so that others may benefit. As they listen to the
music coming through us, they too are inspired to look within. Light is being
transmitted and received from soul to soul. Gradually, the planet moves from
darkness to light. We as musicians must surrender to the ocean while the sludge
of the ego floats on the surface. We let go of our egos and permit the music to
come through us and do its work. We act as the instruments for that work.\(^3\)

As this study progressed, I became aware that certain aspects of musical thinking that
were at the core of my musical practice had become a significant barrier to the ongoing
evolution of my playing, my way of composing, and, more particularly, my way of
creating music through improvisatory processes. I came to realise that my ‘peak
moments’ in musical performance all related to that peculiar state of being that one
sometimes finds oneself within through the act of listening to music. For the moment, I
will simply refer to this state as ‘transcendent experience.’

In the course of this study, an interesting synchronicity of events occurred at the time I
was immersed in the process of making a compact disc with the improvisational group
Zeno’s Wig.\(^4\) I was struggling conceptually with every aspect of recording improvised
music onto compact disc and the way in which we had set about the task. Also, I was
not content with my own ‘flow’ in terms of my phrase construction within my process of
musical improvisation. At the suggestion of my Ph. D. supervisor, I read Friedrich
Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy*. Instantly, Nietzsche’s exposition of the way in which
‘Apollonian and Dionysian forces’ are at work in the manufacture of art contextualised
the tensions I was experiencing within myself and with my relationship to the other
members of the group.

In exploring Nietzsche’s argument, I came to realise that it had strong resemblances to
other material I was examining from authors including Jung, Nachmanovitch, Berendt,
Sudo, Reanney, Herrigel and Hesse amongst others, and, at the core of their writing,
there appeared to be a concern with the transcendent experience I was interested in. However, as I began to examine the way in which other theorists\(^5\) considered Nietzsche’s conception of Apollonian and Dionysian forces, I was struck with a feeling of ‘something lacking.’\(^6\) What was lacking?

As I became more intellectually familiar with the ideas of Nietzsche, Nachmanovitch, Sudo and Herrigel, I began to theorise that, if external forces are at work in the manufacturing of art and that if transcendent experience is somehow connected to a ‘rising above self,’ then my desire to improve as a player was acting against my becoming a ‘better’ more communicative player because the nature of self, as it occurred in my music practice, did not allow for the possibility of external forces taking possession of my playing or any possibility of rising above self. Hence, the research component of this study as it has emerged in the practice room, has been focussed upon finding ways to remove my ‘self’ from the process of practising the saxophone.

From the modified Apollonian-Dionysian model I propose in my exegesis, I have developed a practice regimen which aims to identify and then balance the Apollonian or Dionysian tendencies existing within the player, thus preparing the player for the state which immediately precedes the dispossessment of self. Through a combination of structured exercises and breathing techniques, it has been possible to develop a program that enables a player to practise music, particularly where improvisatory processes are involved, within the transcendent state. I have attempted to integrate this approach into my own practice, recording and performance.

In the ‘Performance’ component of this study, I presented a concert length performance of improvised music that had been informed by, and occurred as a result of, my research process and its impact upon my musical practice through utilising the practice techniques I developed. My aim in this performance was to move closer to the approach of ‘the archer’ Herrigel describes in *Zen in the Art of Archery*. 
...the contest exists in the archer aiming at himself - and yet not at himself, in hitting himself - and yet not himself, and thus becoming simultaneously the aimer and the aim. The hitter and the hit. Or, to use some expressions which are nearest to the heart of the Masters, it is necessary for the archer to become, in spite of himself, an unmoved centre. Then the supreme and ultimate miracle: art becomes 'artless', shooting becomes not-shooting, a shooting without bow and arrow; the teacher becomes a pupil again, the Master a beginner, the end a beginning, and the beginning perfection.7

My aim is to make my own art 'artless.' This concept may appear to be firmly rooted in Zen philosophy, however, in the year 2000, I had the opportunity to hear legendary jazz piano player Joe Zawinul speak in person about his life and philosophy of music. What I understood Zawinul to say was that, when music is 'truthful,' it transcends ownership of the players; it transcends the sounds of the collective of instruments which make the music; it transcends the style of music; it is just music which does not compel the listener to assert his or her own 'political' territory.

Despite my evolving practice technique, the extent to which I may achieve this 'artful-artlessness' in any given performance is unknown, and my desire to engage with the transcendent state more often than not acts as its own barrier to achieving transcendence. From this perspective, I intend that my performance be understood in the Zen sense as a religious ritual in the manner Herrigel equates archery with religious ritual. Herrigel states:

By archery in the traditional sense, which he esteems as an art and honours as a national heritage, the Japanese does not understand a sport but, strange as this may sound at first, a religious ritual. And consequently, by the 'art' of archery he does not mean the ability of a sportsman, which can be controlled more or less, by bodily exercises, but an ability whose origin is to be sought in spiritual exercises and whose aim consists in hitting a spiritual goal, so that fundamentally the marksman aims at himself and may even succeed in hitting himself.8
It may appear from the above quote that my music practice may evolve at a greater rate if I were to just begin a study of Zen Buddhism. This may be true. However, I assume that to become a ‘truthful’ musician, in the manner I intend in this study, supported by a high level of technical ability, it should not be necessary to ‘go outside’ one’s own cultural training. Nietzsche, Deleuze, Jung, Reanney, Nachmanovitch and Sudo illuminate ideas that are comparable to ‘Eastern’ philosophy or embrace Eastern ideas in a way that makes them accessible to the West. My intention in using Nietzsche through the filter of these other writers was to develop a practice program which enables myself and other musicians to attain mastery over an instrument and, as a ‘jazz-based’ improviser, understand mastery not only as a matter of technique but one of developing a unique personal voice.\textsuperscript{9}

In the ‘Exegesis’ component of this study, I have attempted to document my process of reasoning and discovery as it has emerged. To do this, it was necessary for me to theorise a model by which the transcendent experience could be understood and examine my music practice in relation to this model. Issues that emerged regarding methodology and the ‘socio-political economy of music,’\textsuperscript{10} insofar as they have influence in creating the ‘mode of existence’ I propose, are discussed by way of situating my musical practice against the experience I have of transcendence.

In chapter one, entitled \textit{Transcendence}, I attempt to define transcendent experience in the way it is to be understood for the purposes of this study, demonstrating that it is a relatively common experience amongst musicians and listeners, even though there seems to be little discussion about what the actual experience is. Moreover, in situating the importance of the transcendent experience to music, I discuss the significance of the transcendent experience to the evolution of humankind utilising the arguments put forward by Australian author Darryl Reanney,\textsuperscript{11} and, I examine the significance of the transcendent experience in my own music practice in terms of evolving as a creative musician.
In chapter two, entitled Methodology, I attempt to highlight the barriers to knowledge of the transcendent experience that traditional Western musicological practice erects. In doing so, I propose a broader understanding of music which is able to account for the transcendent experience noting that ‘transcendence’ in this context is different to ‘ecstatic’ experience (which is becoming a popular topic of discussion amongst cognitive scientists). Also in this chapter, I document my process of reasoning as it evolved in this study through a more traditional ‘heuristic’ research model, mindful that it was this process of discovery which shaped the ideas I was testing in the practice room, on compact disc recordings I was making, and, most importantly, in live performance.

Chapter three, entitled Contextualisation, examines my goal of transcendent music making as it occurs in relation to factors which have influenced my training as a musical improviser, my relationship to other improvisers within a global ‘field of practitioners,’ relating this to the experience of making music in Melbourne. I attempt to say what my musical practice is, and highlight some of the aesthetic problems arising from calling oneself a ‘jazz-based’ improviser.

In chapter four, entitled Forces, I present the Nietzschean concept of Apollonian and Dionysian ‘forces’ and their role in the manufacture of art. Nietzsche’s model is well known to scholars and art theorists. However, I attempt to interpret Nietzsche through an ‘Eastern’ understanding of ‘polar-complementary relationships’ rather than the more typical binary logic of Western thinking. I examine ways music may be read as ‘Dionysian’ or ‘Apollonian,’ relating these qualities to the dynamic state of the relationship between Dionysus and Apollo.

Chapter five, entitled My Mode of Existence attempts to draw together the various arguments put forward in the preceding chapters into a unified proposition known in Deleuzian terms as a ‘mode of existence.’ I then examine how my experience of transcendence arises within my mode of existence and present a ‘rhizomic’ account of my creative processes leading to the examination performance.
In chapter six, entitled *Musical Processes*, I discuss the way in which my study has circulated back into my practice room via the research process I have undertaken and the practice method I have developed from the Apollonian-Dionysian model. I will examine the extent to which my practice method influenced my performance-examination and ways in which this study may progress in the future.

This study has led me toward embracing a deeper spiritual awareness of my musical practice. A traditional Western mind may be ‘put off’ by the idea of researching anything that has a spiritual dimension because of the perceived difficulty in applying ‘rational’ methodologies to such studies. However, an unpublished paper authored by Robert Woog, Lesley Kuhn-White and Vladimir Dimitrov argues for a spiritually integrated approach to all research because, ‘humans as inherently spiritual beings bring to all their knowing a religious, spiritual or heart direction.’

This study intends to reposition Western musical thinking and practice towards a more ‘human centred’ knowledge of music making and music comprehension for the purposes of embracing the totality of the world’s musical practices into a ‘non-partisan’ democracy of creative thought. In doing so, Nietzsche’s conceptualisation of Apollonian and Dionysian forces may be used as a model in which all music and creative musical processes may be understood.

2 Having said this, I have included a significant number of my recordings of improvised music including a recording of the examination performance itself. In the context of this study I felt it necessary to include these recordings as documentary evidence that a research process occurred in my musical practice as well as in the written form.


4 Zeno’s Wig, Eyes and Instinct. Newmarket NEW3017.2, Melbourne, 1999. (Included as appendix one).

5 Many theorists have considered Nietzsche’s model and its relationship to music and improvised music, Allison 2000, Carvalho 1998, and Edgar 1995 for example. However, I intend to show that Nietzsche’s model may work as a tool for understanding all music and the transcendent experience if some adjustment is made to the way in which the relationship between forces is considered.

6 Nachmanovitch relates the story of the old flute master who continually admonishes his flute student with the expression, ‘something lacking.’ The motivation for the ‘old master’ in using this expression is to allow the student to discover for him or her own self ‘what is lacking.’ Like the flute student, it was my task to find out what was lacking for me in Nietzsche’s exposition of Apollonian and Dionysian forces as they relate to music and the ways in which other writers have interpreted Nietzsche and his relationship to music.


9 Arguably, the notion of developing a personal voice on the one hand and the idea of wilfully attempting to dispossess the self on the other hand are contradictory. However, in the exegesis I attempt to reconcile these two ideas as essentially ‘two sides of the same coin.’

10 The expression 'socio-political economy of music' is used occasionally in this exegesis and refers in all instances to the arguments made by Attali 1989 and Durant 1984 regarding the way in which sound exerts 'political' and 'economic power' and the way in which improvisatory practices 'threaten' dominant power structures.


Chapter One

Transcendence

The Phenomenon of Transcendence

In a tale from jazz folklore¹ a story is told about master saxophonist John Coltrane who, when asked by Julian ‘Cannonball’ Adderley about his playing style, said, ‘Well, I just get into this thing and I don’t know how to stop!’ Amusingly, Miles Davis’ reaction to this comment was simply that Coltrane should ‘Try pulling the goddam horn out of his mouth!’

This story is significant because it suggests there are at least two distinct ways improvisatory music comes into being. Davis’ comment, in this context, may be read as Davis the ‘modernist’ suggesting that ‘the self’ constructs each artistic act, and that each note or musical phrase uttered by a jazz improviser is a direct representation of that player’s ‘will,’ thus defining the ‘self’ of the player. However, Coltrane was alluding to an approach to improvisatory music that is concerned with transcending the ‘self.’ In the ‘transcended state,’ a player is no longer concerned with identifying ‘self’ as the author of an artistic product; rather, ‘forces’ at work outside the ‘self’ control the creation of the music when the player dissolves the concept of ‘I.’²

There is reason to believe that this state of transcendence may be experienced not only by master musicians, such as Coltrane, but also musical ‘lay people,’ that is, people who ‘enjoy’ music but have no theoretical knowledge of the structural foundations³ upon which the music they are listening to has been constructed. The problem here is that people, particularly musicians in the act of playing music, are able to experience a state of being that arises through (but not exclusively from) listening to music. However, the experience of transcendence does not appear to have a way of being commonly verbalised or expressed in a manner which correlates to the experience of a musician.
Co-founder of musical group *The Grateful Dead*, Jerry Garcia, in conversation with Derek Bailey, states:

Sometimes this feels to me as though you don’t have to really think about what’s happening. Things just flow. It’s kind of hard to report on but it’s a real thing. I mean we’ve checked it out with each other and after twenty-five years of exploring these outer limits of musical weirdness this is stuff that we pretty much understand intuitively but we don’t have a language to talk about it.  

As a musician, the experience I have of transcendence manifests itself in two primary ways: firstly, as a physical phenomena where I experience a sense of ‘release’ from my body, and secondly, as a ‘transcendence’ over my technical limitations as a saxophone player including my conceptual and technical limitations as an improvising-composer. In an article I wrote in 1997, (which became a turning point in my own artistic growth) I expressed my sense of the transcendent experience:

Sometimes, when I am improvising, I feel as if I leave my body, able to hear my performance as the audience hears it, external to myself in a type of aural projection. In these moments, all that I can imagine or sonorize is expressed through my saxophone, well executed technically and coherent as musical expression. With little effort from myself, the music manages itself, reveals itself and I am a conduit-spirit medium, a willing participant in an exhilarating interplay of sound-emotion-sensuality. Too often, the moment is brief, I become self-aware and become responsible once again for managing the composition in real time, cajoling the sound to speak from the saxophone, risking bad note choices and the honks and squeaks of an ill tempered saxophone.

Many musicians share this experience at some level. In Philip Sudo’s book *Zen Guitar*, guitarist David Torn is quoted as saying:
I lose myself at some point during almost every musical performance. There’s some point of struggle and super self-consciousness, but I always get lost at some point. While I’m playing, there’s a pattern of struggling through something and then cracking through it by a weird combination of willpower and letting go. That’s the most enjoyable thing for me: “Uh-oh, he’s gone!”

English guitarist John McLaughlin experiences something comparable with Torn, however, McLaughlin attributes the phenomenon of transcendence to spiritual forces outside himself that shape the creative process when he is able to relinquish his own sense of ‘self.’ McLaughlin states:

If I can get out of the way, if I can be selfless enough, and if I can be generous loving and caring enough to abandon what I have and my own preconceived, silly notions of what I think I am-and become truly who in fact I am, which is really just another child of God-then the music can really use me. And therein lies my fulfilment. That’s when the music starts to happen.

It is more usual to associate the study of transcendent experience within the disciplines of psychology or perhaps theology. Carl Jung, for example, wrote extensively on the relationship between the transcendent experience, psychology and Christian symbolism. Musician and author Steven Nachmanovitch in his book Free Play: the Power of Improvisation in Life and the Arts uses a Buddhist concept to illustrate his understanding of the transcendent experience. Nachmanovitch writes:

Buddhists call this state of absorbed, selfless, absolute concentration samadhi. 

Samadhi is best known to be attained through the practice of meditation, though there is also walking samadhi, cooking samadhi, sandcastle-building samadhi, writing samadhi, fighting samadhi, lovemaking samadhi, flute-playing samadhi. When the self-clinging personality somehow drops away, we are both entranced and alert at the same time.
The concept of transcendent experience is also exemplified in Sufism:

...the Sufi, through an act of the will and deliberate deeds, suppressed his individual ego and its concomitant attachments to worldly things and emotions in order to become receptive to the following level of “states” (ahwāl), which were vouchsafed to him through God’s grace. These culminated in the goal of the mystical quest, the final states of bliss, which were identified by Sufis according to their proclivities, as love (mahabba, later ‘ishq), mystical knowledge (ma’rifā), and the total loss of ego consciousness and the concomitant absorption and subsistence in and through God (fana’ and baqa’).

However, I intend to pursue my understanding of transcendence through a different route. Whilst the Jungian and Buddhist conceptions of the transcendent experience are valuable in enabling comprehension of this phenomenon at a deeper level, I seek an explanation that places music-making at the centre of transcendent experience. In doing so, I present a model of musical creativity which embraces the diversity of music-making practices and places the transcendent experience as the goal of music-making for both the musician and the listener.

Defining Transcendence

In defining transcendent experience, Robert M. Adams writing in the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* includes, ‘the property of rising out of or above other things.’ What is ‘risen out of’ in this context? David Torn, in the previous quotation, articulates the struggle in overcoming ‘self’ where self-consciousness is perceived by Torn to be a barrier to transcendent experience. McLaughlin speaks of ‘selflessness’ and ‘getting out of the way’ of the music, suggesting that, for McLaughlin, music originates at a source outside himself. This is not an uncommon sentiment. The idea that music can originate outside the human creator and the notion that ‘musical flow’ is musical experience
outside the ‘self’ appears to be commonplace outside traditional Western musicology. Nachmanovitch elaborates:

Spiritual traditions the world over are full of references to this mysterious juice: *ch’i* in China and *ki* in Japan (embodying the great Tao in each individual); *kundalini* and *prana* in India; *mana* in Polynesia; *orendé* and *manitu* among the Iroquois and Algonquins; *axé* among the Afro-Brazilian *condomblé* cults; *baraka* among the Sufis in the middle East; *élan vital* on the streets of Paris. The common theme is that the person is a vessel or conduit through which a transpersonal force flows. That force can be enhanced through practice and discipline of various sorts; it can become blocked or bottled up through neglect, poor practice, or fear; it can be used for good or evil; it flows through us, yet we do not own it.\(^{12}\)

For the purposes of this study, transcendence will simply be read as a ‘rising out of self’ or, as in the case above, ‘getting the ‘self’ out of the way.’ That is, the experience of transcendence is to either ‘will’ or allow a process of ‘self-disintegration’ to occur for the purposes of engaging with the physical experience of transcendence or, as McLaughlin implies,\(^{13}\) with forces existing outside ourselves.

