Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

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Abstract

Creativity is an intangible yet very much real element of the human condition, an abstract concept or process proven by its representation in the material and metaphysical products of innovative human pursuits. In terms of music, creativity is demonstrated in the efforts of composers of musical works, whose preparatory undertakings result in a specific product of amalgamated intentions, and conversely in the spontaneous inventions of improvising performers, who both create and perform their works in real time. What of the many so-called classical musicians out there, who while rigorously and comprehensively trained in the creation of the ideal sound on their respective instruments via employment of the ideal technique, complete such training with a view towards the performance of the musical realisations of another’s creative urge? It is as a classical musician myself challenging the artistic merit of what I do that I embark upon this line of questioning, with a view towards clarifying the potential representation of creativity within the constraints of performing already-composed works, and identifying the role improvisation could play in interpretation as the bridging of the gap between articulating another musician’s notes and conveying those notes’ perceived meaning with a sense of personal voice.

In doing so I call upon the perspectives of musicians from the genres of repertoire performance, improvisation, and composition through a survey process which presents a practical exploration of these musicians’ motivations, experiences of creativity, notions of sound, voice, interpretation and ownership and opinions of the personal impact on all of these that musical improvisation has had or may have. The original research is grounded in examinations of the historical and contemporary contexts of improvisation’s role in classical music performance.

Responses indicated that experimentation with one’s own musicality in the form of spontaneous composition – ideally a pure, direct and honest self-expression – is an immensely useful exercise. Indeed as an exercise, and because of its immediate nature, improvisation can aid in the expansion and deepening of a musician’s knowledge of, and facility on, their instrument – the performer moves from the cycle of purely repetitious execution into a more direct and informed exploration of the notes, and thus an awareness of and contact with the more meaningful communicative potential of said notes.
Declaration

This is to certify that

(i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the Master of Music Performance (by Research) degree;

(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other materials used;

(iii) the thesis is less than 15,000 words in length inclusive of footnotes and exclusive of bibliographies and appendices.

Signed________________________
Date__________________________
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‘Do you think,’ he said, ‘do you really think that any outsider has ever got half as great a thrill from a symphony as the composer himself when he first heard his work played by a full orchestra?’

‘No,’ she answered timidly. ‘Of course not.’

‘Then become the composer! Steal his music! Take it away from him and give it to yourself!’

Roald Dahl, “Mr Botibol”
in *Completely Unexpected Tales*
Introduction:

Creating Questions

The soul must take the hint from the relics our scientists have so marvellously gathered out of the forgotten past, and from the hint develop a new living utterance. The spark is from dead wisdom, but the fire is life.

*

If it be not true to me
What care I how true it be

D. H. Lawrence, Fantasia of the Unconscious

This thesis emerges from my sense that I, as a classical musician, a performer of music imagined by someone else, am not fulfilling my creative potential. Classical music is an art but I find myself doubting that I am an artist; perhaps I merely realise the art of others. With their notes, I speak; but is my speech hollow – merely repeated from the page – or shaped by my musical (artistic) convictions? It is my re-presentation of the notes I play that gives the music a life in sound – my interpretation. How, then, can I find interpretations as the artist I could be, without compromising the artistry which brought that sequence of notes into existence in the first place? As I consider those notes, the composer’s response to life, I need to understand those notes as that response to engage with them truthfully. In performance, I need to make them my own. This thesis documents part of my discovery process in owning my interpretations; my path to finding my creative voice.
Following the final of the 2009 Asia-Pacific Chamber Music Competition in Melbourne, then Artistic Director Marco van Pagee told *The Age* newspaper that “You can have the best tutors in the world ... [but] you have to decide what it is you want to say” (Usher 2009:1). This quadrennial competition is for young instrumental performers of classical music – pre-composed music, or existing repertoire, if you will. They are participants in a form of performance art which is often construed as obscure and inaccessible or, at best, being a non-verbal communication, simply abstract. The expressive and indeed affective potential of classical music, however, is an inarguable reality and one which, technical acrobatics aside, could be considered its essential ingredient for those who engage with it. A clear concept, therefore, of a performer’s intentions for demonstrating the expressive potential of what they play demands a certain commitment and engagement on their part, and a willingness to extend that musical engagement to an engagement with their audience. This concept is ultimately a performer’s knowing ‘what it is [they] want to say’ – their musical intentions framed in artistic sensibility. However, in the performance of repertoire of which one is not also the composer, who is to say that one’s musical intentions are valid, or even relevant – when performing the work of others, is one merely a vehicle for the intentions of those others? In embarking upon this line of inquiry, I turn to those performing musicians who are themselves inherent creators – improvisers. Improvising musicians – performers of deliberately spontaneous music – make definitions theoretically straightforward: they are creators, and they are performers. Ideally, they own what they invent, as they play. And indeed, as they play, they ideally maintain a maximal engagement with the potential for musical exchange. The question of the role of interpretive ownership and certainly engagement in examples of existing repertoire is a pertinent one – how to execute a musical phrase with similar, improvisatory conviction without taking possession of it, and the sentiment behind it.

With this thesis, I pose and explore questions of what it means to be creative as a performer of existing repertoire, and the role that experimentation with improvisation can have in tapping and developing creative potential for these performers. The term ‘existing repertoire’ is taken to be interchangeable with ‘classical music’; additionally, so-called ‘classical music’ is a term commonly used to refer to Western art music as a whole and in this thesis is used similarly. The presumed dichotomy between improvising and classical performers must be
addressed; while today it is a question of categorised approach, the two realms of performing have certainly not been mutually exclusive throughout history. Certainly, it could be argued that the term ‘improvisation’ is merely a question of interpretation in itself; surely there are elements of the improvisatory in all unplanned occurrences? Such blurring of the edges will be subjected to examination in the course of this thesis.

The improvising trumpeter Leo Smith (Dean 1989:xvi) defines his craft as a musician’s “ability to instantaneously organise sound, silence and rhythm with the whole of his or her creative intelligence”, through which we observe that a holistic engagement is a vital element in the improvisation process. Chris Johnston, author of *The Improvisation Game*, clarifies this notion further, stating that “improvisation is a research tool”, and that, “properly handled, has the capacity to show us to ourselves” (2006:5-6). He goes on to contend that

> The audience is complicit with the performers in not knowing the outcome. It’s uncertain, unpredictable, occasionally heart-wrenching and also sometimes disappointing. But because of this, it is somehow closer to our day-to-day, moment-by-moment experience of life (2006:75).

Smith and Johnston both illustrate the link between improvisation and creative exploration, while Johnston highlights the potential for connectedness between improviser and audience which results from the immediate nature of the improviser’s work, and the necessity for the performer’s mindful engagement. Conversely, in an article encouraging classical musicians to explore improvisation, Sarah Stiles draws the following comparison:

> [When improvising] you are encouraged, indeed forced, to pay attention to how and what the other person is playing. If you don’t, the end result will not sound like music, but bear more resemblance to a group of players each absorbed in his or her own individual world. Classical musicians are so used to playing in front of a music stand that it can be awkward to change this habit. Even when players know their music inside-out it is the safety of reading that stops them looking away from the page. This insularity can be one of the major causes of communication problems in ensemble work (2004:139).

Stiles draws our attention to one of the hurdles faced by classical musicians as performers of existing repertoire – a mere reading of the notes can indeed lead to insularity. Without
fostering a sense of creativity in the interpretive process, how can these performers achieve
the mindful engagement that leads to communicative performance?

The concept of creativity can be explained as “the ability to produce work that is both novel
(i.e., original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e., useful, adaptive concerning task constraints)”
(Sternberg & Lubart 1999:3). Improvisation, then, as an extemporaneous performance, or as
described by Bruno Nettl, “the creation of a musical work ... as it is being performed”
(2010:1, ‘Improvisation’), can be seen to provide a clear example of an indubitably creative
pursuit. What, then, of performing existing repertoire? Creatively, having something to say
can only come as a consequence of a mindful approach, one of a readiness for “drawing
novel distinctions, that is, noticing new things” (Langer 2005:5), and we have already
observed the suggestion that the former is potentially lacking in the performance mentality of
some classical musicians. Said the late American avant-garde composer Earle Brown
(Brown, in Bailey 1980:66), that “as a matter of fact, some of the most brilliant performers of
instruments go completely dead if you ask them to imagine something”, from which we can
interpret brilliance to refer to facility, and imagination as applicable to creative capacity – and
the performers in question to be struck dumb, as it were, by the pressure of spontaneous
requirement. Brown continues,

In the straight world [of conventional classical music] the performer approaches music on tiptoe.
Music is precious and performance constitutes a threat to its existence. So of course, [they have]
to be careful. Also the music doesn’t belong to [them]. [They’re] allowed to handle it but then
only under the strictest supervision. Somebody, somewhere, has gone to a lot of trouble to create
this thing, this composition, and the performer’s primary responsibility is to preserve it from

We have here a penetrating insight into the world of dilemmas presented to the performer of
existing repertoire; while idealising the artistic identity, yet occupied with the trials of
accurate execution, whatever artistic inclinations they might have are to be projected onto the
notes of another artist. Once again, how relevant really is what these performers of someone
else’s notes want to say? In Jonathan Dunsby’s words, “for most people the performer is the
embodiment of music” (1995:4), and in taking this statement to be the practical truth, the
challenge becomes how better to embody any musics, be they your own or imagined by
another. I hypothesise, then, that inhabiting the mindset of the improviser – the spontaneous
composer and mindful performer – has the potential to help develop for performers of classical music a capacity to engage and communicate as artists, and more so an understanding of the original representation process. Thus, also, for developing the performer’s sense of ownership of the notes and of the notes’ belonging to the representation of meanings accessible to the performer themselves, and comparable with the intentions of the composer. In exploring such a hypothesis, I consult existing research in the realm of creativity studies, and examine the personal testimonies of performers, composers and improvisers. This examination takes the form of a questionnaire directed towards musicians from each of the above disciplines comprising sets of questions adapted appropriate to the discipline with which each participant identifies. Through this survey-based project I sought the opinions of professional and pre-professional – and some ex-professional – musicians on their experience of their own creativity, and their ideas as to what impact improvisation may have had on the expressive potential of their music-making. Granted there are other elements to consider in the interpretation and performance of pre-composed musics, particularly historical research, analysis and conventions of performance practice, and most certainly methods other than musical improvisation which might be utilised successfully in the obtaining of a sense of artistic ownership over the notes one plays; this thesis is intended, however, to address the notion of improvisatory music-making as a means of exploring creativity and ownership. This is offered as but one avenue towards a more comprehensive understanding of a work and its meaningful performance, rather than the only avenue towards such an understanding.

This research project finds a parallel in an earlier project conducted at (what was then) the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne by PhD candidate Rosalind McMillan in 1996. McMillan’s final thesis, “A Terrible Honesty”: The Development of a Personal Voice in Musical Improvisation, chronicled her review of the Improvisation stream in the Bachelor of Music Performance course offered by the institution, and its capacity to enable a select group of students with a trajectory for the development of their sense of musical direction and ownership as improvisers. My own research, while dealing in the concept of the

1 Of similar relevance is Mark Freeman’s Finding the muse: a sociopsychological inquiry into the conditions of artistic creativity, an interview-based study which assessed “the developmental profiles of a group of aspiring
development of voice through musical improvisation, is tailored more specifically to the
needs of the classical performer in establishing their creative journey.