Presumably, transcendent experience is a highly subjective phenomenon, however David B. Allison suggests that there is a commonality of transcendent experiences that include:

Experiences associated with sensations of flying, weightlessness, floating, rising up and so on – as well as “contact words” – that is, experiences that include claims of union, presence, mingling, identification with totality, god, nature, spirits, peace, timelessness, perfection, eternity, knowledge, and bliss. Such feelings include a loss of self, of time, of place, and of limitation and language. One likewise feels a gain of eternity, a feeling of release, a new life, another world, joy, satisfaction, salvation, perfection, mystical knowledge, and enhanced mental capacity.\(^{14}\)
Similarly, Stanislav Grof has categorised various types of transcendent experience that he refers to as the ‘Basic Perinatal Matrices.’ With regard to Grof’s catalogue of transcendent experience, the matrix which comes closest to that which I have pursued in this study is best defined by the category Grof refers to as the ‘First Perinatal Matrix (BPM 1). The Amniotic Universe.’ Grof argues:

The basic characteristics of this experience are transcendence of the subject-object dichotomy, strong positive affect (peace, serenity, tranquillity, and oceanic ecstasy), feelings of sacredness, transcendence of space and time, and richness of insights of cosmic relevance.\(^{15}\)

Both Grof and Allison contend that there are multiple ‘causative or inducing triggers’\(^{16}\) capable of producing transcendent ways of being. In this exegesis, the exploration of ‘causative triggers’ will be confined to those that are directly related to the process of making improvised music.

The Significance of Transcendent Experience.

The transcendent experience bears witness to something unique about humans, something that identifies us as being different from other primate species. What this difference is and what it means precisely is yet to be discovered from an empirical perspective. However, the ability of humans to overcome our sense of self seems highly significant not only for psychological and religious reasons but for reasons regarding the evolution of the human species where the transcendent experience may be viewed as 'the key' which is capable of 'unlocking' human patterning behaviour. Biologist Darryl Reanney hypothesises that:

The basic nature of the ego-self shows up in the way it is constructed within each individual brain. The ego-self is an expression of the learned layers of memory stored in the cortex but-and here is the crucial point-*the ego-self remains*
inextricably locked into the survival software permanently written into the genes. The genes of every human being create in the physical brain a robot, the limbic/reptilian complex which houses the survival instincts. This robot is the same in all of us. Blindly, it pegs each emerging layer of the ego-self to the ancient feedback loop of self-preservation. The process is one-way. Once an experience has been added to memory, it becomes part of the ego-self, to be conserved along with everything that went before.\textsuperscript{17}

If Reanney is correct, then the phenomenon of transcendence has at least two possible meanings. The first is, that we are able to ‘rise above’ or go beyond the safe, protective barriers of our genetic coding and that to do so evolves our species physically, psychologically and spiritually. The second meaning, the less palatable, is that we merely delude ourselves into believing that we can surpass our ‘programming’ and that transcendence is illusory, perhaps a bio-chemical ‘trick’ of the brain masking a greater truth; that life is essentially meaningless.\textsuperscript{18} For the purposes of this exegesis, let us consider transcendence as an essential condition of ‘human becoming’ in the sense that Reanney suggests:

We speak of ourselves as ‘human beings’ despite the image that the word ‘being’ conjures up—a fixed thing, a stable state. Yet we live in and are part of a universe that is endlessly fecund, inventive, ever changing, ever transforming itself. It would surely be better if we abandoned the term ‘human being’ and replaced it with ‘human becoming.’\textsuperscript{19}

My desire to research the phenomena of transcendence as it experienced by the musician is driven, in part, by my aspiration to become a better and more communicative musician, believing that the transcendent experience is a real and significant phenomenon. However, prior to this study, my contact with the transcendent experience was contextualised by an argument William Day puts forward where Day draws together Stanley Cavell’s notion of ‘moral perfectionism’ and jazz improvisation. Day argues:
Moral perfectionism is best characterised not as a set of moral axioms or principles, as though it stood in competition with the dominant theories of morality (Utilitarianism and Kantianism), but as a kind of thinking that begins after or beyond such theories. It is a thinking whose distinguishing features are a commitment to speaking and acting true to oneself, combined with a thoroughgoing dissatisfaction with oneself as one now stands.\textsuperscript{20}

Day’s comment ‘speaking and acting true to oneself’ may be likened to the notion in jazz improvisation of finding ‘one’s own voice’. Derek Bailey embellishes this idea: ‘Improvisers in all fields often speak of “my music”. It is not a claim of ownership but a complete personal identification with the music they play.’\textsuperscript{21} However, if the music created by a musician is motivated, as Day suggests, through ‘self-loathing’ and there is, as Bailey suggests, ‘a complete identification with the music they play,’ then, the musician experiences the music he or she plays in an intensely negative frame of mind. Arguably, the musician under these circumstances neutralises the pain of self-loathing through adopting a work ethic that involves intense amounts of time ‘wood-shedding’ (music practice) for the purposes of feeling less hostile toward him-herself.

The transcendent experience arising through music appears to offer the possibility that mastery of an instrument and mastery over ‘one’s own voice’ may be experienced as a positive psychological and spiritual pursuit in comparison with Day’s conception of the artist who is motivated by a ‘thoroughgoing dissatisfaction with oneself as one now stands.’ The positive nature of the transcendent experience may be observed in Suzuki’s discussion of the mindset of the Japanese artist. Suzuki writes:

The chief concern of the Japanese artist is to stand on an intimate relationship with this Life, this Spirit. Even when he has mastered all the technique necessary for the profession, he will not stop there, for he still finds himself wanting; he is still under the bondage of the technical restrictions and traditionalism; his creative genius he feels somehow clamped; he fails to give it the freest possible expressions. He has spent so many years to [quality] himself
as a worthy heir to his profession, laden with a line of brilliant masters, but his
works are short of his ideals, they are not precipitating with Life, that is to say,
he is not satisfied with himself-he is not a creator, but an imitator.
When the Japanese artist reaches this stage, he frequently knocks at the gate of a
Zen master. He asks the latter to lead him to the inner sanctuary of Zen. When
Zen is understood, the spirit takes varied form for its expression: the painter
expresses it in paintings, the sculptor in sculptures, the Noh-dancer in dancing,
the tea-master in the tea-cult, the gardener in gardening, and so on.²²

The significance of this study to my own art making practice is that through the
discovery, identification and understanding of the contextual boundaries that mediate
and disseminate my art making process, and an understanding of the phenomena of
transcendence, I surmise that I will have greater access to the transcended state, and the
force of ch’i, that Nachmanovitch speaks of will have a greater flow through me. My
goal of becoming a ‘better’ musician and a ‘better’ teacher of music will be realised
when I can establish which elements keep me from realising a deeper state of
musicianship. I expect that whatever I uncover for myself will have significance for
other musicians and I expect also that whatever I uncover in this study will be significant
in theorising Western music and understanding how music is comprehended by humans.
Adopting the image of Suzuki, in this study I am now ‘knocking on the door’ of the Zen
Master.
This story is recounted by John Voysey in his notes accompanying John Coltrane’s CD entitled *Transcendence* (SUMCD 4166).

The concepts of ‘I’ and ‘self’ arise frequently in this exegesis. For the purposes of this exegesis, ‘I’ and ‘self’ are intended in the manner Zen master D.T. Suzuki describes. Suzuki explains:

> When we talk about self it is generally confused with relative self, which is to be distinguished from the Absolute Self. When this distinction is not clearly made we are apt to talk about the individual, empirical, psychological self as the divine nature of Absolute Self. When we say “I am,” this “I” is generally considered to originate from the relative “I.” But the relative “I” cannot stand by itself; it must have something *behind* it which makes “I” possible, which makes this “I” really “I” in the deepest possible sense. If there is no real Absolute Self behind this relative, psychological “I,” this psychological “I” will never achieve its I-ness. The relative “I” assumes something of the real “I” because it has at its back the real “I.” When the absolute “I” is taken away no relative “I” exists. But in our ordinary way of thinking this relative “I” is separated from “Absolute I,” and we take this separated “I” as something absolute – something independent, something that can stand on its own right. When this notion is adhered to we have what we call egotism, the ego-centred notion which ordinarily governs our consciousness.


There is an argument suggesting that ‘meaning’ in music arises from a listener’s essentially ‘innate’ understanding of the structural foundation of the music he or she is listening to. For example, see, F. Lerdahl and R. Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*. MIT Press: Cambridge, 1983. Although this proposition is persuasive amongst cognitive scientists, in his article, *Perception: A Perspective from Music Theory*, Nicolas Cook argues against Lerdahl and Jackendoff on the grounds that ‘cognitive psychology and music theory are two disciplines with essentially different and mutually incompatible aims.’ (See Aiello’s introduction to Cook’s article in R. Aiello ed., *Musical Perceptions*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1993, p.65.


Sudo, p. 77.


12 Nachmanovitch, pp. 32-33.

13 Sudo, p. 77

Allison makes no distinction between 'transcendent' and 'ecstatic' experience. There is, for the purposes of this study, a significant difference that will be discussed in Chapter Five.


16 Allison, p. 67


18 The notion that 'life is meaningless' will be discussed in a later chapter with regard to Nietzsche's discussion of 'the wisdom of Silenus.'

19 Reanney, dedication page.


21 Bailey, p. 11.

22 Suzuki, p. 58.
Chapter Two

Methodology

The previous chapter introduced the central concern of this study, namely, the physical and spiritual experience of ‘transcendence’ as it occurs in my improvised music performance making. When I began this study, this focus had not made itself known to me at a conscious level. Subsequently, this exegesis has become a personal journey in which I have attempted to map my own aesthetic location within a theoretical construct I felt necessary to build because of the difficulty more traditional models of musical thinking encounter when dealing with improvised music.

In creating a method of investigation capable of addressing the central concerns of my music, I felt that it was necessary to begin with no particular methodology in mind trusting that a way forward would emerge through applying a thinking process to the problem at hand. I am reminded of Carl Jung who said about his early research into dreams, ‘I resolved for the present not to bring any theoretical premises to bear upon them, but to wait and see what they would look like of their own accord.’

The Way Forward

Clark Moustakas in his book *Phenomenological Research Methods* allows for this process of rumination and uncertainty. Categorized by Moustakas as ‘Heuristic Research’ Moustakas writes:

Heuristic inquiry is a process that begins with a question or problem which the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer. The question is one that has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand one’s self and the
world in which one lives. The heuristic process is autobiographic, yet with virtually every question that matters there is also a social-and perhaps universal-significance.

Moustakas suggests that there are six ‘phases’ in following a Heuristic research method. They are: the initial engagement, immersion into the topic and question, incubation, illumination, explication, and culmination of the research into a creative synthesis. I intend to use these headings for the purposes of organising my ‘evolving process’ into a workable form and to clarify the way in which my study proceeded.

Initial Engagement

For the purposes of entering Ph. D. study it was necessary to have a thesis title. My provisional thesis title was, ‘An Examination of Creativity in Musical Composition.’ There was no particular forethought about how my study should be titled, except that, I presumed, it would hold within it my intuition about that which was necessary for me to discover.

In my original proposal, I made the assumption that musical improvisation was essentially a behavioral characteristic of human creativity, and as such could be replicated through the use of ‘computational modeling.’ My intention was simply to program computer software to ‘think like a jazz musician’ or more specifically, ‘me.’ I intended to transcribe and analyse a substantive portion of my own recorded solo improvisations and then make conclusions about the note choices and rhythmic structures I was likely to make in solo performance. I would then program my ‘likely musical outcomes’ into ‘generative behavioral patterns’ that, I assumed, would mirror my own creative process. Therefore, I would be able to discover something about my own creative nature.
It was becoming difficult to continue the study in this manner. Aspects of this approach did not ‘feel’ right. I was mindful of the criticism of Derek Bailey and others stating that transcription misrepresented improvised music.\(^5\) Further, my proposed method of investigation could not take into consideration the improviser’s actual sound and the reflexive effect of the improviser’s sound operating within a particular acoustic environment with a particular audience in shaping all aspects of the performance.

Immersion into the topic

My original research proposal stated the following goal:

\[
\text{To examine the process of creativity in musical composition by designing computer software capable of modeling the compositional process, thereby creating a machine that mirrors the musical intelligence of the programmer.}
\]

If ‘language is the house of Being,’\(^6\) then I felt obliged to look at the language I had used to construct this proposal and in doing so arrive at a beginning. The keywords of my proposal at this stage were: examine, process, creativity, musical composition and musical intelligence. The key concepts were: process of creativity, computational modeling as a tool to self-knowledge. Interestingly, I had not included any reference to improvised music despite my earlier claim that I had always intended the improvisation process to be at the center of this study.

As a way of coming to understand the content of my proposal, I started by identifying the actual or useful meanings of the words I had used to construct this proposal. At this point, I did no more than map the key words and concepts, substituting other words that led to associate concepts. My intention was simply to expand the meaning of my
proposal. For example, substituting the word ‘process’ with a dictionary definition defining ‘process’ as a ‘method of doing’ led to, *To examine the - method of doing - musical composition*. I had also used the word ‘creativity’ in the proposal. Creativity was defined as ‘cause to come into existence.’ My transformed sentence became: *to examine the - cause to come into existence - music composition*. But what then was my motive for causing something into existence? Or in context, *what is my motive for bringing into existence - music composition?* It would seem that my proposal had two interrelated questions: What is my method of composing music? What is my motive for composing music?

In stating my intentions toward this study, I began with the words, *to examine*. This felt too passive. I preferred *to interrogate* or *to discover*. In reconstructing my proposal, I arrived at: *To interrogate my method of bringing into existence the organisation of sound and to discover my motive for bringing into existence the organisation of sound.*

Of these two questions, the second question, regarding my motive for my arts practice, seemed to be more important. However, at this stage, I was not able to deal directly with either of these questions. I still had the feeling that there was a significant barrier to my understanding of these issues that could only be addressed when I would be able to articulate the source of my uneasiness.

Incubation

In 1997 I had an article published entitled; *Pushing the Buttons: A Personal Account of Expression and Technology.*

At the time of writing this article, something within me was trying to breakthrough. I noticed that I had stated in the conclusion of this article that I was ‘angry’ with the
‘rationalists’ for putting only ‘one side of the story,’ and that the ‘feeling, sensing, intuitive aspects of ourselves’ were also valuable and needed acknowledgement. I came to realise, only after the article was published and reading it in print, that I was angry with myself for restraining the ‘intuitive’ aspect of my nature in the pursuit of my art-form.

In the article, I stated that I felt that I had developed ‘parallel creative processes’ and yet ‘my expression should somehow be unified’. What I came to understand was that my interest in computer-generated music and digital aesthetics was increasingly leading me away from where I felt my ‘center of self’ was, and it was becoming easier to manufacture art works where the machines did the work of composing and playing the music. I could compose and observe the work at arm’s length without feeling any emotional attachment for the music. This process of composition was becoming less satisfying for me at an artistic level. I identified with the character Harry Heller from Herman Hesse’s novel Steppenwolf who believes he has two distinct natures, one man and one wolf, and that these natures are incompatible. Hesse writes:

In the case of Harry, however, it was different. In him the man and the wolf did not go the same way together, they did not help each other, but were in continual and deadly enmity. The one existed simply and solely to harm the other, and when there are two in one blood and in one soul who are at deadly enmity, then life fares ill. Well, to each his lot, and none is light.⁸

Coincidentally, I had been working on a compact disc entitled Eyes and Instinct⁹ with the improvisational group ‘Zeno’s Wig.’ I felt at the time we were recording and editing this compact disc that there was much unresolved tension within myself. With all this technology at our disposal how much should we edit, how much should we ‘sweeten’ our music? If we are an ‘improvisational group’ is it dishonest to cut out the ‘rough
bits?’ Is it that we as a group, or myself individually, do not have enough artistic
courage to release the compact disc ‘warts and all?’ Were we making a commodity for
the sake of self-promotion that should be as ‘perfect’ as possible? Again, there appeared
to be a duality of choice: become more ‘machine-like’ or stay human centered.

With regard to Moustakas’ notion of ‘incubation,’ many ideas and feelings were
incubating within myself; something was ready to emerge within me and whatever this
was, it would become central to this study.

Illumination

In discussing my situation with my supervisor, at his suggestion I read Frederick
Nietzsche’s ‘Birth of Tragedy’. In reading Birth of Tragedy, I experienced my ‘eureka’
moment. Nietzsche’s revelation of Apollonian and Dionysian ‘forces’ (this concept will
be extensively dealt with in Chapter Four) and the subsequent influence of these forces
on the way in which we understand the world, strongly identified with the experience I
was having of sensing a dual nature within myself. Nietzsche’s model made sense as a
way of understanding the creation and apprehension of art and, more particularly,
improvisatory practices in music.

I was open to Nietzsche’s ostensibly dualistic paradigm through reading the novels of
Herman Hesse. Again, to quote Hesse’s character Harry from Steppenwolf, Harry
encapsulates the divisive feelings I was experiencing as a musician working inside the
academy:

From a dance-hall there met me as I passed by the strains of lively jazz music,
hot and raw as the steam of raw flesh. I stopped a moment. This kind of music,
much as I detest it, had always had a secret charm for me. Jazz was repugnant to
me, and yet ten times preferable to all the academic music of the day. For me too, its raw and savage gaiety reached an underworld of instinct and breathed a simple honest sensuality.

I stood for a moment on the scent, smelling this shrill and blood-raw music, sniffing the atmosphere of the hall angrily, and hankering after it a little too. One half of this music, the melody was all pomade and sugar and sentimentality. The other half was savage, temperamental and vigorous. Yet the two went artlessly well together and made a whole. It was the music of decline. There must have been such music in Rome under the late emperors. Compared with Bach and Mozart and real music it was, naturally, a miserable affair; but so was all our art, all our thought, all our makeshift culture in comparison with real culture. And this music had the merit of great sincerity. Amiably and unblushingly Negroid, it had the mood of childlike happiness. There was something of the Negro in it, something of the American, who with all his strength seems so boyishly fresh and childlike to us Europeans. Was Europe to become the same? Was it on the way already? Were we, the old connoisseurs, the reverers of Europe as it used to be, of genuine music and poetry as once they were, nothing but a pig-headed minority of complicated neurotics who would be forgotten or derided tomorrow? Was all that we called culture, spirit, soul, all that we called beautiful and sacred, nothing but a ghost long dead, which only a few fools like us still took for true and living? Had it perhaps indeed never been true and living? Had all that we poor fools bothered our heads about never been anything but a phantom?10

Through Nietzsche and Hesse, I was becoming consciously aware that my own creative processes had at least two distinct paths. One path was concerned with the use of computers both in terms of the creation and the realisation of music, where I had absolute control over every aspect of the music production. The second path concerned my relationship to the saxophone, particularly the music we make together as an aural
expression of my own physicality and my ability to realise a musical gesture through the instrument, and placing this within the context of improvised music where I have had some of my ‘peak’ musical experiences.

Nietzsche had provided a way forward in understanding the feeling I had of artistic duality and reconciling the two poles. Moreover, Nietzsche’s initial conceptualisaton of Apollonian and Dionysian forces provided an intellectual framework by which it was possible for me to contextualise my own artistic practice in terms of understanding the way in which I function as an artist within the academy.

Explication

Early in my study I had identified two primary questions that this whole study would be founded upon, namely: To interrogate my method of bringing into existence the organisation of sound and To discover my motive for bringing into existence the organisation of sound. I had identified the notion of ‘motive’ as being the more important of the two questions. These two questions reduce simply into, ‘Why do I play the saxophone in the way I do?’

When I asked this question of myself, I noticed that I had already attempted to answer this question in my aforementioned published article. Within this piece of writing, I had stated that my pleasure in playing music centered around the experience I had of ‘transcendence’ where I felt as if I became free of my body, able to observe myself and that my playing seemed to construct itself. Although I had written about this, it had not occurred to me until I read the article in print that this is my motive for playing; to encounter the outer-body transcendent experience in performance, to feel the resonance and the intensity of my saxophone through my body when I play, to become fused with something I perceived to be outside myself in what may be some type of ‘spiritual’
experience, and occasionally to share this experience with the other musicians I perform with. All my training as a musician both facilitated this possibility but also militated against releasing ‘the self’ into the music.

Thus, my study now had a focus: to discover the nature of transcendent experience as it occurs in my arts practice (musical improvisation on the saxophone) and articulate this experience in a written form using an essentially Nietzschean framework arising from Nietzsche’s primary conception of Apollonian and Dionysian forces as they influence my arts practice and the way these forces account for the social, political and economic milieu my art occurs within. Then, from the findings, develop ways of practising and performing music which access the transcendent experience via the most direct route.

- I begin by studying Nietzsche’s ‘Birth of Tragedy’ and coming to understand Nietzsche’s intention in identifying Apollonian and Dionysian forces and what these forces actually are.

- I examine ways in which music may be understood in terms of Apollonian and Dionysian forces.

- I investigate other writers who have used Nietzsche’s model to broaden my own understanding of the topic.

- I investigate any relevant parallels which may help to contextualise my work within the Apollo-Dionysus framework.

- I attempt to define the phenomena of transcendent experience through the Apollo Dionysus paradigm.
• I draw conclusions about my work based upon the study and check these conclusions against my own experience.

• I use my study to influence the way I conduct my personal practice on the saxophone

• I perform my examination concert having internalized, as far as possible, my musical practice based on my findings.

Culmination

When I commenced my research, these intentions were not clear, but I believe they existed in an intuitive form needing a language to be expressed in. Through the process of developing a methodology for this study, they became articulate. This study presented a personal challenge to me insofar as I feel that there are forces and issues in the way that music has been traditionally theorised that block the self from engaging with the transcendent experience.

These contextual and historical forces relate to the way in which the field of musicology has come to understand music, the implication this has for a commonly understood definition of music and the problems created by musicology's emphasis on analysing notated music even in improvised music. In order to contextualise this study, it is necessary to examine these problems and the ways in which my methodological approach attempts to address them.
Problems Arising From Traditional Musicology

My interest in this study was at all times going to be focused upon the process of making improvised music as this is essential to my own arts practice. However, because the improvisatory practice of jazz is relatively new to the academy, it has been the subject of a good deal of hostility directed towards its inclusion into the academy as a legitimate study of music. As an example of this hostility, French composer Pierre Boulez has stated:

These improvisations are nothing more than pure, sometimes bizarre, samplings of sound that are not all integrated into the directives of a composition. This results in constant arousal and appeasement, something I find intolerable... The dialectic of form takes precedence over the possible; everybody arouses everybody else; it becomes a kind of public onanism.\textsuperscript{11}

Theodore Adorno is equally unimpressed with improvised music particularly jazz which Adorno claims is, ‘a compromise between aesthetic sublimation and social acceptance, a “mechanically and ritually subdued” symbol of castration anxiety.’\textsuperscript{12} Boulez regales improvised music to essentially "penis music." Adorno admonishes jazz as the opposite, in essence "absence of penis music." In both cases, the author’s sexualisation of jazz and improvised music is intended as a vilification.

From a methodological perspective, introducing the practice of improvisation to a study of music is problematic for many reasons. This is because the nature of improvisatory music, its function and dissemination within a Western culture is, in many ways, antithetical to our ‘knowing’ of Western ‘art music.’ Alan Durant argues:
Perhaps more than any other aspect of music-making today, improvisation questions dominant directions of musical change, fully across what are often conceived as discrete, separate forms: classical, jazz, folk and pop. As a procedure, it raises fundamental issues by putting continuously into question -moment by moment, within the activity of music making itself - the process of deciding what to play and how to organise or shape musical events or performances. As a social practice, through its challenge to the production and distribution of music in commodified forms, it questions how relationships of music-making are to be represented: economically, legally and aesthetically. These are genuinely fundamental concerns for the whole formation of music, since these aspects of procedure and practice, rather than matters of form alone, make up the basic parameters of what 'music' is.\(^{13}\)

Traditional music enquiry depends to a large extent on notation and 'step-time' control processes.\(^{14}\) Notation and step-time are structuralising tools and strongly favor the analysis of notated music. The theorist may ask, 'How is this piece put together? What are the composer's intentions? What does this reveal about the human creative process? What does that illustrate about the human brain?' These are useful questions. However, the danger with exclusively adopting this approach to examining musical problems is that the aural experience of music may be ignored in preference to the analysis of 'music' as it appears written on the printed page. Arguably, musicology may in this case be regarded as the study of the visual surrogate of aurally experienced music.

Ironically, in improvised music, jazz musicians in particular have utilised the process of transcribing improvised solos as a means of visually representing music with which the musician seeks to become more familiar as a method of developing their own musicianship. This presents an interesting problem. On the one hand, jazz musicians are transcribing solos for musicological reasons and for reasons of establishing 'legitimacy'
within the academy.\textsuperscript{15} On the other hand, jazz musicians argue that transcription invalidates the ‘real-time’ aspect of improvised performance. English guitarist and theoretician Derek Bailey contends that, ‘improvisation has no existence outside its practice.’\textsuperscript{16} If this is true, then it renders improvisatory practice beyond the scope of traditional musicological inquiry because it is not possible to capture the improvisation for the purposes of examining its contents. Bailey continues:

For the description - or evaluation - of improvisation, formal technical analysis is useless. Firstly, it is not possible to transcribe improvisation. There have been some attempts; usually of jazz solos, or organ improvisations, and sometimes of ethnic music. Invariably the transcription is into ‘standard’ musical notation, a system that concerns itself almost exclusively with representing pitch and rhythm within certain conventions. However, most improvisation has scant regard for the niceties of the tempered scale, or for exactly uniform divisions of the ‘bar’ or beat. But the real indictment of transcription is that in most cases it is used to reduce a performance music to a condition in which it can be examined as if it were a composition. When the object of examination is improvisation, transcription whatever its accuracy, serves only as a misrepresentation.\textsuperscript{17}

Improvisation is a musical process through which I choose to express myself artistically, and sometimes, through the improvisational process, I am able to achieve a transcendent state. Although my training has been to a large extent through the African-American language of Jazz, I do not rule out the possibility, and welcome the fact, that anything may happen in the moment of performance, and the notion of ‘risk’ maintains a central role in the formation of the music. For me, the process of musical improvisation is best served in front of an audience because I am able to maintain a real-time focus in my playing whereas, when I am not playing in front of an audience and I improvise, I tend to repeat phrases if they don’t work the first time, I go back over the material and I am
less committed to the real time aspect of the playing. The qualities of improvisation I intend to embrace for the examination performance are ‘site specific,’ ‘risk,’ and ‘real time.’ Hence, for the purposes of this study, I conceive of improvisation as ‘site specific, real time, music risk management.’

The Problem of Defining Music

We are instructed that music is ‘an art form consisting of sounds organised melodically, harmonically, and rhythmically.’¹⁸ This definition is intended to state as simply as possible what music is and, arguably, this is a common understanding of music in Western culture. However, the problem with this definition of music is that where ‘the meaning of a thing is relative to the consciousness that engages it’¹⁹ we are not made aware of what type of musical thinking creates and is nurtured by this definition.²⁰

The deficiency in this definition of music arises not because it does not acknowledge music practice where music is understood without attention to melody, harmony and rhythm, rather, that music, in this way of thinking, can only be understood through its formal construction. Steven Holtzman in *Digital Mantras* argues for this idea:

> All music can similarly be viewed as a formal abstract system. Even music that may seem like noise or that is based on randomness and chance must have an underlying system. To the extent that music is a form of communication between composer and listener, it must have a shared set of rules that makes communication possible.²¹

Holtzman’s proposition strongly implies an uncompromisingly rational foundation for the construction and comprehension of ‘all music’. Further implied is Holtzman’s belief that the underlying logic of the ‘formal abstract system’ could be comprehended and

25
expressed through written language. It is interesting to compare Holtzman's conceptualization of music with Suzuki's discussion of asymmetry in art. Suzuki writes:

An asymmetrical treatment of a subject is characteristically Zen as well as Japanese. One often comes across a square of circle cut off at one corner, a teacup quite disfigured, a dinner tray covered with dishes of varied shape, or a room with ceilings of different designs and with windows of various sizes and shapes cut into the walls...Asymmetry may be considered an imperfection, but in my view this is not true. A broken line is just as artistically perfect as a straight line or a curve. It all depends on where one would fix a standard. A broken line or irregular curve is perfect in its very "imperfection." 22

Can Holtzman's formalist proposition embrace irrationality, non-linearity and asymmetry in music? If not, then it is of little interest to the improvising musician. The qualities of irrationality, non-linearity and asymmetry are arguably regarded by music theorists in the negative as perhaps the result of poor technique or understanding. In claiming these qualities as essential to the improvisatory process the 'claimant' may be falsely accused of anti-technique or anti-quality activity. Hence, where music is defined only through structural clarity and cohesion, the culture that propagates this idea does so for the purpose of legitimising the music in question within the academy. Theorist Susan Mc Clary writes:

From the time of the ancient Greeks, music theory has hovered indecisively between defining music as belonging with the sciences and mathematics or with the arts. Its use in communal rituals and its affective qualities would seem to place it among the products of human culture, yet the ability of mathematics to account for at least some of its raw materials (tones, intervals, etc.) has
encouraged theorists repeatedly to ignore or even deny the social foundations of music. The tendency to deal with music by means of acoustics, mathematics, or mechanistic models preserves its mystery (accessible to only a trained priesthood), lends it a higher prestige in a culture that values quantifiable knowledge of mere expression, and conceals the ideological basis of its conventions and repertories.23

Music that is created in ‘real time,’ where the composer and performer are the same person, music which is heard for a relatively brief time once only and then never again, music arising from gesture without reference to sequencing or pattern structure, is highly problematic when understood through a structuralist model. American composer Scott Johnson clearly states the position music finds itself in:

Music has both an inside and an outside. Its internal concepts and terminology are necessary for understanding and describing the music itself, but they are not sufficient for explaining the transactions it makes with the surrounding world - transactions involving education, economics, class, stylistic tribalism, audience demographics, and serendipitous inspiration from unexpected sources, whether romantic landscapes or modern math. Conversely, ideas imported from the philosophy of science are not going to be much use in understanding any individual piece of music, much less enjoying it emotionally.24

For the purposes of this study, an unequivocal definition of music can neither be made or assumed, however, it is essential to this study that the reader acknowledge something of music’s ‘otherness,’ that is, ‘music as a social practice,’25 and that music does have a sensual dimension arising from music experienced through the human body. David Rosenboom through his concept of ‘Propositional Music’ suggests a very useful way of
understanding music that is inclusive of the diversity of music practice without specifically defining what music is. Rosenboom writes:

The potential of music to combine abstraction with feeling, along with its dependence on the physics of tone (vibration) and time, make it an ideal discipline within which to explore the essential qualities of human knowledge. Music may balance the cerebral and visceral in any conceivable mixture. Music accepts all and is devoid of any assumed mind-body differentiation. It can be used to investigate perception, to represent philosophical systems and embody models of nature. It can be thought of as a model building discipline as well as a medium of expression. As long as we do not succumb to the pressures of conformists to adopt an a priori definition of music, it remains open and unadulterated.26

Mc Clary, Johnson and Rosenboom are essentially arguing for a way of theorising music that arises from a holistic perspective in which music is known as an expression of the whole of a culture rather than only the projection of a formal concept of beauty. In developing an appropriate methodological basis for the enquiry into improvisatory practice, it is necessary to preserve the 'real-time' nature of the improvisatory process and consider the various social and political issues arising through the improvisatory process as 'related to' improvisatory music, not the 'key drivers' of the improvisatory process.


3 Moustakas, p.18.

4 I have had in the past some recognition of my work in this area. In 1988 I won the 'B.P. Quiet Achiever Award' for my work in artificial intelligence and music.

5 'Any attempt to describe improvisation must be, in some respects, a misrepresentation, for there is something central to the spirit of voluntary improvisation which is opposed to the aims and contradicts the idea of documentation'


10 Hesse, pp. 46-47.


14 These concepts will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

15 See the arguments proposed by Attali, 1989 and Durant 1984.

16 Bailey, p. x, introduction.

17 Bailey, p.15.


20 This idea will be discussed in Chapter Four.


Chapter Three

Contextualising My Music Practice

In the previous chapter, I summarised the way in which this study has proceeded and the various methodological issues associated with this journey. In this chapter, I intend the reader to come to an understanding of key influences that have shaped the way in which I play music and my relationship to other practitioners of improvised music. The notion of transcendent experience should be read as the goal of my music making process. However, the aesthetic parameters of improvised music established by the ‘field of practitioners’ as normative, facilitate my engagement with the transcendent experience.

The notion of contextualising one’s artistic practice, when that practice is driven by process rather than outcome, as in improvised music, poses some interesting problems with regard to the nature of subjectivity and the artist. This problem will be briefly discussed in this chapter as a way of further identifying the importance of the creative process and ‘the moment’ in improvised music as distinct from the ‘musical work’ arising from ‘step-time’ compositional processes.

Contextualisation

In situating my musical practice I am obliged to ask myself the question, ‘how do I define my own musical practice?’ This question is challenging as it implies, amongst other things, that there may be for any artist, a singular, stand-alone representation or ‘semiotic code’ that is able to explain a work of art. Moreover, if I ask the question how do I define my music practice? I am in essence asking a question about ‘authorship.’ The concept of authorship does not sit easily within improvised music because improvised music is a form of communal activity that has multiple authors ‘writing’ the work in real time in response to each others’ input. A new problem
emerges if I claim, as McLaughlin does, that at the very highest levels of my music making practice, a force takes possession of my playing and I am merely a conduit for an un-nameable force creating the music. Can I claim authorship of the ‘work’ arising from this process? Is the work arising from transcendent experience a representation of the will of the artist?

Author John Corbett constructs a more useful way of conceptualising the creative output of the improvising musician which bypasses the notion of authorship altogether. Corbett writes:

It is tempting to view improvisation as a collection of individual idioms (rather then being, as Derek Bailey suggests, non-idiomatic), with its parameters determined not by adherence to and divergence from a tradition or style, but in the development of a personal language in practice or solo situations. Thus seen, improvisation is a scaled down version of the infra-semantic, each performer being the equivalent of a “culture.”

Corbett’s term ‘culture’ is useful in this context because it allows for the discussion of improvisatory practices without having to state one’s ‘adherence to and divergence from a tradition or style.’ If this were not the case, by necessity, this exegesis would attempt to define African-American jazz and the way in which my improvisatory practice, although informed by jazz practice, deviates substantially. This approach, from the perspective of an exegesis, can become unnecessarily convoluted insofar as there is to date no universal agreement on what constitutes ‘normative’ jazz practice.

My ‘culture’ is ‘an agglomeration of the forces’ which take possession of my playing, my relationship to the other players with whom I perform, and, more broadly, to a field of practitioners with whom I share a strong commonality. The ‘commonality’ which unites me to this field of practitioners is the improvisatory process itself where the voice of the individual is valued as part of a collective. Jazz saxophonist Archie Shepp, in conversation with Nat Hentoff, states:
Each of the great players has had so distinctive, so individual a voice. There is only one Bird, one Ben Webster, one Cootie Williams. That’s jazz - the uniqueness of the individual. If he believes in himself, every person is not only different butvaluably different.4

When Shepp uses the expression ‘valuably different’ he intends that a player’s uniqueness or personal experience is a valued part of the shared experience of both the musicians he or she is performing with and, more broadly, to the shared experience of the audience. By regarding an individual player as a ‘culture,’ there is recognition that the individual improviser is an amalgam of human experience, musical style and technique and that the collective of improvising musicians and the broader community benefit from this diversity and the relating of human experience through improvised music practice. Joachim-Ernst Berendt writes:

The composer listens to himself and to his own inner voice. The improviser listens – firstly and primarily – to the people improvising with him, to his fellow human beings. The composer is alone. The improviser is part of a community.5

With regard to the concept of community, it is remarkable that in the globalised age of mass communication in which we live, jazz–based improvisatory practice, which is not deliberately aiming at recreating an American style, can be so readily identifiable through regional difference. The community from which I emerge is Melbourne centred. Precisely what these regional differences are and how the ‘Melbourne’ spirit is different to improvisatory practices in Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth or Hobart is extremely difficult to quantify, however, in his book entitled Playing Ad Lib John Whiteoak attempts to illuminate the Melbourne spirit and traces it back to 1836 with its roots in Melbourne’s budding colonial music.
My link to this ‘Melbourne-ised’ tradition occurred in 1983 when I began to study at the Victorian College of the Arts in the Jazz Department under the direction of Brian Brown. Whiteoak writes of Brown at the Victorian College of the Arts:

Brian Brown became widely recognised as central to ‘innovative jazz’ in Melbourne. His persistent belief in the importance, above all, of seeking one’s personal voice influenced his approach to jazz education in a way that has provided many of his students at the Victorian College of the Arts with an opportunity to explore and evolve personal forms of improvisatory musical gesture.