Significant contributors to available literature on improvisation do not number greatly, but
begin with Ernst Ferand, whose writings marked the commencement of this area as a
component of musicological studies in general. Philip Alperson’s 1984 submission to The
Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, an article entitled ‘On Musical Improvisation’,
scrutinises what it means to improvise musically with reference to philosophical ideas on
music as an art form, and as such clarifies improvisation’s role in the discipline overall. Also
available are texts such as Derek Bailey’s Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music
(1980), and Bruno Nettl’s In the Course of Performance (1998), books that relate the
context/s of improvisation in the music of Western and non-Western cultural practices alike,
within the bounds of their current genres however and not across an overall historical
perspective. They are, therefore, of limited relevance to the proceedings of this research,
beyond the purposes of understanding the present place of improvisation in music worldwide.

Similarly, there exists little research into the role of improvisation in classical music today.
Roger Dean’s manual of improvisation, however, Creative Improvisation: Jazz,
Contemporary Music, and Beyond (1989) is potentially useful for the development of
improvisatory techniques for performers, particularly those with no prior tuition in this area.
As this thesis is written with the aim of exploring the potential impact of improvisation on
classical music performance, rather than as a further addition to the above literary field, such
texts are also, while interesting, not directly related to this study. Nettl’s contributions to the
Grove entries on improvisation (2010), and Robin Moore’s The Decline of Improvisation in
Western Art Music: An Interpretation of Change (1992), however, provide useful insights
into the historical narrative of the roles played by improvisation in Western art music, and as
such enabled a contextual grounding of my own research. Mildred Portney Chase’s
conversational relaying of her experiences encouraging her piano students to develop their
creativity through developing their improvisatory skills in Improvisation: Music From the

painters and sculptors who began their careers in the mid-1960s after having attended the School Of the Art
Institute in Chicago” (1993:5).
As regards creativity studies, while there exists a great deal of material in this area developed over the last sixty years, a consensus on and succinct summation of what it means to be creative has yet to be arrived at; indeed the Creativity Research Journal has only been in publication since 1988. Much available material is devoted to suggestions of how to utilise one’s creativity to better the financial prospects of progressive corporations, but the great body of the literature is geared towards the relating of creativity research to the education industry. Texts such as Edward de Bono’s notorious Lateral Thinking: A Textbook of Creativity (1970) follow a typical structure based on measured purveyance of creativity theory followed by activity templates. These writings demonstrate that while creativity is inherently valued in our society it is seen as a somewhat nebulous trait, and one to be harnessed by an artificial process of acquisition and fostering. The scope of debate in psychological theory on what constitutes a viable measure of creativity, however, only serves to highlight the fact that the quantification of creativity or creative inclination is certainly and justifiably hazy, and indeed, how this relates to music, music performance, and the performance of existing repertoire in particular has yet to be definitively established.

This thesis is fashioned around a forum for the standpoints of the participating musicians in the questionnaire detailed above. With the following chapter I aim to provide an initiation into the historical affiliations between improvisation and existing repertoire, before in Chapter Two engaging with survey participants’ motivations and inspirations. This forms a precursor to Chapter Three’s consideration of creativity and these participants’ conceptions thereof; the place of creativity in improvised and prepared musical performance will also be considered. In Chapter Four I discuss participant responses to the concepts of sound and voice respectively, alongside issues of interpretation and ownership in the performance of the existing repertoire, while Chapter Five presents participants’ improvisatory experience and perceptions of its places and capacities in their music-making.
Chapter One: 

*Rhyme and Reason*

For there is scarcely a single field in music that has remained unaffected by improvisation, scarcely a single musical technique or form of composition that did not originate in improvisatory practice or was not essentially influenced by it. The whole history of the development of music is accompanied by manifestations of the drive to improvise, though the element of improvisation retreats to the background in some phases, while in others it reveals a strikingly rich flowering.

Ernst Ferand, *Improvisation in Nine Centuries of Western Music: An Anthology With a Historical Introduction*

One could say that the music played by most conservatory musicians today is not ‘theirs’, in a sense, in that they have lost the right to perform it in the manner of their own choosing.

Robin Moore, “The Decline of Improvisation in Western Art Music: An Interpretation of Change” in *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*

This chapter offers first a historical backdrop to the current position of improvisation in classical music, and later some examples of classical musicians today exploring improvisation in both their education and performance practices.
While the notation of music is a phenomenon only a few hundred years of age, historian Ernst Ferand informs us that “the spontaneous invention and shaping of music while it is being performed is as old as music itself” (1961:5). Certainly, most cultures the world and history over strongly feature music in some form of tradition and certainly also, in some context, music which is improvised. Ferand continues,

The exclusively or predominantly improvisatory nature of early music practice also resulted from the circumstance that the strict division into groups of creative musicians (composers), performing musicians (singers, players), and passive listeners (the public) – a division accepted as a matter of course in our modern Western musical life – was unknown in the early stages of music’s development.

We see today a similar place for many (predominantly improvised) musics in Eastern cultures and ceremonies, such as Indian *raga*², however in most elements of our current culture of modern Western art music, we find improvisation to be playing little or no part³ – indeed it has been progressing this way for the greater part of two hundred years. Robin Moore in his article, *The Decline of Improvisation in Western Art Music: An Interpretation of Change*, refers to the infrequency with which improvisation had to that date been discussed in published scholarly research. Moore attests to

> the puzzling fact that improvisatory performance has ceased to interest a majority of conservatory-trained musicians, despite the fact that performers of European art music in previous centuries exhibited considerable interest in improvisation, and continued to consider it an important musical skill until at least 1840 (1992:61).

He goes on to state that “it is clear that only in the past hundred and fifty years attitudes towards improvisation in Western classical performance have changed drastically” (1992:63). What of prior to this, then?

In the church music of the early centuries AD we find an improvisatory approach in the use of *melisma*⁴ and *coloratura*⁵ to have been considered appropriate for the expression of

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² The study of these musics however does not have a place within this thesis.

³ Excluding the ongoing tradition of extemporised organ music in religious and other spheres.