Although Brown vigorously rejects the label ‘nationalist musician,’ in the late 1950’s he became concerned by the extent of American hegemony of Australian jazz development. This concern led him to develop in the early 1960s an unorthodox control process for improvisation based around the parameter of ‘musical tension,’ a concept which has continued to shape his music up to the present day.

Through his association with hard bop, Brown became interested in the peaks of musical and ecstatic intensity (e.g. dynamics, textural density and activity) which occurred at certain points during the band’s performance of this relatively aggressive and rhythmically complex style of jazz. He also noted that these ‘peaks’ could produce momentary loops of intense ecstatic response between ensemble and audience - momentary ‘real life’ or theatre of life experiences.6

At the Victorian College of the Arts there were two primary and seemingly antithetical influences7 that were embodied in Brian Brown, Head of the Jazz Studies course, and Tony Gould, who at that time was a senior lecturer. Students, through the course of their study, appeared to align themselves with the mentorship and aesthetic base of either Brown or Gould.8 This made for an intense and constant debate amongst both students and staff about the nature and relationship of creativity, technical ability and the Australian context.
At a subconscious level, I became more attracted to the ideas and playing style of Brown. In hindsight, I remember feeling that Brown’s ‘culture’ embraced European and non-Western music, experimental and electronic music, and ‘Fluxus’ conceptions of musical theatre all of which I was interested in. Brown advocated that these broad influences and whatever else seemed important to the individual student should be uncompromisingly embedded within the context of the student’s ‘own voice’ and respecting that voice as an Australian musician.

I began study of the saxophone with Brown in my third year at the Victorian College of the Arts after having completed my first year with saxophonist John Barrett whose teaching centred on ‘Berkley School’ style chord-scale relationships. In my second year, I studied with master saxophonist and improviser Graeme Lyall who focussed his teaching upon improvising upon ‘twelve-tone music’ using ‘Hindemith’ principles and voice leading within traditional western harmony as a way of ‘navigating’ the player’s use of tension and release.

Brown’s approach, which I embraced, was to make the student’s connection between creative imagination and technical realisation of a musical idea stronger. This involved the mental mapping of a ‘note,’ visualising the position of that note on the stave, becoming kinetically aware of how that note physically felt to play both in terms of the actual breath support necessary to achieve that note and the kinaesthetic feel of the fingers, hands and arms, in fact the whole body’s relationship to producing the sound. As the student became more familiar with this concept, he or she was able to attempt more abstract shapes or musical gestures. Brown’s intent was to make the musician more available to the improvisatory ‘moment’ and hence the transcendent experience of music making whilst developing the technical ability of the student.

At this time, I was strongly influenced by the music of John Coltrane, Joseph Jarman, Lester Bowie and the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Roland Kirk, Archie Shepp and Albert Ayler. I was attracted to the intense energy and textural approach these players had. In my estimation, the apparent anarchy of their music arose from the technical ability of
these players who appeared to deliberately renounce their virtuosity with what seemed to be an intent to achieve a type of religious state of being. Brown’s teaching provided me with access to this way of approaching music.

Upon completing my undergraduate studies I undertook a two-year Post Graduate Diploma where I studied the saxophone intensively with Brian Brown and I began my studies in electronic music particularly exploring the notion of programming machines to improvise. After my graduation I became a member of staff in what was to become known as the Improvisation Department, at the Victorian College of the Arts.

Significantly, Brown had begun a staff forum where each week each member of the Improvisation Department staff and invited student guests would play a short solo improvisation, usually around five to ten minutes and, at the conclusion of the performance, each staff member would make critical comments about that improvisation. Over time, Gould and Sedergreen discontinued their attendance. This left Brian Brown, guitarist Ashley Cross and myself as the core of this group with occasional appearances from guitarist Mike Doyle, pianist Sue Johnson and bassist Geoff Klueke who were fractional members of staff. Occasionally, trombonist Simone De Hann also participated in this group.

In these sessions, there was no particular aesthetic model constructed by the group by which improvisations played should be compared. There was never a sense of how an improvisation ‘should’ sound. Critical comments were addressed to the clarity, the intent and focus of the player in the improvisation process, the consistency and form of the improvisation, how the listener responded to the improvisation emotionally and whatever else seemed to be important. These sessions formed the backbone of my own improvisatory practice because they allowed for a consistent analysis and debate that at all times respected the development of the individual ‘voice’ of the player.

Arguably, the current community of improvisatory musicians in Melbourne that constitute a ‘field of practitioners’ has been created almost largely through the aesthetic
nexus embodied in Brown and Gould and their respective influence in the Melbourne community via the Victorian College of the Arts. This is not to suggest that there wasn’t a vibrant improvised music scene prior to 1981,\textsuperscript{13} rather that the influence of players such as Humble, Banks, McKimm, Gamely and Clarke has become absorbed into the creative fabric of the Melbourne and Australian music culture rather than being necessarily visible on stage in 2002.

Included in the notion of a contemporary Melbourne field of practitioners of improvisatory music are: saxophonists Brian Brown, Tim O’Dwyer, Adam Simmons, Phil Bywater and Tim Pledger, flutists Nicola Eveleigh and Belinda Woods, trombonists Kynan Robinson, James Wilkinson and Adrian Sheriff, trumpeters Felicity Provan and Nadje Noordhuis-Fairfax, guitarists Ashley Cross, James Wilson, Steve Magnusson, Dan Nielsen and Elliott Folvig, pianists Stuart Campbell, and Will Poskitt, bassists Belinda Moody, Chris Hale, drummers Peter Humble, Will Guthrie, Michael Jordan and Serge DeLeucio, harpist Diane Peters, vocalists Lisa Young and Sue Johnson to name but a few. Players who did not attend the VCA but are active in the improvised music scene in Melbourne include David Tolley, Scott Dunbabin, Judy Jacques, David Jones, Paul Grabowsky, Ren Walters, Tom Fryer and Niko Schauble.

Absent from the above mentioned abbreviated list are players who went through the Victorian College of the Arts but specialise in the playing of a 'neoclassicist' African-American style jazz, players such as Barny McCall, Matt Clohesy, Sam Keevers, Ben Robertson, Danny Fischer, Julian Wilson. These players participate in parallel improvisatory community which is more reliant on the culturally specific improvisatory form of jazz as the basis of their music making.

At a global level, George Lewis in teaching improvised music at the University of California, San Diego exposes his students to that which Lewis refers to as a ‘multi-national view of the field, reflecting the transcultural nature of music.’ Lewis writes:
The students listened to the examples of European improvised music, such as the work of contrabassist Joelle Leandre and Barry Guy, guitarist and theorist Derek Bailey, pianists Misha Mengelberg, Alexander von Schlippenbach and Irene Schweizer, trombonists Paul Rutherford, Radu Malfatti and Gunter Christman, vocalists Maggie Nichols and Phil Minton, and saxophonists Peter Brotzman and Evan Parker. They were exposed to AACM composer-improvisers, such as Muhal Richard Abrams, Fred Anderson, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Anthony Braxton, Wadada Leo Smith, violinist Leroy Jenkins, pianist and composer Amina Claudine Myers and saxophonist Henry Threadgill.

Students became aware of the so-called “downtown” New York improvisers, such as violinist Malcolm Goldstein, flutist Robert Dick, saxophonist John Zorn, guitarists Fred Frith, Eugene Chadbourne and Elliot Sharp, vocalists Shelley Hirsch and David Moss, and the electronic improviser Bob Ostertag, as well as the Western improvisers, including pianists Jon Jang, Glen Horiuchi and Vijay Iyer, kotoist Miya Masoka and the ROVA Saxophone Quartet. Finally, the new school of Chicago improvisers, including clarinetist Ken Vandermark, contrabassist Kent Kessler, saxophonist (and former Creative Music Studio participant) Mars Williams, and guitarist Jim O’Rourke were studied as part of the course.¹⁴

The notion of a community of players where each player’s individual difference or ‘culture’ is considered a ‘valuably different’ part of a whole means that ideally it should be possible to perform with any of the players mentioned in the above list and share a common language of musical improvisatory process without any prior discussion regardless of regional difference.

In support of this idea, on a recent trip to San Francisco, I was introduced, through a mutual friend, to internationally renowned percussionist Kenneth Nash. We exchanged a few words and soon got down to the business of playing. For me, the experience was magical. It was only after at least an hour and a half of non-stop playing that we finished our improvisation. I felt a deep connection to Kenneth and his music. I sense
that he felt similarly. On the basis of this performance, Kenneth agreed to put aside a busy schedule, fly to Australia at considerable financial loss to himself and perform with me as part of my Ph. D. examination.15

The notion of a field of practitioners depends not upon identifying the peculiarities of a particular musician's way of playing; rather, upon identifying the relationships that exist between the players. The word ‘relationships’ is meant here in the Wittgensteinian sense where ‘these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes the same word for all, - but that they are related to one another in many different ways.’16 It is possible to call yourself an improviser but be excluded from culturally specific forms of improvisation such as jazz or Indian music. There are musicians who are comfortable shifting from one form of improvisatory music practice to another, Keith Jarrett and John McLaughlin for example. It is unlikely, however, that a musician who becomes an improviser through jazz-based training will be content necessarily in performing ‘Cage-like’ aleatoric music. This is because the jazz-based improviser develops a ‘custodianship’ of a musical language that is at the core of his or her musical expression and is not at ‘arms length’ in the way that musicians exclusively trained in playing ‘classical’ music improvise. Arguably, jazz-based improvisers choose to play with musicians who share a common ‘culture’ or sense of human experience. In Nash’s words ‘you gotta be able to break bread with a brother’.17


3 The concept of 'an agglomeration of forces' in intended in the Deleuzian sense and will be explored in Chapter Four generally and in Chapter Five specifically.


7 The notion of two 'antithetical influences' will be extensively discussed in Chapter Four. Interestingly, Brian Brown encapsulated Gioia's conception of the 'romantic' jazz musician or qualities that may be considered as 'Dionysian' and Tony Gould embodied Gioia's 'neo-classicist' model or qualities that may be regarded as 'Apollonian.'

8 There was another minority aesthetic 'stream' personified through Melbourne pianist Bob Sedergreen that was most closely identified with 'the blues' and may be seen as far more 'Dionysian' than Brown.


10 Hindemith principles as taught by Lyall create the tone row as if it had a 'tonic centre' and that each of the tones in the row appears to proceed toward the tonic. This effect is created through applying particular rules including, beginning and ending the row on the same tone, resolving the tri-tone interval occurring in the row by 1/2 or whole step in either direction. Resolving the 'tonic' by 1/2 step, whole step, perfect fourth and perfect fifth in either direction, avoiding triadic patterns and avoiding consecutive minor seconds.

11 This was in 1988. A number of factors seemed to coincide at the same time. Brown had returned from a trip to Spain where he performed a series of solo improvised concerts. His experience of this seemed to revitalise his own creative vision. Both Brown and Gould had become less comfortable with the notion of the jazz studies course being so closely aligned with the African-American tradition of Jazz. The
conceptual change to ‘the Improvisation Course’ and the ‘Improvisation Department’ was intended as a way of embracing a wider array of improvisatory practice.

12 These sessions began in 1988 and now continue occasionally at Brown’s house since his retirement from the Victorian College of the Arts in 1998.

13 The first year of student intake into the ‘Jazz Course’ at the Victorian College of the Arts. See Whiteoak 1999 and Johnson 1987 for a more comprehensive history of Australian jazz and improvisatory music.


15 The circumstances which led to the cancellation of the proposed examination performance with Kenneth Nash and the public performance we did play in lieu of the cancelled performance are discussed in Chapter Six.


Chapter Four

Forces

In chapter three, I attempted to contextualise my arts practice from the perspective of identifying the cultural practices in which my work is situated to the extent of identifying a ‘field’ of practitioners with whom I believe I share a commonality of process. However, in Nietzsche’s view, there is a more elemental level at which art making occurs. This chapter will attempt to identify these 'Nietzschean' forces and suggest ways in which music may be understood as the product of these forces in action, and also the extent to which these forces take possession of my arts practice and subsequently find resolution in my experience of transcendence.

The Artist as a Conduit

In Nietzsche’s model, the artist is a conduit expressing archetypal forces. These forces are responsible for motivating the artistic process and producing a subsequent work of art. This is why Gilles Deleuze suggests that to know a ‘thing’, one has to comprehend the extent to which these forces have taken possession of that process or object. Deleuze believes that:

"We will never find the sense of something (of a human, a biological or even a physical phenomenon) if we do not know the force which appropriates the thing, which exploits it, which takes possession of it or is expressed in it. A phenomenon is not an appearance or even an apparition but a sign, a symptom which finds its meaning in an existing force."

The notion of ‘forces’ Deleuze is referring to comes from the Nietzschean concept of ‘Apollonian’ and ‘Dionysian’ forces, as discussed by Nietzsche in the Birth of Tragedy. Being the primary motivating drive experienced through the artist responsible for the production of artistic objects, ‘every artist is an ‘imitator’ - either an Apolline dream
artist or a Dionysiac ecstatic artist or else - a dream artist and a ecstatic artist at one and the same time.\textsuperscript{12} In this paradigm, the artist acts as a conduit for these forces expressing the will not of the artist but of the external influence to the extent the artist is capable of complying with the will of these external forces at work. Hence, a work of art is an analogue representing the degree to which Apollonian and Dionysian forces have acted differentially in motivating the artist to produce a particular work of art. Moreover, the audience who experience the work of art, and the creative process itself, are also subject to the control of Apollonian and Dionysian forces. The Apollonian and Dionysian forces, responsible for the production of the particular artistic object and its apprehension, form the ‘mode of existence’ of that object.

Nietzsche’s intent in \textit{Birth of Tragedy} was, in part, to argue that music is an essentially Dionysian art form particularly in comparison with the visual arts that, in his view, have a greater quality of Apollonian illusion. However, from a contemporary standpoint, where many kinds of music from a diversity of world cultures are accessible, it is possible to observe both Apollonian and Dionysian qualities present in music.

The question arises, why do Apollo and Dionysus act at all? The essential background to Nietzsche’s Apollo-Dionysus nexus is that we live in a meaningless world of torment and horror that is only made bearable through the making of art.\textsuperscript{3} In Nietzsche’s view, ‘the whole world of torment is necessary so that the individual can create the redeeming vision, and then, immersed in contemplation of it, sit peacefully in his tossing boat amid the waves.’\textsuperscript{4} Art making, and the contemplation of art, are the only means we have of making life tolerable whilst maintaining a degree of human dignity:\textsuperscript{5} ‘there approaches a redeeming, healing enchantress – \textit{art}. She alone can turn these thoughts of repulsion at the horror and absurdity of existence into ideas compatible with life: these are the sublime - the taming of horror through art’.\textsuperscript{6} Further, Kathleen Higgins writes:

\begin{quote}
Art serves the valuable function of helping this mitigation of human suffering. Art stills the will of the aesthetically moved observer, and it allows him to see beyond the particularity of whatever is presented to the universal Platonic Idea
\end{quote}
that he instantiates. As long as the observer is captivated by art, he has seen beyond the illusory character of the phenomenal world and has ceased to take his own suffering seriously. Art thus provides moments of salvation for the beholder; and although these moments are transient, they are, short of those states of self-transcendence achieved by saints and mystics, essentially the best that life has to offer on Schopenhauer’s worldview.  

The Apollo - Dionysus Relationship

Apollo and Dionysus form a particular relationship with one another. Both possess specific characteristics that compel the artist to produce art as an effect of the differential produced between the action of Apollonian and Dionysian forces at work in the artist. The complex, differential nature of interaction between Apollonian and Dionysian forces creates a ‘type’. In this context, each work of art is a self-referential ‘type’ and the type is analogous to that which Deleuze refers to as a ‘proposition.’ Deleuze argues:

For any proposition is itself a set of symptoms expressing a way of being or a mode of existence of the speaker, that is to say, the state of forces that he maintains or tries to maintain with himself and others.  

For the purposes of this argument it is useful to think of the Apollo-Dionysus relationship as being like two planets in geo-synchronous orbit with one another. See Figure 1.
If one were in a spaceship between the two planets perhaps going from Dionysus toward Apollo, one would feel the increasing gravitational pull of Apollo. As one ventured toward the ‘dark side’ of Apollo, a place where Dionysus has no influence, one would encounter what Nietzsche calls ‘Socratic man’. Conversely, the ‘dark-side’ of Dionysus where Apollo shines no light, one approaches a state of ‘the Barbarian’.

Each planet embodies the particular characteristics that identify it, that is, Apollonian characteristics and Dionysian characteristics. The particular qualities of each force radiate a field of influence that extends omni-directionally outward. The field of influence may be likened to gravity or another naturally occuring force. These forces exhibit ‘active, acted and reactive’ behaviours ‘affirming’, ‘negating’ and ‘mutually intensifying’ one another.