⁴ Refers to the singing of more than one note for a single syllable.
religious ecstasy, in all its spontaneous glory. Particular examples can be found in Ambrosian and Gregorian chant. The first forays into polyphony in such chant music were known also as ‘extemporised counterpoint’ and, as the chants began to be notated, were indicated only by reference to intended intervals from the starting note of the basic chant itself. From there, the singer had some degree of license.

Later, as the Renaissance era took hold, and indeed into the Baroque era, improvisation continued to remain a vital element in performance, in the form of (often quite extended) ornamentation. In this vein, equitably distributed ensemble polyphony was rejected somewhat in favour of the solo feature. As Ferand tells us,

In the late Baroque is achieved a far-reaching synthesis of the horizontal principle of melodic ornamentation with the vertical one of polyphony and chordal playing and with motoric elements not technically highly developed, a synthesis in which free and strict improvisation at the organ, as it was practised by many generations of organists, acquires special importance. In this field, as in that of the art of vocal and instrumental ornamentation, there is reached with Johann Sebastian Bach not only an undreamed of peak but also a kind of conclusion (1961:14).

Ferand also quotes Tosi, writer of the 1723 text *Opinioni de’ cantori*,

Whoever finally does not in the da-capo section by means of variations sing everything even more beautifully and better than he has sung it previously is surely no great hero (Tosi, in Ferand 1961:17).

and C. P. E. Bach’s 1760 foreword to his *Sechs Sonaten fürs Clavier mit veränderten Reprisen*,

Variation upon repetition is indispensable today. It is expected of every performer. The public demands that practically every idea be repeatedly altered ... [and] it is this embellishing alone ... that often squeezes the bravos out of most listeners (Bach, in Ferand 1961:20).

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5 Literally ‘colouring’ (Italian) and refers to ornamented melody.
The *basso continuo*\(^6\), and their improvised realisations of the all-important figured bass, or thorough-bass, also became an increasingly important component of music of this time.

We begin to see that improvisation in these musics increasingly takes a form relative to the framework dictated by notated music, rather than being absolute (Ferand, 1961); that improvisation had its context within firm stylistic boundaries. As the Classical era established itself, and history drew nearer the Romantic age of the lauded virtuoso, performers received greater creative improvisatory opportunity in the form of the *cadenza*. Says Ferand,

> Originally, these closing formulas were governed by the old singers’ rule that they not exceed one breath, but from the end of the 17\(^{th}\) century on, cadenzas grew in scope until they became extended instrumental pieces, which assumed the character of toccatas, capriccios, études, and the like and had no direct connection with the thematic content of the compositions in question (1961:79).

Performers were gradually reined in, and during the rationalistic Classical era it became “the general practice to improvise cadenzas on motifs and themes of the concertos in question, until finally it became customary to write them down” (Ferand 1961:19). Keyboard improvisation\(^7\) continued to blossom, with composers such as Mozart and Beethoven achieving great renown for their skills in this area (as did Bach previously). However, Ferand (1961:21) tells us that soon after “signs of an increasing shallowness in improvisation doctrine became noticeable” with “technical agility taking precedence over truly creative spur-of-the-moment invention on the piano”.

It was during the Romantic era in Western art music that improvisation’s prevalence receded\(^8\), while as Lydia Goehr informs us,

\(^6\) Players of keyboard and bass instruments.

\(^7\) *Fantasias* – through-composed melodic extemporisations – were quite in vogue but these too tended to follow quite prescriptive guidelines.

\(^8\) While some 20\(^{th}\) century to contemporary composers do request the discretionary improvisatory skills of their performers, this is usually within carefully specified restraints.
The ideal of Werktreue emerged to capture the new relation between work and performance as well as that between performer and composer. Performances and their performers were respectively subservient to works and their composers (1992:231).

Thus the performance of pre-composed musics since, and particularly earlier musics (where improvised ornamentation was once expected), is dampened by prevailing attitudes of what constitutes ‘historical appropriateness’ – indeed also the notion that you can and should be true to a work as an existing concept (Goehr, 1992). Certainly, as can be observed in some survey responses in the later chapters of this thesis, many contemporary classical performers struggle with counter-intuitive negative internal monologues when asked to improvise, quite possibly as a result of self-doubts instilled by comprehensive training in the ‘perfect’ rendition of notes written by the ‘greats’. Moore (1992) attributes this to the decline of the court music culture, the increase in notation and publication of compositions (both of which lead to greater accessibility of art music to the bourgeoisie), and particularly the rise of the conservatory – the premise of which was to ‘conserve’ traditions of composition, pedagogy and performance. The conservatory ideal did not allow for the ‘distasteful’ embellishment of art music by the masses, and as Moore later states,

Reverence for the music of past eras is in itself an impediment to improvisation. Spontaneous improvisations cannot occur in music which is intended to be more a replication from 1790 than a musical event of today (1992:79).

Moore refers also to a personal communication from historian Jack Talbott, in which the latter muses,

I wonder whether the decline of improvisation in classical music shares some things in common with the rise of the museum as a middle class pastime? Both demand reverential attitudes toward artefacts of the past. Just as a moustache is not to be drawn on the Mona Lisa, so Mozart is not to be embellished (Talbott, in Moore 1992:79).

In spite of this, Moore goes on to conclude that

Art music must belong to us, as performers and spectators, and become the form of musical discourse through which we naturally choose to express ourselves. We are challenged to assure that art music remains a relevant voice in a changing society (1992:82).
A noble quest indeed, and one which, from the perspective of one such disillusioned performer, drives this research project. Says Mildred Portney Chase (1988:14), “musical improvisation can provide important outlets for musical creativity and should be reinstated in the experience of each person who learns to play an instrument”; her views on the subject are echoed in recent years by the research and education practices of such figures as David Dolan of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama’s Centre for Classical Improvisation and Creative Performance, and more locally, Nicholas Bochner, Assistant Principal Cello with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. In his work at the GSMD, Dolan uses improvisatory techniques to explore “the nature of musical spontaneity in real time – which, though it may be associated particularly with improvisation, is relevant to all musical performances” (2005:98). He explains,

The usual strategy in defining musical improvisation is to make a distinction between a spontaneously created performance on the one hand and a reproduced portrayal of a written score on the other. However, I make no such absolute distinction ... because I consider that all musical performance involves elements of creativity and spontaneity in various degrees (2005:97).