A traditional Western mind may initially perceive the forces embodied in Apollo and those embodied in Dionysus as being mutually exclusive of one another. De Bono calls this ‘table top logic’ and suggests that our whole Western concept of logic depends on the dichotomy existing between the two entities.
The principle of contradiction can only really apply if the two proposed categories are truly mutually exclusive. In practice this is very difficult to find, so we deliberately set up mutually exclusive categories – and these are our treasured dichotomies. Without them the principle of contradiction and the certainty of our logic are greatly weakened.\textsuperscript{13}

However, in the context of this study, a more appropriate way of understanding Apollonian and Dionysian forces giving rise to a ‘mode of existence’ is to consider the relationship of Apollo and Dionysus to be very similar to the ancient Chinese concept of ‘Yin and Yang.’ Ted Kaptchuk writes:

Yin-Yang theory is based on the philosophical construct of two polar complements, called Yin and Yang. These complementary opposites are neither forces nor material entities. Nor are they mythical concepts that transcend rationality. Rather, they are convenient labels used to describe how things function in relation to each other and to the universe. They are used to explain the continuous process of natural change. But Yin and Yang are not only a set of correspondences; they also represent a way of thinking. In this system of thought, all things are seen as part of a whole. No entity can ever be isolated from its relationship to other entities; no thing can exist in and of itself. There are no absolutes. Yin and Yang must, necessarily, contain within themselves the possibility of opposition and change.\textsuperscript{14}

From a Yin-Yang perspective, Apollo and Dionysus form a set of polar-complements. Neither can exist without the other, and all entities influenced by Apollo or Dionysus are subject to a continual process of opposition and change. It is necessary to re-state that these polar-complements are not opposites nor are they mutually exclusive.

The Force of Apollo

Nietzsche refers to Apollo as the dream artist.\textsuperscript{15} He says of Apollo:
Apollo, the deity of all plastic forces, is also the soothsaying god. Etymologically the ‘shining one’, the deity of light, he also holds sway over the beautiful illusion of the inner fantasy world. The higher truth, the perfection of these states in contrast to the imperfectly incomprehensible daily reality, the deep awareness of nature healing and helping in sleep and dreams, is at the same time the symbolic analogue of soothsaying powers of art in general, through which life is made possible and worth living.16

Apollo inspires the mortal artist to give form to the Apollonian world, which, through the creation of artistic objects, will stand as a surrogate reality. A painting, a sculpture, a computer animation and a composed piece of music, for example, are objects which project the Apollonian illusion that we live in a ‘moral’ world of order and perfection, freed from the horror of uncertainty and stupefaction which would otherwise dominate our lives.

We construct the Apollonian world within the ‘dreamscape.’ The dreamscape may be thought of as a mode of existence in which the dominant Apollo compels us to build structures and controls throughout all that we may believe to have sovereignty over.17 We remain aware that we are participating in a fantasy; sometimes referred to as ‘the veil of Maya,’18 ‘even when this dream reality is presented to us with the greatest intensity, we still have a glimmering awareness that it is an illusion.’19

The Music of Apollo

In Western music, Apollo’s20 agent is a construct known as ‘the composer’.21 The inherent nature of the composer construct is Apollonian and demonstrable through the way in which scripted music functions to create ‘powerful illusions’ for Apollonian reasons. The composer creates a musical object by carefully arranging, in step time, musical elements into a generally ‘pleasing’ arrangement of ‘notes’. It is, in part, the notion that music should be somehow ‘pleasing’ which strongly suggests the presence of
Apollo. Further, in a more extreme Apollonian state, ‘perfect music’ arises from ‘righteousness’ where moral and political order rule and the moral order is naturally integrated into the ‘order’ of the cosmos. Novelist and follower of Nietzsche, Hermann Hesse\textsuperscript{22} expresses this idea:

> When the world is at peace, when all things are tranquil and all men obey their superiors in all their courses, then music can be perfected. When desires and passions do not turn into wrongful paths, music can be perfected. Perfect music has its cause. It arises from equilibrium. Equilibrium arises from righteousness, and righteousness arises from the meaning of the cosmos. Music is founded on the harmony between heaven and earth, on the concord of obscurity and brightness.\textsuperscript{23}

The Apollonian effect in music ‘channelled’ through ‘the composer’ begins with the concept of a ‘note’. The musical note is an aggregate of pitch, duration and intensity denoted by a particular visual symbol. Of all the pitches that a human can discriminate (approximately 1400\textsuperscript{24}) a note fixes a single frequency to a letter name. The frequency of the note is assigned a duration that is measured in whole numbers as a division of tempo (measured in beats per minute) with a relative intensity symbol denoting approximately ‘soft, medium or loud.’ The visual symbol standing for a particular pitch with its associated temporal space and intensity is often considered, in an Apollonian illusion, as "music" itself. If music depends on the aural sensing of sound then a visual symbol cannot be music.

A scripted or scored composition is by necessity constructed in ‘step time’. This means that the composer in the act of composition returns many times to a note event scripted on paper for the purposes of revising that note and subsequently contextualising that note ‘correctly’ within the composition. The note may be modified with reference to what the note ‘sounds like’ in the context of the composition or the note may be subject to modification because it is discovered to be non-consecutive within a ‘mathematically’ constructed sequence.
In performance, the composition is played in real time. The sense of order and unity composed into a piece through the step time arrangement of notes and then performed in a temporal continuum heightens the Apollonian ‘soothsaying’ effect. The audience experiences the ‘perfection’ arising through order ‘in the moment’ of performance. The musical object or ‘proposition’ in this context becomes the glorified projection of the human spirit along the lines expressed by Nietzsche. ‘It was in this sphere of beauty that they saw reflections of themselves, the Olympians.’

Nietzsche writes that Apollo is a god ‘which must always overthrow a realm of Titans and slay monsters, and which must emerge triumphant over a terrible abyss in its contemplation of the world and its most intense capacity for suffering, by resorting to the most powerful and pleasurable illusions.’ Apollo is present when the ‘Titans’ of human imperfection are erased from performance. The meta-musical tools of notation, step-time composition and modern recording practice (which allows for the editing, normalisation and dynamic compression of the note for example) enable Apollo to work through the music-artist who erases imperfection from the musical process and thus creates the necessary Apollonian illusion of moral and social order making our lives somehow ‘meaningful.’

Apollo’s influence in music is felt when the music has been created in step time, relies on another media for its creation or performance, such as notation or sound recording technology, and where there is a sense of concord and moral order about the work. Music that is created through a dominant Apollonian spirit is more readily understood by musicologists attempting to deconstruct a work in trying to understand that piece of music. Music that is strongly Apollonian tends toward perfection and beauty as an ideal and is strongly identified with the composer. The composer optimally becomes the embodiment of the principium individuationis where the individual will of the composer may be identified as separate from the ‘noise’ of universal willing.
The Force of Dionysus

Nietzsche’s Dionysus is the ‘affirming god’ of the Apollo-Dionysus nexus; ‘He is not content with “resolving pain” in a higher and suprapersonal pleasure but rather he affirms it and turns it into someone’s pleasure.”

Further, Deleuze writes:

(Dionysus)...is the god for whom life does not have to be justified, for whom life is essentially just. Moreover it is life which takes charge of justification, “it affirms even the harshest suffering.”...We must be clear, it does not resolve pain by internalising it, it affirms it in the element of its exteriority.

Dionysus, the ‘ecstatic artist’ revels in life as it is. Life, despite its harshness and pain, is justified in and of itself and Dionysus compels us to partake of the full experience of life ‘by making us participate in the superabundance of unique being or universal willing.’ Inspired by Dionysus, we do not accuse life of being unjust, we do not employ our critical faculties to explain the way things are or how they should be, we do not categorise or stratify our experience or separate ourselves from the natural world.

In his writing to ‘The Great Martyr’ (Nietzsche), the novelist Nikos Katzanzakis encapsulates the Dionysian spirit:

The day came when you encountered Schopenhauer, the Brahman of the North. Seating yourself at his feet, you discovered the heroic, despairing vision of life: The world is my own creation. Everything, both visible and invisible, is a deceptive dream. Nothing exists but will-blind without beginning or end, purposeless, indifferent, neither rational nor irrational. Nonrational, monstrous. When jammed into time and place it crumbles into innumerable forms. These it obliterates. Then it creates new forms and smashes them again, continuing for all eternity in this same way. There is no such thing as progress; destiny is not governed by reason; religion, morality, and great ideas are worthless consolation good only for cowards and idiots. The strong man, knowing this, confronts the
world's purposeless phantasmagoria with tranquility and rejoices in dissolving the multiform, ephemeral veil of Maya.\textsuperscript{31}

Nietzsche uses the analogy of 'intoxication' as a way of describing the extent to which Dionysian forces suspend the rational processes of Apollo in favour of sensual experience. In the way intoxication is commonly understood, there is a sense of temporary-ness suggesting that the individual will at some point return to a state of 'normal' functioning. Apollo gives us the power and more importantly 'the will' to return. The modern Dionysus of Nietzsche is not a force of abandonment, rather a force of sensual abundance. 'It is Dionysus' task to make us graceful, to teach us to dance, to give us the instinct of play.'\textsuperscript{32} Steven Nachmanovitch expands this notion of sensuality and suggests it is, in fact, the originator of all creative acts:

Music (and I mean here the music of music, the music of poetry, the music of creative living) plays in the mind in a place where sexuality and sensuality play. Eros - the divine principle of desire and love - surges from our deepest evolutionary roots: the urge to create, to generate new life, to regenerate the species. It is the creative energy immanent in us as living beings.\textsuperscript{33}

Nietzsche proposes that the Dionysian experience is one of self-negation\textsuperscript{34} and therefore, is transcendence over the self. Rather than transcendence over the self, I argue that the self is still present, but that it is experienced through the body in a way where language is insufficient to account for the ecstatic experience. For that reason, Nietzsche's quality of ecstasy is not a complete transcendence. This is confirmed to some extent in the abovementioned quotation from Kathleen Higgins where she says, 'Art thus provides moments of salvation for the beholder; and although these moments are transient, they are, short of those states of self-transcendence achieved by saints and mystics.'\textsuperscript{35} The ecstatic Dionysian experience is 'short of' a true transcendence where the 'I' is truly negated.
Dionysian Music.

Dionysus presides over the physical and sensual experience of sound ‘the overwhelming power of sound,’\textsuperscript{36} over how a person ‘feels’ music and becomes totally absorbed by the experience of music. In consideration of the way Dionysian forces work in music, let us consider a simple definition of music as \textit{sound occurring in time} or John Cage’s ‘organization of sound.’\textsuperscript{97} This is a difficult definition. For many, there are particular distinctions to be made between ‘musical’ and ‘non-musical’ sounds. What distinguishes music from noise? What qualities make sound desirable for musical purposes and what sounds, if any, could never be musical? Why? These questions arise because the listener is deeply rooted in an Apollonian mode of existence. To broaden the definition of music, one has to move toward the Dionysian, the way ‘musical’ vibration is experienced through the human body as music.

A Dionysian Concept of Sound

Sound processed into music through an Apollonian mode of existence tries to fix frequency, duration and intensity into discrete manageable aural units accessible to the human ear. In the Dionysian mode of existence, sound is processed into music when entities as small as ‘sub-atomic particles’ or entities as large as ‘planets’ cause vibration and this vibration is understood by the ‘listener’ who experiences the total effect of that vibration and interprets that as musical. Sufi master Khan claims that music does not merely depend on audible sound (vibration of air particles) but upon each of the human senses responding to the vibratory movement of the whole of the natural world:

When we pay attention to nature’s music, we find everything on the earth contributes to its harmony. The trees joyously wave their branches in rhythm with the wind; the sound of the sea; the murmuring of the breeze; the whistling of the wind through rocks, hills, mountains; the flash of lightning and the crash of thunder; the harmony of the sun and moon; the movement of the stars and planets; the blooming of the flower and the fading of the leaf; the regular
alternation of morning, evening, noon, and night: all reveal to the seer the music of nature.\textsuperscript{38}

A Dionysian Concept of Time

In the Dionysian mode of existence, time is ‘felt.’ How does time feel? Presently, it is beyond the realms of science to know how we feel time, although, Deleuze and Guattari provide a way forward in their discussion of smooth and striated space;

Take a system in which transversals are subordinated to diagonals, diagonals to horizontals and verticals to points (even when they are virtual). A system of this kind, which is rectilinear or unilinear regardless of the number of lines, expresses the formal conditions under which a space is striated and the line describes a contour. Such a line is inherently, formally, representative in itself, even if it does not represent anything. On the other hand, a line that delimits nothing, that describes no contour, that no longer goes from one point to another but instead passes between points, that is declining from the horizontal and vertical and deviating from the diagonal, that is constantly changing direction, a mutant line of this kind is without outside or inside, form or background, beginning or end and that is as alive as a continuous variation - such a line is truly an abstract line, and describes smooth space.\textsuperscript{39}

Adopting this metaphorical concept to that of ‘time’, we may create the concept of smooth and striated time. In smooth time (or continuous time) it is not possible to subdivide the moment into a sequence of smaller temporal objects or coordinates. It is as if one is fused with the moment in a continuum of flow. As stated earlier, within the Dionysian mode of existence there is a temptation to say that one gives up self to fuse with time, however, I argue that the fusion experience is still not transcendent insofar as the self is still present. To illustrate this point, a surfer who ‘catches a wave’ using a surfboard fuses with the energy of that wave to surf it, but he or she still maintains the
self as a distinct entity. The transcended self 'becomes the wave,' that is, there is no
 distinction between the wave and the transcended self.

In striated time it is possible to mark particular temporal and physio-spatial coordinates
or moments within the moment. Striated time is illusory in the same way that a 'motion
picture' appears animated by re-playing twenty-four still frames per second. The
illusory nature of striated time places it within the Apollonian mode of existence.

Dionysian Music

In the Dionysian mode of existence, music is continuous time, continuous sound. That
is, there is no striation, no subdivision possible of even the simplest components of
Dionysian music; sound and time, divided here, are not divided within the Dionysian
mode of existence. Dionysian music is, from the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari, a
'Body Without Organs:' [=BwO]

A BwO is made in such a way that it can be occupied, populated only by
intensities. Only intensities pass and circulate. Still, the BwO is not a scene, a
place, or even a support upon which something comes to pass. It has nothing to
do with phantasy, there is nothing to interpret. The BwO causes intensities to
pass; it produces them in a spatium that is itself intensive, lacking extension. It is
not space, nor is it in space; it is matter that occupies space to a given degree-to
the degree corresponding to the intensities produced. It is nonstratified,
unformed, intense matter, the matrix of intensity, intensity = 0; but there is
nothing negative about that zero, there are no negative or opposite intensities.
Matter equals energy.\textsuperscript{40}

The significance of the 'body without organs' construct to a Dionysian mode of
existence is that the body without organs 'causes intensities to pass'. An 'intensity' in
this context is a force which propagates the music\textsuperscript{41}. In Nietzschean terms, this intensity
is the will exerting itself over the 'will-less' state because, as one moves toward the

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extreme Dionysian state referred to as the 'Barbarian,' there is no desire to continue playing, the will diminishes, the player is overwhelmed by the emotion of the moment which may also have an adverse affect on the technical ability of the player in that moment to produce a sound. This is particularly true of musicians who depend on the breath to produce a sound, that is, wind players and vocalists.

The intensity which drives the Body Without Organs arises from Dionysus forcing us to realize that everything that is born must be prepared to face its painful dissolution. (Dionysus) forces us to gaze into the horror of individual existence, yet without being turned into stone by the vision. Delueuze and Guattari continue, ‘the BwO can no longer be populated by anything but intensities of pain, pain waves,’ and, that we should find our body without organs, ‘Find out how to make it. It’s a question of life and death, youth and old age, sadness and joy. It is where everything is played out.’

Dionysus is present where music tends toward an unbroken continuum. A Dionysian sound may change over its duration. It may change because a listener will increasingly become aware of the overtone flux in a sound or that the player changes the sound over time. Jazz musicians often talk of ‘feel’ which refers to a musician’s ability to subtly perceive rhythmic nuance and play with that nuance. ‘Feel’ is squarely within the Dionysian mode of existence. Feel and continuum draw the listener into Dionysian space, as Kahn describes:

The secret of composition lies in sustaining the tone as solidly and as long as possible through all its different degrees; a break destroys its life, grace, power and magnetism, just as breath holds life and has all grace, power and magnetism. There are some notes that need a longer life than others, according to their character and purpose.

The Dionysian mode of existence revels in the absence of conscious structures (although structure may dictate the composition at a sub-conscious level), the absence of mind in
favour of the sensual body, and, most importantly, in ‘the moment,’ the real-time ‘now’ in which the music is being created.

The Force of Socratic Man - Theoretical Man

For Nietzsche, Socrates is the embodiment of ‘anti-arts’ or more correctly ‘anti-Dionysian’ forces. The Socratic mode of existence is not influenced by Dionysus whatsoever, therefore, Socratic man refers to a theoretical possibility not an actual state of being. Nietzsche holds Socrates in great contempt and refers to him as ‘the despotic logician’. ‘Where art was concerned, the despotic logician had the sense of a lacuna, a void, something of a reproach, of a possibly neglected duty.’ In Hesse’s words, the Socratic mode of existence may be understood as a ‘monastically austere intellectual discipline.’

In his novel The Glass Bead Game, Hermann Hesse fictionalises the concept of a totally ‘Socratic’ society that Hesse calls ‘Castalia.’ The central character Joseph Knecht, who becomes a master of ‘the game’ and subsequently legendary in his leadership of Castalia, says to his friend Tegularius:

Your love for culture and the products of the mind does you credit. But it happens that cultural creativity is something we cannot participate in quite so fully as some people think. A dialogue of Plato’s or a choral movement by Heinrich Isaac - in fact all the things we call a product of the mind or a work of or objectified spirit - are the outcomes of a struggle for purification and liberation. They are, to use your phrase, escapes from time into timelessness, and in most cases the best such works are those which no longer show any signs of the anguish and effort that preceded them.