Later Dolan adds that

The properties of improvisation – the presence of spontaneous flow, active listening, communication and involvement, and the sense of unique one-time experience are also relevant to the interpretation and performance of repertoire works ... Extemporising both tonally and freely on specific stylistic forms prepares the way for integrating the sense of flow with a search for structure within the reduction of a chosen repertoire text (2005:122).

Additionally, there are musicians such as UK-based cellist Matthew Barley, who uses exploration of free improvisation in the context of his solo performances, public workshops and with his experimental ensemble, Between The Notes, with a view not just to engage more

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10 Bochner was the recipient of a 2009 Churchill Fellowship to observe and participate in aspects of Dolan’s work; see also BOCHNER, N. (2010) A study of the use of improvisation in the teaching of classical musicians. Resonate Magazine. Australia, Australian Music Centre.
in music, but to promote a social engagement and connectedness. In both performative and educational contexts, Barley’s improvisational activity is felt by him to enable a more direct means for personal commune with his audiences than performance of already-notated musics.

The chapters that follow aim to investigate prevailing motivations drawing musicians to their calling, perceptions of voice within that calling, and the potential for improvisation to promote a concept of artistic ownership – and greater communication – in music performance.
Chapter Two:

The Crowded Air

Musicians wrestle everywhere—
All day—among the crowded air.

Emily Dickinson, *Musicians Wrestle Everywhere*

How can we do honest justice to our creative selves in playing music? What brings us to study music, and what sustains us while we do? And what indeed, allows us to establish relevance in our music-making while maintaining an artistic integrity? In investigating these ideas, I developed a questionnaire to be completed by a sample of practising musicians hailing from performing and compositional genres. Begun in March, 2010 and continuing over the course of three months, the survey process involved the collection of the voluntarily-submitted opinions and perspectives of a representative body of music students and professionals in Melbourne, Australia. Questions were consistent to begin with but gradually tailored to maintain relevance to the disciplines with which the participants identified

There were thirty respondents in total, a collective comprised of studying and established classical, improvising, rock, pop (and fusions of each) vocalists, instrumentalists and composers of all sorts and styles. Their generous contributions to my research were made in kind and on the understanding that they would be anonymous. Some participants were known to me previously but others responded to advertisements posted at the former Victorian College of the Arts, and via online social-networking sites. The aim of the

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11 See Appendix A: Questionnaire, pp57-62.
12 See Appendix B: Participant responses, pp63-228.
questionnaire was to establish the motivations and inspirations behind the music-making of participants and to assess their experience/s of their own creativity, before drawing the focus towards participants’ experience in and of musical improvisation. While my intention was ultimately to ascertain the impact improvisation had or hadn’t made on participants’ ideas of their musical journeys, in order to further clarify potential impact of improvisatory experience on development of personal voice, a discernment of participants’ concept of the latter was required. Additionally, I felt it to be important to clarify participants’ attitudes towards perceptions of creativity, as performers specifically of existing repertoire or spontaneously improvised music, and also witnesses to performances of repertoire of their own conception.

The opening questions directed participants to disclose the motivating factors preceding their commitment to certain instruments and/or disciplines. In responding to the question, What drew you to music initially?, the general tendency across repertoire players, improvisers and composers alike was in the realm of satisfaction of the creative impulse, namely through self-expression. The following responses from participants who identified as repertoire musicians were mirrored by those of other disciplines:

- It was the unique, strong emotions I felt while listening to or playing it.
- I find it emotionally fulfilling to express myself through sounds and it is satisfying to work at technical challenges and experiment with sound to create something beautiful.
- [Music provided] an avenue to express feelings; a way to connect with myself and others.

When participants were asked to elucidate these motivations further however, and clarify reasons for pursuing their musical ambitions under a certain disciplinary genre (What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?), the apparent separation between these genres was emphasised somewhat more. All participants indicated a sense of inexplicable ‘resonance’ with the particular qualities of their instruments, leading to their choosing to study that instrument, however in terms of genre choice for further study the results were more plainly divided. Interestingly, repertoire musicians spoke of a fear of boundary-less performance: they believed that a greater overall structure pertained to the performance of
existing repertoire than that of improvised contexts, and indeed that a major feature of improvised performance is the perceived absence of predetermined structure. This differentiation is not necessarily the practical case, especially given that a great number of improvised performances draw from the jazz tradition of improvisations canvassed against structural formulae similar to many found in classical music. Likewise, given that spontaneity is an irrefutable element of any engaged performance, improvised or repertoire-based, such a fear is perhaps ill-founded. It appears nonetheless to be a commonly-held view by performers of existing repertoire that their discipline provides the parachute that the free-fall of live improvisation lacks. Alternately, the focus of participants who considered themselves to belong to each and all of the genres addressed tended to be a more encompassing one; they appeared not to feel a need to restrict or pigeonhole their creativity and instead described their music-making as an avenue for their expressive requirements, with one explaining that they “see instruments and disciplines as vehicles for me to be able to say what I want to say in sound”.

In keeping with the response trends evidenced above, responses to the similarly broad What do you find musically inspiring? were equally consistent, covering ideas such as passion, commitment, and honest communication. From repertoire participants, responses ranged from the more general:

Evidence of someone giving themselves completely to the music, taking risks and leaving them [sic] vulnerable to imperfection.

... playing with other people when they have compatible musical ideas.

to including situation-specific detail:

There are moments – [while] listening or playing – in all musical genres that epitomise the awesomeness of that particular genre – I always find these inspiring. For example the end section of Mahler’s 2nd symphony with a choir singing at full strength and the feel of the organ playing – that along with everything the orchestra’s doing makes it inspirational to either be a part of creating or to share listening.
Variance in the responses to this question was demonstrated in terms of what constituted essential qualities of the above ideas. While the notion of skilled ensemble playing appeared fairly consistent, repertoire-based participants made more sweeping statements regarding the musically inspiring, along the lines of story-telling, communicative properties and risk-taking. Improvising participants, however, conveyed a more specific concept of these elements, with one participant stating:

As a musician I feel inspired when playing with a group of musicians that [sic] come together and create a sound that is seemingly unified[,] where the music feels greater than the sum of its parts.

Another valued “the creation of sounds on one’s instrument that are not typical or stereotypical”, and still another added “originality, resourcefulness” to this more personal conception of involved performance.

Value for the potentially transformative experience in music performance was common to all categories of participants surveyed, and the concept of transformation through music also appeared particularly relevant to interpretations of the questions that followed, which related to what participants found to be musically meaningful and fulfilling. Most responses referred to experiences in which the above elements of passion, commitment and communicative potential were optimised, and this time the major difference between the responses across the board was that repertoire performers seemingly found musical fulfilment in more egocentric ways, while the responses of improvisers and composers were more ensemble-oriented. Composers however, demonstrated most openness to external influence in their music-making.

In terms of finding meaning through their music-making, most participants – particularly those of the repertoire persuasion – appeared to expect to be changed in some way, be it in relation to emotive power of the musical experience or in terms of global outlook. Again, the responses from repertoire performers portrayed a self-orientation while improvisers looked to ensemble experiences for examples, and composers (and also those who aligned themselves with the three available categories) presented a more encompassing view but one which nonetheless strongly featured the importance of sharing the experience with other human
beings in rendering that experience meaningful. Among the responses offered by repertoire performers, were

I value music and performances that take my breath away, make me lose track of time, make me think and revalue my own life, surprise me and mesmerise me.

One in which I realise something new either in a musical or technical sense – this could happen in performance or practice. These moments will often shape my opinions in terms of whatever musical style is being played, or the appropriate technique to use on a particular instrument/style of music.

I think the one thing always required is that SOMETHING IS COMMUNICATED [sic].

while another defied the trend summarised above in attesting they found meaning in

Enjoying a performance with others – the musicians, the audience, whoever’s there. Music is all about giving, to me. Giving yourself to it and giving it to others.

This opinion was echoed throughout the responses made by improvising and other participants, one of whom contributed that

It’s often composing a particular piece that really moves me, or being part of an ensemble that plays in a way that is a transformative experience for both the performers and the audience. Conversely, a meaning/less experience usually entails playing in (or listening to) a band that doesn’t listen to each other, is unnecessarily loud, and is unsupported by the audience (either because the audience doesn’t care about the band, or because the band doesn’t care about the audience!) [italics added].

Ultimately it would seem for the surveyed group that meaning is brought to the musical experience in a sense of belonging, usefulness, communicative potential, and personal growth through all these. As one last repertoire performer put it, through

[An experience] where I feel involved and engaged (as a player or listener) and part of something significant, when I play with a group and things happen in a performance spontaneously and perfectly ...
In the next chapter, I address the notion of creativity, especially as it relates to respondents’
given perceptions thereof.
Chapter Three: 

Artists and Artisans

The fate of a culture is finally decided by the creativity of its carriers.

J. L. Moreno, “Creativity and Cultural Conserves”

in Sociometry

In order to be creative you have to know how to prepare to be creative.

Twyla Tharp, The Creative Habit: Learn it and use it for life

The study of creativity is imprecise, at best. While the field has expanded dramatically since J. P. Guilford admonished its state of neglect in his inaugural presidential address to the American Psychological Association in 1950 (Feldman et. al., 1994), it is generally acknowledged that “the complexity of creativity more or less militates against a universally acceptable definition” (Dacey & Madaus 1969:58). Indeed, the reliable measurement and quantification of creativity continues to be an issue of some contention, with such existing methods as Torrance’s Tests of Creative Thinking and Mednick’s Remote Associates Test felt to produce contrived and inadequate results. Most attempts to establish a practical definition, however, do generally assert creativity to involve the same basic element, as explained by David Cope in his text Computer Models of Music Creativity, being the

\[\text{In that the superficial nature of data collection doesn’t give a practical measure of creative capacity (Bleedorn 2003).}\]
“initialisation of connections between two or more multifaceted things, ideas, or phenomena not otherwise considered actively connected” (2005:11). When we observe that creativity is generally seen as an intrinsic and essential attribute of the practising artist, and the communication of messages through art practice often occurs through metaphorical means, we note also a potential for clear and functional application of Cope’s definition in the case of this project’s subject matter. It could perhaps be said, as many of the communicative connections made in performance linking musical phenomena to other such phenomena or even existential phenomena known experientially to the performer are not assumed or prescribed, that the performer is consequently ‘initialising connections’ between elements ‘not otherwise considered actively connected’. Surely indeed making music is as much about the making of connections as the playing of the notes. Given, then, that musicians are creative – they create sound and associate with it meaning derived from representation of the human condition – are repertoire musicians less creative than their improvising and composing counterparts? The third section of the questionnaire focused on participants’ perceptions of creativity as evidenced through their realisation – or not – of their own creativity through their music-making.

When asked, Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?, participants responded overall with a resounding ‘Yes’, but their concept of creativity differed in a number of ways. The emerging trend of more literal responses from repertoire musicians to responses of greater openness from improvisers and greater still from composers persisted. Most repertoire performers argued that playing music is creating sound and therefore is creative. The majority of responses here aligned with the opinion that music performance is creative “absolutely – both in the challenge of recreating a story and finding technical solutions to problems”. While some went as far as implying that creativity by definition requires a revealing of the soul, and only the ‘truest’ musicians were capable of this, most repertoire musicians seemed to be of the opinion that, as put by one, “even if you are performing something that’s been done three million times before you put your own stamp on everything you touch”.