It is a great good fortune that we have these works, and of course we Castalians live almost entirely by them; the only creativity we have left lies in preserving them. We live permanently in a realm beyond time and conflict embodied in those very works which we would know nothing of, but for them. And we go
further into the realms of pure mind, or if you prefer, pure abstraction: in our Glass Bead Game we analyse those products of the sages and artists into their components, we derive rules of style and patterns of form from them, we operate with these abstractions as though they were building blocks.\textsuperscript{47}

Hesse, through his character Knecht and the institution of Castalia, has captured Nietzsche's concept of Socratic man, 'the enemy.' The Socratic man is a person who is justified through the artistic product of others. Here, through the process of abstraction, Socratic man distils the real world into symbols that may be played off one against the other, stratified, preserved, marketed, bought and sold.

Nietzsche offers Socratic Man as a negative construct because of the 'despotic' tendency of Socratic Man to attempt assimilation and subsequent domination of all cultures he encounters. In musicology, the despotic tendency of Socratic Man emerges not out of hatred for 'the sweet brutishness\textsuperscript{48} of the Dionysian, but out of love for serenity and harmony. This leads to the notion of a 'true music'\textsuperscript{49} that is the goal of the Socratic musician. Mathematical or structural order becomes so highly manipulated, that it may only be understood by those approaching the Socratic mode of existence. Socratic Man, through the fictional character Lu Bu We in \textit{The Glass Bead Game}, warns against the impending doom of social collapse arising from music that is not harmonious.

Decaying states and men ripe for doom do not, of course, lack music either, but their music is not serene. Therefore, the more tempestuous the music, the more doleful are the people, the more imperil the country, the more the sovereign declines. In this way the essence of music is lost.\textsuperscript{50}

The Force of the Barbarian

As the concept of Socratic Man is a theoretical mode of existence, so too is the mode of existence of the Barbarian. Nietzsche makes a significant distinction between the Dionysian 'Barbarian' and the Dionysian 'Greek' and, in the abovementioned references
to Dionysus, it is the Dionysian Greek who is being referred to as Dionysian in this study. Here, the Socratic Man and the Barbarian are mutually exclusive modes. One cannot be Socratic and a Barbarian at the same time.

The Barbarians are characterized through the existence of festivals where: ‘Almost universally, the centre of those festivals was an extravagant lack of sexual discipline, whose waves engulfed all the venerable rules of family life. The most savage beasts of nature were here unleashed, even that repellent mixture of lust and cruelty that I have always held to be a “witch’s brew”.’

According to Nietzsche, the Dionysian Greek is distinguished from the Barbarian through the symbolic act of Apollo in slaying the Gorgon. The Gorgon is an embodiment, a symbol, of all the dark barbaric forces emerging from an unbounded excess of the Dionysian state, which Nietzsche identifies with the ‘ancient world’ of Rome and Babylon.

In decapitating the Gorgon, ‘the most dangerous force it (Apollo) had to contend with,’ Apollo liberates humankind from a tyranny of unbounded sensuality. Through Apollo, a mortal has the power to construct a life of the mind, toward the *principium individuationis*, increasingly independent of the body. Thus, the extent to which the Barbarian force is neutralised, and consequently transformed into Nietzsche’s concept of a modern Dionysian, is the extent to which the structuralising force of Apollo is acting within Dionysian space. This symbolic act of Apollo allows for the prospect of a person yielding to their sensual desire without necessarily surrendering absolute sovereignty over their body. The Barbarian, however, is beyond the saving grace of Apollo.

Summary

I propose that music occurs as the result of two primary forces interacting with one-another expressed through the process and work of the musician. The Apollonian force favours structure and operates increasingly through the mind. The Dionysian force is
sympathetic to how music feels and how sound may be apprehended through the body and understood as music. However, Apollo and Dionysus remain in a relationship that may be described as polar-complementary where both forces are expressed but where one force may exert its dominance over the other. In the creative process itself, the artist may find that the dominant force acting within themselves shifts between Apollo and Dionysus, and vice-versa, and, the ability of the artist to become mobile and swing from one force toward the other is necessary for the artist to achieve the transcendent state.


3 The discussion here will be very limited. However, for the purposes of this argument, it is necessary for the reader to understand that despite human suffering, both Dionysus and Apollo act in a positive manner, albeit via different routes, for the good of humankind.


5 Nietzsche disregarded the redemptive power of religion because he believed that religion dis-empowered the individual.

6 Nietzsche, p. 40.


8 Deleuze, p. 10.

9 Deleuze makes explicit Nietzsche's concept of forces. He says of Nietzsche's philosophy: 'Nietzsche's philosophy is organised along two great axes. The first is concerned with force, with forms, and forms of general semiology. Phenomena, things, organisms, societies consciousness and spirits are signs, or rather symptoms, and themselves reflect a state of forces.' Deleuze, p. x. introduction

10 Deleuze, p.x. introduction.

11 Nietzsche, p. 27.

12 Although it may seem as if I intend to argue for a dualist model by identifying the apparently dualist characteristics embedded in the Apollo-Dionysus model and that in my defining of music I stated that the way in which the body processes music should be taken into account when trying to understand music, I do not intend this thesis to read as if Apollo and Dionysus represent a Cartesian dualism. On the contrary, I intend the reader to consider the 'polar-complements' of Apollo and Dionysus from a more 'Eastern' way of thinking which I will discuss.


15 Nietzsche, p. 18.
Apollo’s influence in music need not be considered in the same depth as Dionysian
music. This is because, arguably, our familiar Western music structures are Apollonian
in essence and do not need to be detailed for the purposes of this discussion.

I intend the concept of a ‘composer’ to include composers of popular music or any
music style which is scripted.

Steven Aschheim notes that Hermann Hesse was a devotee of Nietzsche’s writings.
‘Thus for Herman Hesse, during his 1895-1898 period in Tübingen, Nietzsche became a
kind of cultural pin-up: two images hung on Hesse’s wall’
S. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890-1990*. University of California


‘The average ear can distinguish 1,400 discrete frequencies. However, in the equally
tempered scale covering a hearing range of 16 to 16,000 cycles there are only 120
discrete tones. In other words, musical tones may be said to be quantised, in that only
discrete frequencies are allowed and others ruled out.’

Nietzsche, p. 24.
Nietzsche, p. 24

Nietzsche, p. 20.
The ‘Principle of Individuation’ as Nietzsche intends is based upon Schopenhauer’s
conceptualisation of this idea in E. F. J. Payne trans., *The World as Will and

Deleuze, p. 13.
Deleuze, p. 16.
Deleuze, p. 12.


Deleuze, p. 18.

"The individual, with all his restraints and moderations, was submerged in the self-oblivion of the Dionysiac state and forgot the Apolline dictates." Nietzsche, p. 27.

Higgins, p. 366.

Nietzsche, p. 20.

Cage writes: ‘If this word “music” is sacred and reserved for eighteenth - and nineteenth -century instruments, we can substitute a more meaningful term: organization of sound.


Deleuze and Guattari, p.153.

This concept is further discussed in Chapter Five with consideration to Nietzsche’s concept of ‘will to power.’ Briefly, the ‘intensity’ of the BwO may be regarded as the ego projection of the will that is still possessed by ‘the self’ existing within a Dionysian mode. The self maintains itself ‘in tact’ and does not desire to self-annihilate. Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the BwO may be regarded as analogous with the Nietzschean ideal of 'the Barbarian' whereas I intend the BwO to be understood from the perspective of a Dionysian who maintains a sensuous existence but has not crossed into the realm of 'the masochist' or the 'schizophrenic' that Deleuze and Guattari are concerned with.

Deleuze and Guattari, p.18.
Deleuze and Guattari, p. 152.

Kahn, p. 54.

Nietzsche, p. 70.

Hesse, p. 33.
Hesse, pp. 278-279.

The term ‘sweet brutishness’ was initially coined by Emile Zola in his discussion of Edouard Manet’s painting style. It refers to a quality of ‘primitivism’ that may be likened to work arising from a Dionysian mode of existence. The term ‘primitive’ is often used as a tool of oppression against works arising from Dionysus however, in the
context of this exegesis, the Dionysian mode of existence is recognised as a necessary complementary force to Apollo.


49 Hesse, p. 27.
50 Hesse, p. 29.

51 Nietzsche, p. 19.
52 Nietzsche, p. 19.
53 Nietzsche, p. 19.
Chapter Five

My Mode of Existence

This chapter will endeavour to merge the various concepts put forward in the previous chapters into a unified proposition or, in a Deleuzian sense, explain my ‘mode of existence.’ My musical practice arises from Apollonian and Dionysian forces seeking expression through me, my desire to engage with these forces and the interaction of these forces between the individual modes of existence of each player I perform with, and with each individual audience member.

The Problem of Subjectivity

Rarely does an individual mode of existence exist independent of an infinitely complex array of connections with other modes of existence. The highly complex nature of relationships which form as a result of this intensive inter-subjectivity between performer and performer, performer and audience, audience and performer in the performance context of the ‘site specific’ space, within the broader context of the field of practitioners and their relationship to the wider community, make it virtually impossible to represent a mode of existence as if it had a single, linear identity.

A more useful way of conceptualising a mode of existence is to embrace the concept of ‘rhizomatics’ proposed by French theorists Deleuze and Guattari. In attempting to explain simply Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of rhizomatics, Nick Mansfield writes:

In literal botanical terms, a rhizome is a type of stem that expands underground horizontally, sending down roots and pushing up shoots that arise and proliferate not from a single core or trunk, but from a network which expands endlessly from any of its points. Grass, for example, is rhizomatic. A tree grows upwards as an apparently single and purposeful formation, struggling to build its solid mass in order to crown itself with subordinate branches and flowers. A rhizome
develops haphazardly from any single point. Where a tree is a single vector aimed at a specific goal, the rhizome expands endlessly in any number of directions, without a centre. The multiplicities that are the tree’s final achievement can be traced back to the trunk and roots as its origin and meaning. A rhizome, pushing in a number of directions at once, lacks this sort of unity. Its multiplicity is part of its nature, not its by-product.¹

The multiple inter-connectivities which relate the individual mode of existence from one performer to another, and, from a performer to the mode of existence for each individual member of the audience may be likened, using the analogy of the rhizome, to ‘blossoms’ linked by a vast unseen rhizome where the blossoms act as a metaphor for the visible or ‘knowable’ aspects of the various modes of existence which are interactive with one another in any performance context (and in any moment where ‘communication’ exists between humans). The significance of ‘rhizomatics’ to this exegesis will become apparent later in this chapter.

Music: the Will and Silence

For any musician – composer, his or her mode of existence is embedded within the polar – complementary existing between the will (‘the one that wants in the will’)² and silence. Here, silence may be understood in a multiple of ways. In the Taoist sense referred to earlier, it is the 'nameless' force³ that is the ‘mother’ of ‘the Tao.’ In the Sufi sense as ‘the life absolute,’⁴ or in the simple sense as the absence of sound. In the Zen sense it is 'emptiness' known to the Japanese as ‘mu’. This is perhaps one of the most difficult Zen concepts to comprehend. Phillip Sudo attempts to explain the concept of ‘mu’:

Mu, in Japanese, means “no thing,” or the absence of a thing. It does not mean “nothing,” for in Zen, nothing is still something. Rather, Zen masters say mu is a timeless void transcending rational comprehension, the point where all senses come together. Out of this mu, they say, flows the stream of time and all that exists.⁵
Through the interaction of human ‘will’ and silence, music is born. Music may be defined then as the will separating sound from silence because ‘any act of creation is an act of separation.’ 6 Darryl Reanney elaborates upon this idea:

An act of separation divides in two what previously was one, while an act of union joins in one what previously were two. This is why an act of union joins is, ironically, an act of destruction, for the prior selfhood of the thing to be joined is always lost in the act that joins it. 7

The creation of music is the deliberate act, perpetrated by a musician of separating sound from silence. Why does one separate sound from silence and create that which we call music? Reanney answers in a Nietzschean manner:

For it is precisely because of pain, unrelentingly because of suffering, that human beings are driven to outgrow the littleness of their own limitations, to ‘rise above themselves’, to climb the mountain to see the vision. 8

The ego projects the will outward to engage silence in an attempt to ‘rise above’ the ‘natural condition of man’ for the purpose of engaging with god or being god-like. The ego may emanate from a more Apollonian state or a more Dionysian state where the ego is a projection of Apollonian or Dionysian qualities. Being either Apollonian or Dionysian, the ego is not balanced and therefore engages silence in an act of territorialisation, subsequently, music ‘becomes’ in the manner Attali describes:

With music is born power and its opposite: subversion. In noise can be read the codes of life, the relations among men. Clamour, Melody, Dissonance, Harmony; when it is fashioned by man with specific tools, when it invades man’s time, when it becomes sound, noise is the source of purpose and power, of the dream – Music. It is at the heart of the progressive rationalisation of aesthetics, and it is a refuge for residual irrationality; it is a means of power and a form of
entertainment. Everywhere codes analyze, mark, restrain, train, repress, and channel the primitive sounds of language, of the body, of tools, of objects, of the relations to self and others. All music, any organization of sounds is then a tool for the creation or consolidation of a community, of a totality. It is what links a power centre to its subjects, and thus, more generally, it is an attribute of power in all of its forms. Therefore, any theory of power today must include a theory of the localisation of noise and its endowment with form. Among birds a tool for marking territorial boundaries, noise is inscribed from the start within the panoply of power. Equivalent to the articulation of a space, it indicates the limits of a territory and the way to make oneself heard within it, how to survive by drawing one's sustenance from it. And since noise is the source of power, power has always listened to it with fascination.⁹

When the ego is projected from a balanced state of Apollonian and Dionysian forces, the possibility occurs for a reflexive effect where Mu can flow backward toward the performer if the performer can, in Jung's terms, 'crucify the self.' When this happens, a 'flow' is established between the self and something outside of the self that will be referred to using the Japanese Zen concept of Mu. This direct connection with Mu is responsible for the transcendent experience and the experience of another force 'playing the music' where the artist becomes merely the conduit. See Figure 2.
All people occupy a mode of existence. An artist rises above the ‘natural inclination of ordinary people’ by projecting his or her will onto a force for the purpose of engaging that force in ‘play’. Nachmanovitch writes of play and its importance to the creative process:

The creative mind plays with the objects it loves. Artists play with color and space. Musicians play with sound and silence. Eros plays with lovers. God plays with the universe. Children play with everything they can get their hands on.\textsuperscript{10}

In this context, the ego projects itself in an act of play. The play may originate from a more Apollonian state that ‘loves’ the process of organising objects and analysing their relationship to one-another and making things. Play may also originate from the Dionysian state that loves the way in which an experience ‘feels’ as a person encounters it. The artist at play may find the balance point between Apollo and Dionysus resulting in a nexus between the artist and that force which is being played with if the artist is able to dispossess his or her self.
The concept of ‘dispossession of self’ or ‘crucifixion of self’ is central to the transcendent experience and that which identifies the transcendent experience as being different in nature to ecstatic experience (arguably Dionysian). For example, Allison argues:

The excitement provoked by musical tonality is experienced as fluidity of affect, in that intense emotional states lose their conventional associations and tend toward reinvesting their objects of pleasure with more immediate, hallucinatory cathexes - and such states involve extreme intensification of psychic discharge, resulting in a heightened increase of satisfaction.\(^{11}\)

In Allison’s argument, there is reference to the concepts of ‘excitement’ and ‘pleasure.’ Both of these emotional states exist because a person ‘takes possession’ of that state as in, ‘I feel excited’ or ‘I find that pleasurable.’ Because the ‘I’ is central to each of these experiences, they are not transcendent experiences but experiences of ecstasy that the ‘I’ can possess.

At the mid-point between the Apollonian and Dionysian nexus is the place Sudo refers to as ‘the gateless gate.’\(^{12}\) To pass through the gate, the will of the musician has to dispossess the self. On the other side of the gate, there is no ‘I.’ The musician has brought into harmony Dionysian and Apollonian forces so that he or she is able to maintain the ability to produce a sound on his or her instrument whilst fully sensing the quality of that sound both within the body and within the mind. The real time composition of the music becomes regulated by flow\(^ {13}\) rather than the forced, external imposition of rules over sound arrangement. The music manages its own ‘self-organizing pattern.’\(^ {14}\) The musician maintains a transcendent state so long as he or she maintains the balance of Apollonian and Dionysian forces and does not claim authorship of the music as it is being played.
My Mode of Existence

As stated earlier, the complex inter-subjective nature of a mode of existence makes it virtually impossible to capture a moment in time where a mode of existence exists in its entirety. As a mode of existence is in a constant state of change and renewal, unfolding a moment from the past into the present, present into future, my mode of existence, examining itself, may only do so in retrospect highlighting fragmentary elements, ‘blossoms,’ that appear to me to be key defining elements or moments of my mode of existence.

The subtle complexities that weave the fabric of a mode of existence are effectively not recalled or may never have been noticed by me in the first instance. The contextual elements of my mode of existence are highlighted to some extent in Chapter Three. In this section, I will focus on my mode of existence to the extent that I can know it prior to my examination performance and I relate it here in the spirit of ‘rhizomatics’ where there is a multiplicity of ideas which connect to a larger un-knowable organism.

I play the saxophone.
I will myself to engage silence through the mechanics of a metal pipe stopped at one end by a mouthpiece and a reed.

I choose to improvise.
I choose to play some part of this performance as a soloist and some part of this performance with another player or players who will also improvise.

The musicians I choose to play with, in general, share a commonality of language which is improvisatory, jazz-based and yet not dependent upon the jazz tradition of playing ‘standards’ or ‘the blues’ or ‘swing’.

Before I present my ‘examination performance,’ I will ‘break bread’ with the other musician or musicians I play with. In the context of this performance, I will formally
refer to them as associate artists but in performance, there will be no hierarchical
distinction between us. After the performance we will break bread again and celebrate
our opportunity to make music together.

Phillip Sudo suggests that the act of performance is like the Japanese tea ceremony. ‘In
the tea ceremony, host and guest call this ichigo ichie – one time, one meeting. Each
gathering is a special occasion.’¹⁵ Collectively musicians and audience in this
performance may reach a transcendent state together, or we may not. Individually we
may slip into and out of the transcendent state but host (musicians) and guests
(audience) share this special moment of performance together.