The improvising respondents took this aspect a step further across their answers, offering that the level of creative potential was indeed dependent upon the level of mindful engagement:
I think [music performance] definitely can be [creative], but in some contexts it is much closer to resembling a technical pursuit or even a trade in the carpenter/mason sense of the word. I don’t think I believe that all acts of music creation are inherently ‘creative’ in the sense that they are an expression of something, an artistic gesture. I think the apparent level of ‘creativity’ in a music performance varies greatly.

One composer took this further still in referring to the overall participatory event of music performance:

... a good performance is a practice in being ‘in the moment’ and is therefore created fresh every time! But there’s a larger creative context as well. The performer and observer are creating an experience together, they are held together by the form of ‘performance’, and while they are suspended together in that form they cannot go about the work of being ‘destructive’, a fact which has a creative magic of its own\(^\text{14}\).

Participants were then asked to draw their reflections towards their experience of their own creativity. A number of responses from the repertoire performers to the questions Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? and subsequently Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? came across as somewhat shallow, in the sense of not being particularly revelatory, or even relevant, for instance,

I try to create therefore I am creative.

Yes – music is an art form. We create sounds and structures that are for entertainment and are also for communication.

From which it could possibly be surmised that, rather than these particular respondents being shallow people, the approach to identifying or developing creativity in music performance in the classical music world has been somewhat retarded in comparison with other creative fields, or indeed other music performance disciplines. Some other responses from this area however were much more illuminating, offering explanations as to how their created sounds

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\(^{14}\) It is not, however, unequivocally certain that the negation of destruction has a creative result by default (or that the people in question could necessarily be labelled so!).
contained their expressive creativity\textsuperscript{15}. Two responses in particular were both negative, and loaded:

... as an ‘interpreter’ rather than a composer, I need the starting point of dots on a page and other people’s ideas and input before I manage to create something that is actually genuinely my own interpretation of an existing work. I have never written new music or engaged in any other kind of art form ... my own ideas take a lot of prodding in order to appear.

... often I don’t let my creativity surface because of what others want, for fear it will be inadequate, or because I don’t have time or energy to invest in creating. When I let fear get in the way I wouldn’t call myself creative.

While both participants are aware of their creative potential they feel it to be blocked by, in the case of the first, their perceived passivity as a classical musician, and in that of the second, their self-doubt, or inability to commit sufficient time. The need for fearlessness and unfettered dedication in the realising of this latter respondent’s creative potential is also clearly acknowledged. Perhaps these participants’ lack of respect for the validity of their personal creativity is indicative of the role of creativity in many classical performers’ formative experiences and education. Indeed it may also be what leaves the one dependent on others’ input, or prevents the other – subconsciously or otherwise – from having or \textit{making} the time to indulge their own creativity.

The repertoire musicians tended to differentiate more plainly between what they saw as a creative element of their music-making and what they considered to be technical. The response expressed by one participant as “I get caught up in technical restrictions and disregard the creative side of what we do” featured in a number of guises, with another participant offering that

\textsuperscript{15} Examples of such responses include:

“Yes, I try to use my brain, my hands, my voice, to make new things and be spontaneous in my thinking and my feelings. Although, it does feel harder the older you get because you lose your childhood innocence and you are told what to think and feel rather than letting it happen.”

“Yes – I try not to judge ideas [but] to allow them to flow ... Also I deliberately try to think of things from as many different perspectives and in as many different ways as possible.”
[I am not as musically creative] as I think I should be. I suppose, to look at it from a slightly more detached point of view, I must be creative in order to be able to pull off any kind of performance. However I feel that all the things that hold me back as a musician (technique, experience, the ability to maintain a groove, etc) must be getting in the way of my creativity.

These respondents acknowledge the place of creativity in classical music, but also demonstrate their uncertainty in accessing creative readings of the works they play. Still another stated that “some creativity is involved but I feel that compared to a composer or another type of artist, creativity is not the main element in my musicianship”, which simultaneously challenges what constitutes musicianship, being a musician, and whether music performance from a classical perspective is an art form at all.

While some repertoire participants steered clear of black and white perceptions of musical creativity\textsuperscript{16}, the broadest views were again held by participants who related to each category, with one providing that the question of the nature of their musical creativity was a difficult [one] to answer ... as a freelance musician so much of what one does can become ‘work’, even though one is technically being ‘creative’, and there is this utopian ideal of creativity being very free and unrestrained. Also, being creative and being musically talented or technically proficient are all very different things, but things that I think can be mixed up and mistaken for one another ...

Overall, these musicians who identified as representing all disciplines demonstrated a more pragmatic conception of their musical creativity:

From the aspect of ‘original’ content, I feel I have little difficulty producing clear and flexible ideas and expressions (improvisational or compositional seeds). I feel I also have reasonable strength at the (reasonably more challenging) task of creative modification/improvisation around a single idea - again, improvisation or composition within reasonable bounds.

\textsuperscript{16} [participant responses]

“I think that all musicians are creative – but of course some more than others. People easily forget that every sound that we make as a musician requires choice and creativity. The stereotype is that classical musicians are less creative, but I do not subscribe to this theory.”

“Yes – both in terms of surviving as a musician and in preparation/performance. No matter what the traditions are I need to find processes which work for me.”
Among the improvisers, there presented a general sense that their creativity was bound up with their identities as improvising musicians. “I not only make music but also am an improviser in life” was one summation of a recurrent view, demonstrating the normality with which these players cast their musical improvisations, and the inextricability of these from the persons performing them. Another improviser explained

I think I am a creative person. As pretentious as it sounds, I feel I can best express myself through the creation of things. The creation of something, be it music, cardboard scenery, writing (no matter how bad) often feels like an outlet for emotions/thoughts/ideas that haven’t had the opportunity to manifest themselves ... in other areas of my life.