In this concert, the collective ‘will’ of the musicians will rouse silence into shapes and
combinations, colours and textures that are meaningful to us, even if we don’t know how
meaning is derived from these ‘bizarre samplings.’¹⁶ We may play notes and sequences
that are Apollonian in origin with identifiable structures and harmonic resolutions. We
may play from a Dionysian state with no discernable structural links to previous
harmonic or rhythmic material or to concepts such as ‘equal temperament,’ where the
sound mass moves for no good reason. There will be ‘yang’ moments of enabling and
‘yin’ moments of restraint. There will be moments where one player is perceived as
foreground and the other player will recede and vice-versa. Occasionally, two
simultaneously occurring melodic lines of equal intensity will blur foreground –
background relationships but sounds may be perceived as ‘minor’ drawing the listener
inward (yin) or sounds may be perceived as ‘major’ projecting the listeners awareness
‘outward’ (yang).

At some point, we will arrive at ‘the gateless gate.’ To pass through the gate, we
dispossess ourselves of our ‘self.’ To do this, we need to become totally absorbed in the
listening process. If this happens without expectation, we will experience a union with a
force outside of ourselves. The force may be called Mu, perhaps Zat, or God or the
Absolute or perhaps best known in the Tao as ‘the nameless.’ In this way, this
performance may be likened to a religious ritual, where, as Reanney reminds us, ‘the
word religion comes from two Latin roots re and ligare – re-ligare (to bind together) - so a root meaning of religion is that which binds together. That which is joined together in this performance is the collective experience of engaging a force outside of ‘self.’

I intend to perform in an intimate yet resonant space. The acoustic of the performing space becomes the physical boundary of the relative silence I play against. It is the prepared canvas ready to be painted with sound. If the space is too acoustically ‘dry’ with a very short reverberation time, I find myself exerting too much force in trying to fill the space with sound. In these circumstances, all my effort is directed towards trying to achieve a ‘good’ balanced sound. If the acoustic space is too reverberant, the reflections bouncing back from the walls, floor and ceiling can become too dominant. In this case, I feel ‘bullied’ by the space and I am compelled to play as minimally as possible making it more difficult to balance the musical elements necessary to find ‘the gateless gate.’

At the beginning of a performance, I may play sounds using my saxophone like a sonar ‘ping’ and hence, the acoustic nature of the space is revealed; the size and shape of the room, the equalisation of the space; a bright sound, a dark sound, an interior sound, a joyous sound, chaotic-confused sounds. In a new space, the beginning of an improvised piece for me is always exploratory, getting to know the canvas. Musical shape and structure are of lesser importance at this stage. It is as if you are in a dark cave, and instead of using your hands to feel the shape and dimension of the cave you use your ears. I prefer to play with my eyes closed, routing all sensory power to my ears.

In using the saxophone as a tool of music making, my will is projected through the saxophone and its associated parts; the mouthpiece, and more especially, the saxophone reed. Is the reed too soft, too hard, too wet or too dry? Each of these considerations has a dramatic effect on sound production. Is the saxophone leaking air? Is the temperature in the room too hot or too cold and affecting tuning?
My saxophone, being of metal, cork and mother of pearl, begins the journey with me cold and distant, but after a time, filled with life giving breath, my saxophone begins to feel like flesh and blood.

My breathing needs to be centred, focussed and physically supported. My embouchure may be too firm or too slack. My whole body needs to be in a correct state of alignment, relaxed and open. Performance anxiety often pushes it in the opposite direction. My mind needs to be calm and receptive. Relax.

To utter a single note is to exert a considerable force of will over all the countering forces abovementioned that would stop the music-making process. How much force? Enough force, or, in Zen terms, force which is forceless.

When I perform with other improvisers, optimally, it is as if we create waves for each other. Some of these waves are ‘surf-able’ where we use each other’s energy to propel the next musical gesture through an entrainment of energy. Other ‘waves’ intentionally create interference as a means of musical propulsion. As musicians, arguably, our tendency is to work towards resolution and harmony; when resolution occurs, the music has cadenced and becomes static. Dissonance and interference move the musical gesture onward.

My objective in this examination performance, and in performing generally, is to ‘just play.’ To do this requires the suspension of all internal Apollonian dialogue. In this context, Apollonian dialogue manifests itself usually as negative critical analysis of what I have just played. My impulse to play, to ‘just play,’ is Dionysian. It is my desire to be engaged with sound and be enveloped by that sound in an aural cocoon. This is why I like playing in cavernous spaces; a return to the womb, sound mediated through amniotic space, the continuum of fluid rushing through a mother’s veins, the continuum of electrical buzz through the nervous system, the beating of the heart-pulse in continuity.

I seek to play with an attitude of ‘nothing to gain-nothing to lose.’
I breathe in,
I exhale through my saxophone producing sound,
this sound reverberates in the acoustic space,
I listen, I feel,
I breathe in,
I exhale through the saxophone, the sound goes out into space and I listen and loop back
to ‘breathe in’.
This is my perfect model of playing ‘breathe in, listen, breathe out’.
At some moment, I reach the ‘gateless gate.’

When the loop is asymmetrical,
I overcome the silence, perhaps with excessive force.
I play,
I analyse, I criticise, I correct,
I listen,
I praise,
I play,
I slip,
I analyse, I criticise,
I move into Dionysian space, I play passionately to the extent that my technique falls
apart, I try and play something, I error correct, I breathe, I’m breathless.

In the moment of beginning a performance, the improiser has exposed the latent
tendency of him or herself toward either Apollo (Yang-masculine) or Dionysus (Yin-
feminine). My latent tendency is toward Dionysian, first seeking the sensuous pleasure
of sound and my restraining force is more Apollonian where I need to seek structure. A
performer may have the opposite tendency, that is, they are motivated by Apollo to
create musical structure that is then moderated by Dionysian forces. Following the
Chinese idea of Yin and Yang, an excessive Yin (Dionysus) may lead to deficient Yang
(Apollo) and vice versa. The aim should be balance, however, players and audience
occasionally become blocked in creating and apprehending music either in excessively
Apollonian or excessively Dionysian terms.

It is essential to remember that at every level where Apollo (yang) or Dionysus (yin)
exert influence, the opposite force is also present to some degree. I stated that my
enabling force (yang) proceeded from my latent tendency toward a Dionysian (yin) state
and that my restraining force (yin) was in my move toward the Apollonian state (yang).
This may at first appear to be a contradiction however, the forces of yin and yang are
infinitely divisible and become infinitely more subtle in their influence. For example:

\[
yin = yang + yin \\
(yang+yin) + (yin+yang) \\
yang = yin + yang \\
(yin+yang) + (yin+yang)
\]

Arguably, Nietzsche's conception of Apollo and Dionysus are equivalent to the Eastern
notion of Yang and Yin respectively. The essential difference between Western and
Eastern treatment of these forces is that the West often sees these forces as mutually
exclusive opposites and the East sees these forces as being in a dynamic relationship
with one another.

A mode of existence (the state of forces which take possession of an object or process) if
read from the perspective of mutually exclusive pairs suggests that an object or process
is fixed and therefore definable because its fixed nature allows it to be mapped through
referencing that which the object exists in relation to. When the mode of existence is
read as the result of the interaction of polar-complementary forces, it is not possible to
map because the forces that take possession of an artistic process are in an ever-
changing state. This method of reading polar-complementary forces is more appropriate
when considering freely improvised music and the transcendent experience because it
allows for risk, asymmetry, disjunction, flow, chaos, self-dispossession and non-linearity
in a way which a binary mind cannot process.


3

The Tao that can be expressed
  Is not the Tao of the Absolute.
The name that can be named
  Is not the name of the Absolute.

The nameless originated Heaven and Earth
  The named is the Mother of All things.

Thus, without expectation,
  One will always perceive subtlety;
And, with expectation,
  One will always perceive the boundary.

The source of these two is identical,
Yet their names are different.
Together they are called profound,
Profound and mysterious,
The gateway to the Collective Subtlety.

4 Sufi master Hazerat Inyat Khan writes:

The life absolute from which has sprung all that is felt, seen, and perceived, and into which all again merges in time, is a silent, motionless, and eternal life which among the Sufis is called *zat*. Every motion that springs forth from this silent life is a vibration and a creator of vibrations. Within one vibration are created many vibrations. As motion causes motion, so the silent life becomes active in a certain part and creates every moment more and more activity, losing thereby the peace of the original silent life. It is the grade of activity of these vibrations that accounts for the various planes of existence. These planes are imagined to differ from one another, but in reality they cannot be entirely detached and made separate from one another.


The concept of ‘flow’ as it relates to music making has a variety of different and sometimes complex meanings such as the concept of flow as discussed in Csikszentmihalyi’s book, *Flow: the psychology of happiness* for example. Where authors such as Csikszentmihalyi (1992) and Jourdain (1998) attempt to define flow in terms of cognitive psychology and in doing so striate the concept of flow, I intend flow to be read here in relation to Nachmanovitch’s text where he writes:

Looking out, now, over the ocean, the birds, the vegetation, I see that absolutely everything in nature arises from the power of free play sloshing against the power of limits. The limits may be intricate, subtle, and long-lived like the genetic structure of the orange tree before me. But the pattern of the ocean, the pattern of the orange tree or the sea gulls, arises organically; it is a self-organizing pattern. The self-organizing activity arises, slowly changes, suddenly shifts, leans from mistakes, interacts with the way of its fellows and its environment. These creative processes inherent in nature are called by some people evolution, by others creation. The unending flow through time and space of this pattern of patterns is what the Chinese call the Tao.’

Nachmanovitch, pp. 33-34.

Nachmanovitch, p. 33.

Sudo, p. 167.

P. Boulez. In Attali, p. 146

Reaney, p. 135.

Ideally, the acoustic spaces I choose to play in have a sense of intimacy about them. I intend for the audience to feel as if they are awash in the musical gesture. This is a tricky
thing to achieve. If the audience have the sense that they need to ‘lean forward’ to hear what you are playing or that the audience becomes more aware of the noises emanating from the person sitting beside them, their ability to ‘let go’ and participate in the transcendent state will be compromised. Similarly, if the volume of the performance is excessive then the audience may feel as if they are being assaulted and also unable to enter a transcendent state because of the need for self-protection.


20 Berendt contends that every living being seeks harmony with every other living being and optimally achieves this through a process called ‘entrainment’ or sometimes called ‘mutual phase locking’. Insofar as entrainment is a fact of musical performance, Berendt quotes George Leonard who writes:

> In music, the miracle of entrainment is made explicit. The performer's every gesture, every micromovement, must be perfectly entrained with the pulse of the music, or else the performance falls apart. Watch the members of a chamber group—how they move as one, become as one, a single field. We have become accustomed to such miracles: the extraordinary faculty of jazz musicians to “predict” precise pitch and pattern during improvisation... the miracle springs not so much from individual virtuosity... as from the ability of a large group of human beings... to sense, feel, and move as one.


21 Nachmanovitch, p. 3.
Chapter Six

The Process of Musical Realisation

In the preceding chapters, I have discussed the nature of transcendent experience, the way in which a performer can be considered as a conduit expressing archetypal forces within a 'mode of existence,' and the extent to which the mode of existence of a performer might facilitate the transcendent experience. In chapter five, I attempted to preface my examination performance by exploring my goal of achieving the transcendent state in performance within the context of the ‘rhizomic’ connections that exist between the musicians I perform with, the audience and me.

In this chapter, I intend to show the way in which this study has circulated the newfound knowledge into my ‘practice-room’ and the extent to which my evolving practice regime has influenced my live and recorded process of musical improvisation.

Musical Practice.

In developing a method of musical practice that would enable a player to have greater access to the transcendent experience, I reasoned, from my evolving exegesis, that the concepts of flow, entrainment, disposssession of self, highly intensified listening, breathing, relaxation and posture were central to the transcendent experience and that self awareness, negative feelings about self and fear amongst other things were barriers to achieving transcendence.¹

Expanding this idea, self-awareness manifests itself as a barrier to the transcendent experience because it is an attitude towards self that is driven by a concern for what other people will think of 'me.' Consequently, one continually and critically gazes at oneself from an idealised external perspective as if one were gazing upon the self from the perspective of another human. The barrier toward transcendent experience is erected insofar as the experiential self becomes confused between the actual self and the
externalised projection of self that gazes upon and sits in judgement of the actual self. The transcendent experience is only attainable when the individual is 'grounded' fully with both his or her absolute and relative self. (See the Suzuki definition of 'self' in chapter one, page 10).

Negative feelings about the self, in the manner that Day suggests, often occurs in conjunction with self-awareness and becomes a barrier to the transcendent experience because the player amplifies his or her perceived shortcomings. The relative self of the player will not allow the absolute self to embrace the relative self because the relative self feels unworthy of union. From Suzuki's perspective, without the union of both the absolute and relative self, it is not possible to achieve the transcendent experience.

Fear may act as a barrier to the transcendent experience from many standpoints. The player may feel that, in the act of dispossessing the self, one loses control and may look foolish, visually and aurally, in performance. Where fear manifests itself as poor tone, poor intonation and poor flow, it may be because the player utilises bad technique to keep him or herself invisible. In this instance, the player is unlikely to advance and play at a deeper level of public engagement and this may be because of a fear of 'success.' Sometimes this fear is employed negatively by a player in fortifying an 'anti-virtuosity' stance. This is more commonly observable in improvised and popular music where the player may be able to avoid being challenged to play with a reasonable degree of skill in comparison to a player of a composed piece of music who needs a minimum skill level to negotiate the scripted piece.

As this study progressed, I gradually became aware that the manner in which I was practising formed a barrier to the experience of transcendence. I became consciously aware that the highly self-critical 'Socratic' voice which would compare my 'miserable attempts' to the music of the great players, kept me self-aware and negative about my own music practice. My attitude embraced the notion that if I keep practising dutifully for many years, I may gain some small measure of achievement and 'morally' this was the correct path to follow. Under this regime, I perceived that my music was an
'apology.' In performance, it was as if I would try to say to the audience, 'yes I know I'm not worthy, but if you bear with me we'll get through this thing and at least I'm trying.' This attitude is relatively common amongst musicians and well argued in William Day's line of reasoning regarding 'moral perfectionism,' cited earlier and neatly encapsulated by the notion that one has 'a thoroughgoing dissatisfaction with oneself as one now stands.'\(^2\)

I reasoned that the first step to achieving transcendent experience was to dispossess the ego even in practice. There should be no separation of the transcendent experience in practice or performance. In musical practice this equates to playing a note or exercise and just observing it. If the note is not well articulated or the exercise is unsuccessful in execution, it is not a reflection on the character of the player; the player must detach from the note or exercise and just observe it. There is no reason for the ego to possess the success or failure of the exercise. This idea is discussed at length in Miyamoto Musashi's treatise of Japanese warrior culture *The Book of Five Rings*. Mushashi recounts a traditional Zen saying and comments:

"the pillar of affirmation does not see the pillar. The pillar of denial does not see the pillar. Having gotten rid of affirmation and denial altogether, attain understanding within affirmation and denial." This story is to be applied to all arts. ...As for the pillar of affirmation and the pillar of denial, this means that judgements of right and wrong, good and bad stand firmly in the heart, affirmation and denial being like pillars standing. Insofar as keeping in mind something that is right will become onerous all of a sudden, it will be even more onerous if it is something wrong. Therefore the saying has it that you do not see the pillar. This means that you should not look for pillars of affirmation and denial, right and wrong. These judgements of good and bad are sicknesses of the mind. As long as these sicknesses do not leave the mind, whatever you do is not good. Therefore the saying goes that we should attain understanding within affirmation and denial after having gotten rid of affirmation and denial. This means that after having detached from affirmation and denial, you should then
mix in with affirmation and denial, rising from the midst of affirmation and denial to the supreme state.\(^3\)

An objection to this attitude toward musical practice may be that, unless one acknowledges a mistake and takes personal responsibility for it, one will not progress. Here I argue, as does Mushashi, that if the player conceptually understands that which is required to achieve the aim of the exercise, the player will achieve mastery over the exercise because the player will subconsciously make the necessary corrections to achieve mastery if unencumbered by the negative baggage of self-loathing or that which Musashi refers to as 'the sick mind.'

Adopting this approach to my own musical practice, I began to focus simply on my scale exercises. My goal was to achieve a level of detachment whilst practising scales. Scales are useful in this type of exercise simply because, at this level, the player does not have to consciously think about which notes to play. Thus, the scale exercise can be focussed on detachment, flow, tonal balance, breathing, relaxation and entrainment. With regard to the scale portion of my practising, my routine was as follows:

*Using the metronome at a medium pace regarding the ‘clicks’ on beats two and four (rather then one and three) play a major scale from the tonic note to the uppermost note of the saxophone in that scale (without going into the altissimo register) and come back down to the lowest note in that scale returning to the tonic. Do this in one breath. Do not be attached to the outcome, just observe. Proceed to the next major scale in the cycle of fourths, for example, move from C Major to F major to Bb major etc. Upon completing major scales proceed to harmonic minor scales and follow the same procedure.*

The rationale for using the metronome on beats two and four was to facilitate jazz flow. I chose not to integrate the altissimo register in this exercise because the exercise was primarily concerned with detaching oneself from the outcome. For the purposes of this exercise, my facility in the altissimo register would have detracted from the feeling of
detachment I was trying to cultivate. In utilising the whole register of the saxophone in this exercise, the player relates the ‘architecture’ of the saxophone to the navigation of harmony in conjunction with the concept of ‘tonic’ so that the player is always aware, aurally and kinaesthetically, of where they are in relation to the tonic.

In playing a scale in one breath, my intention was to entrain myself into a deeper state of aural awareness through balanced and deep breath cycles, and also to experience the deep sense of relaxation that accompanies deep cyclic breathing. My practice routine now begins with deep cyclic breathing for the purpose of balancing Apollonian and Dionysian influences prior to playing a note. The breathing technique I use now is an amalgam of ideas about breathing from multiple sources. However, at the core of this technique is an adaptation of 'Dan-Jun Breathing' from the Korean philosophical art 'Sun-Do.' The 'Dan-Jun' is a physical location within the body just below the lower abdomen. The quickest way to find this point is by using a tone generator resonating at 136.102 Hertz. This frequency resonates the Dan-Jun. At the in-breath, the player visualises pushing the Dan-Jun downward whilst expanding the top part of the chest. The player has the sensation of splitting apart from just above the 'belly button.' The player releases this breath as effortlessly as possible. This type of breathing produces a strong support to the tone.

In adopting a ‘just observe’ attitude, the player removes the self-judgment often associated with playing an exercise which subsequently allows for a deeper listening and entrainment process. The reason for choosing the harmonic minor scale (and not another type of minor scale) was simply that I like the quality of sound produced by playing an essentially ‘major seventh’ sound in a minor context.

It is crucial that the player restrain from trying to make the exercise ‘musical’ by overlaying an emotive quality or through the use of dynamics. This may seem counter intuitive, however, if the intent of the musician is to allow external forces to 'play the music' then practice needs to be for purposes of achieving technical transparency and not rehearsing elements which will be replayed in performance.
The next exercise I practised I referred to as ‘dominant inversions.’ I attempted to play these arpeggiated chords with the same attitude of detachment, using these chords and their inversions as vehicles for both harmonic navigation and for strengthening flow, tonal balance and entrainment.

*Using the metronome at a medium pace, with the beats on two and four, play the C dominant chord to the top of the instrument, to the low register and back to the tonic, that is C₂, E₂, G₂, Bb₂, C₃, E₃, G₃, Bb₃, C₄, E₄, C₄, Bb₄, G₄, E₃, C₃, Bb₂, G₂, E₂, Bb₂, C₂. Then, play the chord in inversion (C₂, E₂, G₂, Bb₂ – E₂, G₂, Bb₂, C₃ – G₂, Bb₂, C₃, E₃, etc) then play Cm7 as a chord and inversion, Cm7b₅ chord and inversion and C dim. Then move around the cycle of fourths to F and play the chord and inversions on F7, Fm7, Fm7b₅ and Fdim. In playing each chord and inversion complete the whole note sequence in one breath.*

I incorporated into my practice an exercise on the harmonics of the saxophone that was designed to make the player acutely aware of the relationship between the muscles of the throat and the mouth cavity. To do this, the player plays a Bb above the treble clef stave as a harmonic based on the low Bb of the saxophone. Then the player, altering only the position of the throat, moves from Bb up the harmonic series to D, to F, to Ab and then down again to Bb. My intention in incorporating this exercise was simply to give greater tone control by being able to control the upper partials of the sound whilst in performance. I noticed that through embracing a 'detached' attitude in this exercise, the throat seems to 'free-up' making this exercise more achievable.

I began an intensive practice program utilising this approach during a three-month period from March until the end of May in 2001 and, since then, I have maintained these exercises as the basis of my daily practice. In another moment of synchronicity, around the time I began this intensive practice program, I met with internationally regarded New York saxophonist Andrew Sterman who has adopted similar ideas regarding attitude to practice and performance in his own practice regimen. Sterman’s
confirmation of these ideas gave me the courage to pursue this way of practising and, in mid 2002, I notice that I have gradually improved my ability to dispossess my self of judgement in the practice room and my focus and energy for practice has improved dramatically. Consequently, I feel the need to practise daily not for the sake of evolution as a player but rather to reach the peaceful mediative state I now achieve in my practice sessions, in Nietzschen terms, ‘to sit peacefully in his tossing boat amid the waves.’

Practice into Performance

Prior to the three-month intensive practice period I commenced utilising my new practice method, I had completed two recordings of improvised music with the intention of commercial release. One recording was with emerging piano player NKJ and the other was with Zeno’s Wig. Whilst my intention in both of these recordings was to achieve the transcendent state, for various reasons I was only partly successful. I include a brief discussion here because, ultimately, these recordings formed part of the preparation for the examination performance. The recording with NKJ is included as Appendix Two (this was not released commercially) and the recording with Zeno’s Wig is included as Appendix Three.

The recording with NKJ was completed in one three-hour session as two takes where we took a short break in between the takes. In this way, the recording was similar to a live performance situation. Our intention was to play freely improvised music exploring each other’s musicality and the quality of the piano in the recording studio at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

I had high expectations of this recording session because of my regard for NKJ’s playing ability and musical sensitivity. At the conclusion of the session, I was disappointed in the way NKJ and I were relating to one another as musicians. I felt that we were not playing as equals, as two independent voices interacting. Rather, NJK in the first set particularly, harmonically resolved everything I played. For me, harmonic resolution in this context closes down flow (in the Nachmanovitch sense) and, in the recording, I
began to focus primarily on creating a forward momentum that I hoped would lead to a sense of entrainment. The second set moved closer to my ideal of a playing situation, however, we still needed to play more as equals. Perhaps because NKJ had been a student of mine or perhaps because NKJ felt obliged to play in a traditional accompanist's role, I felt that NKJ had lost his or her musical voice.

From this experience, I realised that I desired to play with musicians who would play 'as equals' in a 'democratic' performance environment. I have the sense that, if NKJ and I played in this type of performance environment again, we could discuss a more open way of playing with one another. The recording of NKJ and myself documents the first time we played together and whilst, for me, there are some beautiful moments, what I experience in listening to this recording now is the reluctance both of us exhibit in letting go of self. We are respectful of each other, but in my opinion we do not get past the musical equivalent of a 'friendly handshake.'

After the recording with NKJ, I recorded a new compact disc with Zeno's Wig entitled *Bare.* The recording of this compact disc occurred in two sessions where we recorded approximately three hours of improvised music in total. Some of this material, in my estimation, was good and some was not. Again the question arose, 'should we release it warts and all?' In the end, the determining factor in editing the material was that we felt that the improvisations were all too long to be played on radio and that our prime objective in making the recording was to use the compact disc for demonstration purposes to obtain more live performances.

My own intention to reach and maintain the transcendent state in this compact disc was partly realised. However, personally I had difficulty with my health during the recording session, experiencing severe breathing limitations because of an asthma condition that occasionally affects my playing.

Upon reflection, I noticed that in both the recordings with NKJ and with Zeno's Wig, I still had not realised a real sense of release into the transcendent experience. Ironically,
the transcendent experience seemed more accessible prior to this study although I still experienced it in listening to other people play. Why was this so?

I came to realise that it was my desire and expectation that acted as a barrier to realising a transcendent state. I had too much attachment to the outcome. I desired to make a recording of high artistic quality whilst being overly concerned with the process of achieving transcendence, therefore, I was equating high artistic standard with the transcendent experience because 'surely if "god" is playing the music, then it must be good - and I can take the credit!' Hence, my real motivation for making these recordings and my barrier to the transcendent experience was revealed to me, namely, my self interest.

The intensive practice schedule I had begun in 2001 culminated in a trip to San Francisco where I met and performed with multi-instrumentalist Kenneth Nash. Prior to our meeting and subsequent performance together, I was over-awed by his reputation as a player and by his résumé listing players with whom he had performed. I realised that I could not play with Nash maintaining my attitude of 'unworthy-ness' or with my attitude of self-interest that affected my prior recordings. In preparing for our playing together, I reminded myself of the 'old flute master's' words 'nothing to gain, nothing to lose.'

Nash and I played and we shared a deep experience together. Remarkably, as I stated earlier, on the strength of this performance together, Nash put aside his commitments to fly to Australia and perform with me on the examination performance I had scheduled for the 27th March 2002.

Nash arrived in Australia and in the two weeks prior to the examination performance we played together, 'broke bread' together and deepened our bond with each other. Late on Monday the 25th March 2002, I happened, by chance, upon an email that was sent to me declaring that my examination performance was cancelled due to a university procedural problem. Emotionally, I was devastated. I spent the following day trying to rescue the situation, to no avail. Nash and I agreed that we should still perform for an audience of invited guests as we had spent so much time preparing.
For the duration of the performance, I was unable to detach myself from the feelings I had of anger, betrayal and 'injustice.' I was highly embarrassed in front of Nash, an internationally acclaimed performer with a formidable reputation. In the climate of this performance, I was unable to detach to the state of 'just play, nothing to gain nothing to lose.' I remained highly self-aware and was barely able to speak at the conclusion of the performance. I have no recollection of what actually happened in the performance. I have not been able to listen to the recording of this performance fearing that all the negative emotion I felt would return.

Why was I not able to rise above the barriers put before me in this concert? In considering this question, I came to realise that, in my quest for playing in a detached and subsequently transcendent state, I had assumed that one could practise within the transcendent state and that this would automatically translate into performance. Achieving detachment in the practice room is one thing. Achieving detachment from the ego under stress is another. Prior to the moment of the performance with Nash, I had not considered in real terms the nature of the transcendent experience and its relationship to human suffering. Here, I do not mean the relative inconvenience I experienced in having my examination performance cancelled and my anger at this; rather, the deep suffering which gives rise to the 'wisdom' of Silenus who states:

Miserable, ephemeral race, children of hazard and hardship, why do you force me to say what it would be much more fruitful for you not to hear? The best of all things is something entirely outside your grasp: not to be born, not to be, to be nothing. But the second-best thing for you – is to die soon.12

Significantly, I came to understand that the transcendent experience is important because it allows humans to transcend their suffering for a moment in time perhaps as a 'sampler' in the same way someone may obtain a demonstration copy of a computer program that is a stripped down version of the fully actualised program. The transcendent experience may provide a portal into the mystery of death or 'the mind of God,' or conversely, the
transcendent experience may be proven in time to be the result a bio-chemical reaction within the brain in which case the damnation of Silenus is absolutely justified.

Bearing all of this in mind, I was able to approach my examination performance with a more focussed spirit of 'nothing to gain, nothing to lose, just play!' I was able to secure an acoustic space that for me had a 'good feeling' about it. My long time friend and collaborator Ashley Cross agreed to perform with me. Cross was open to my suggestion that prior to the performance we spend time mentally preparing ourselves for the performance in a way that we had not considered previously.

Cross and I played two rehearsals in the space prior to the examination performance with the intent of exploring the acoustic properties of the space and to experiment with using a meditative process prior to the performance. The meditation we used was from Kenny Werner's book *Effortless Mastery*. Our goal was not specifically to attempt to reach a state of transcendance prior to the performance, rather, that we would simply share an experience of entrainment before we began to play.

On the day of the performance, some anxiety was caused initially when the DAT machine broke down. Fortunately, my mini-disc recorder was available therefore a recording was made (although there is some noise created through the resistance of the necessary input adaptors).

Cross and I began our meditation as the examiners came into the space. Approximately ten minutes into the meditation, my mobile phone rang and I answered the call. Our preparation was interrupted, but surprisingly the breaking down of the DAT machine and the interruption to our preparation seemed inconsequential.

Cross and I performed. I have virtually no recollection of what we played. I remember feeling moments of physical exhaustion, but those moments passed. After a time Cross and I finished playing. It felt like the final point of resolution. Just over an hour had passed but I had no sense of time passing at all when we played. I believe we reached a
transcendent state in our playing. For the first time in a performance of this nature,\textsuperscript{15}
upon completion of the performance, I was not left with a feeling of 'something lacking.'
I had the sense that this performance was a complete 'ichigo ichie - one time, one
meeting.'\textsuperscript{16}
These elements are not unknown to the musician however, where 'performance psychology' focuses upon the concept of 'overcoming' impediments from the perspective of 'career development,' (See T.W. Galwey, *The Inner Game of Tennis*. Bantam Books: New York, 1974, for example) I intend to pursue the overcoming of these obstacles as a spiritual pursuit which has no financial reward rather, the player is primarily concerned with realising a deeper level of spiritual awareness.


I had been working with the Dan-Jun concept for some time when co-incidentally I was experimenting with Berendt's discussion of the Indian tone 'Sa,' also known as the 'year tone' which is based on the time the Earth takes to revolve around the Sun in one year. If considered as a frequency, utilising the principle of octave equivalence to bring the frequency into human audible range, the frequency is expressed as 136.102 Hertz and strongly resonates the Dan-Jun point.


One of the prime criticisms directed at 'free improvisation' is that the improviser merely repeats pre-learnt musical phrases and gestures and therefore the term 'free' is not justified. (For example, see Boulez's criticisms in J. Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1989, p. 145.) Whilst this appears to become increasingly true of contemporary jazz practice, my intention in practice is to make my technique 'transparent' meaning that my technique is available to 'the moment' through avoiding practising musical affectations, patterns (licks) or voice leading through chord sequences. Prior to this study I had in fact been practising voice leading through chord sequences, overlaying emotive states and practising sequences. These things were not easy to give up because they are commonly regarded as 'staples' in a jazz musician's practice regimen.


I have not secured permission to print the name of the player. I refer to the player here as 'NKJ' as a way of preserving the anonymity of the player.


11 I have included a recording of this performance as Appendix Four.

12 Nietzsche, p. 22.


14 This recording is included as appendix five.

15 Before transferring into the Ph. D. program at Deakin University, I was undertaking my Masters Degree at the Victorian College of the Arts. Within this program, there were many occasions where it was necessary for me to perform either in my own examination or, as an accompanist in another student's examination. In this performance environment there were at least three examiners, ever present, and on every occasion, I finished the performances feeling slightly ashamed of my playing and feeling that I could've done 'better.'

Conclusions

This study has been an examination into the evolution of my own creative processes from a number of interlocking perspectives. As a result of this study and in an attempt to answer the question I posed earlier 'why do I play the saxophone as I do?' My playing is now moving consciously toward a more spiritual base integrating both Western and Eastern thinking into a model for technical mastery and developing an authentic voice in music.

The transcendent experience occurs on two levels; firstly, in the moment of dispossessing of self, that is, where a person does not feel separate to other people or objects (type one; dispossession of relative self). Secondly, where a person experiences a 'fusion' with a 'force' outside of him or her self (type two; union with 'Absolute' self).

The concept of 'force' has multiple representations depending upon the cultural context or 'mode of existence' that the force is experienced within. More commonly, the concept of force is imbued with spiritual or religious meaning, however, the human experience of these undefinable forces may be proven, in time, to be a fact of human psychology.

Both types of transcendent experience occur through an act of 'will,' that is, a human deliberately engages another person, object or force for the purpose of becoming 'entrained' with an external will. Entrainment may be defined as being intensely involved with that which one is doing to the extent that one loses the sense of self and becomes synchronous with the external influence.

In music, the musician engages silence in an act of play leading to the creation of music. The transcendent experience in music arises as one loses the sense of self and becomes 'fused' with the sound the musician is hearing. This level of transcendence does not depend upon the common notion that music 'communicates' to the listener. To illustrate this point, the notion that the music has to 'communicate' to a listener to achieve a state
of transcendence is equivalent to suggesting that where a chef disintegrates his or her self in the act of cooking, ('cooking samadhi' in Nachmanovitch's terms), the disintegration occurred because the food 'communicated' with the chef (or the diner).

When examining the transcendent experience from the perspective of improvised music practice, the practice of improvised music must firstly be understood through an appropriate frame of reference, not as the 'imperfect' cousin of scripted music. To do otherwise is to create an unhealthy and false understanding about the nature of improvisatory practice and the nature of transcendent experience as it arises from improvised music.

Nietzsche's conception of 'Apollonian and Dionysian' forces provides a powerful way of understanding music and the transcendent experience. However, for Nietzsche's model to work universally, one has to recognise that Apollonian qualities and Dionysian qualities are not mutually exclusive acting in a 'Cartesian Dualism' but instead, operate in the manner of a polar-complementary such as in the 'Eastern' concept of 'Yin and Yang.'

The polar complementary relationship existing between the concept of 'enabling forces' and the concept of 'restraining forces' facilitates the possibility of examining the way 'flow' operates within improvisatory processes leading to the transcendent state. The examination of flow within a creative process in comparison with the more traditional concept of 'form' leads to a new method of understanding improvisatory processes as they occur in real-time and the process of entrainment and fusion that occur as a result of flow.

When this 'new method' is applied to a musician's personal practice, assuming that the musician is concerned with developing mastery over his or her instrument for the purpose of expressing an 'authentic voice,' the musician may experience rapid development over his or her technical ability and a deepening understanding of music and its function within his or her own culture.
At the centre of the new method for comprehending and practising improvised music is the idea that the musician disintegrates the self within the practice room, meaning that the musician does not attach any self-worth to the 'successful or unsuccessful' completion of an exercise. The musician just 'observes.' This attitude is directed not at 'self-development' as one may expect but rather at 'self-annihilation.' This method of practice recognises that achieving a transcendent state in the practice room does not necessarily equate with achieving a transcendent state in performance, and, that the goal of achieving transcendence can itself become a barrier to the fusion experience. However, in developing an appropriate frame of reference for the consideration of improvised music and an appropriate language in which the musician may express the transcendent experience, the musician may make the transcendent experience more accessible through the personalising of practice routines that enable greater access to 'the moment.'

I have focussed this study upon my process of realising the transcendent state through my own musical practice. The process of journey and discovery I undertook in this study was the necessary path for me to 'ground' the knowledge in a way that would positively influence my music practice. If asked 'does this study have relevance for the broader community? I answer in Jung's words:

In an era which has concentrated exclusively upon extension of living space and increase of rational knowledge at all costs, it is a supreme challenge to ask man to become conscious of his uniqueness and his limitation. Uniqueness and limitation are synonymous. Without them, no perception of the unlimited is possible - and, consequently, no coming to consciousness either - merely a delusory identity with it which takes the form of intoxication with large numbers and an avidity for political power. Our age has shifted all emphasis to the here and now, and thus brought about a daimonisation of man and his world. The phenomenon of dictators and all the misery they have wrought springs from the fact that man has been robbed of transcendence by the shortsightedness of the
super-intellectuals. Like them, he has fallen victim to unconsciousness. But man's task is the exact opposite: to become conscious of the contents that press upwards from the unconscious. Neither should he persist in his unconsciousness, nor remain identical with the unconscious elements of his being, thus evading his destiny, which is to create more and more consciousness. As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being.¹
Bibliography