The composers, however, tended to tie their sense of their own creativity to notions of the constitution of their humanness:

I have a constant drive to express myself creatively. Every little moment that occurs throughout my day has a creative attachment – I dress according to my need for expression; I capture the sound of the water pouring from the kettle into my mug of tea and it sparks the basis for a piece of music. There is a constant need for a creative outlet.

I do consider myself to be a creative person, mainly because I don’t feel completely human unless I’m making stuff up – a solution to a problem, a new project, a new business plan, a new song – it all sort of runs together for me.

Improvisers and composers again had more laissez-faire views of their own musical creativity, the problem being for them less about where their creativity was than how to draw it out most honestly. There was no doubting whether it was there, or whether it was important enough to cultivate – it was both and it was vital. One improviser in particular raised some interesting points:

I don’t know whether I consider myself to be creative, so much as aim to be creative. One of the challenges of improvising for me is to keep things fresh. If I am not experiencing the music as fresh, I rapidly feel stale and dissatisfied. When things are working for me, it all feels fresh. When I am stuck, it all sounds tired, even though the outsider probably doesn’t notice any change. I guess what I am starting to say here is that the idea of being creative is very important to me, and that the psychological feeling of being creative is perhaps more influential on my personal satisfaction than the aural result is!
While repertoire participants and those from other disciplines indicated they experienced an exploratory element as significant in their music-making, the former tended towards aiming for a perceived ideal sound quality whereas improvisers and composers seemed more concerned with remaining true to their sense of artistic integrity. One improviser put it thus:

I would like to think of myself as a creative musician as I am always trying to find a way to make music that I feel expresses something important to me, even if I am unsure of what that is. I want to make music that will affect people, or offer a different experience. Whether I am playing music or writing music, it is not enough simply to be considered technically good or valid. I try to make/play music that I am comfortable putting out into the world as an expression of me at that time.

It can seen through these responses that while creativity is an undeniably present and important element in the musical (and daily) lives of the participants surveyed, its measurement is (perhaps predictably) a hard task, given the subjective manner in which it is inevitably perceived. However, the distinct and telling trend in these cases is a decided lack of assurance displayed by the repertoire participants when discussing the role their creativity has in their music-making, as compared to the matter-of-fact approach to the topic taken by the improvisers, composers, and participants hailing from all three disciplines. As the latter groups present works of their own construction, their sense of creative ‘ownership’ is hardly surprising, but as pieces of music are the works performed by repertoire players any less their own? Or have they less ‘right’ to express their creative selves through these notes? The following chapter explores this idea of musical voice, as manifested through sound production and interpretive decision-making across the three disciplines.
Chapter Four

*Playing the Part*

Now that you’ve created a vocabulary, what do you want to say with it?

Ellen Langer, *On Becoming an Artist: Reinventing Yourself Through Mindful Creativity*

Expected, on the one hand, to achieve feats of physical command and yet on the other to bring into these executions their own human reflectivity, it is neither a certain nor predictable developmental process to become a musician who truly incorporates these elements into a performative whole and is not merely caught at one point along the perceived spectrum. Especially as performers of others’ (sometimes contextually rather distant) notes, classical musicians may find the process of moving beyond execution into artistry of particular challenge. Where does one draw the line of relevance in interpretation between adherence to notation and infusion of personality? And how indeed, to keep relevance flowing through musical lines older than the players themselves? In this chapter I negotiate participants’ responses to notions of sound, voice and interpretation in the shaping of a musical performance; in essence, to the question of how they see the nature of their artistic control as performing artists.

Participants were first asked to identify, consecutively, the development of their sound, characteristics thereof, and what it was about it that they valued. The following response to the first of these requests was provided by a repertoire participant, and gives a general indication of the direction of the answers given across all available genres.
My sound is something which I think has been influenced by every ensemble I’ve played in, every teacher I’ve learnt from, every performance I’ve seen, every recording I’ve listened to, every TV show/movie I’ve watched, what I’ve learnt about world history and society in general and all my personal experiences ... Obviously these things have influenced my sound in different ways and to different degrees. As it isn’t something I have really been consciously aware of I can’t really pinpoint what/where my sound has developed. At different points on different instruments I have been asked to specifically work on sound production and tone but these things are only one part of my sound and usually [change] so gradually it is difficult to quantify.

In terms of sound development, each participant indicated a sense of ongoing progress and wide-ranging influence on that progress. Repertoire participants also expressed some degree of developmental passivity in terms of desired outcome: though they were working to produce a good instrumental sound, it was in more general terms according to the generic approach to the instrument they played. The improvising and composing participants on the contrary approached their sound development with clearer ideas of personal taste – and certainly, more sophisticated notions as to the validity of this – beyond merely what was a ‘good’ sound and what was considered less so. As one repertoire performer put it,

I think I would have to say [my sound] has developed organically and independently of my control because I haven’t really had any strategy for developing [it] – I have just become more aware of what I want my playing to sound like. And I have been greatly influenced by what I DON’T want to sound like.

This was in opposition to a participant who identified with all genres and stated definitively that their sound represented “the culmination of many hours of active listening, thinking, and engaging with other peoples’ art work together with rigorous analysis and review of my own work and creative processes”.

One repertoire participant actually attempted to negate the idea of personal sound development; however, in so doing perhaps they succeeded more in reinforcing the overall impression of passivity in this area amongst repertoire players, than asserting the irrelevance of active sound development to these:
With the cello, I think that there is a natural sound for every instrument and performer – and sometimes the idea of developing your sound is false. The optimal goal is to be able to use as many colours and effects as possible using all of the tools at your disposal ... bow weight, speed, angle to the string and contact with the string are all important for the right hand – vibrato, pressure, technique and shifting ability are equally important for the left hand.

In striving for the attainment of said ‘optimal goal’, would not the one striving be creating a most personal effect in the exploration of “all of the tools at [their] disposal”? Perhaps this is also indicative of a lack of concern for personal sound symptomatic of a lack of (active) consideration for the culmination – or purpose – of developing said tools.

Most participants seemed to consider a ‘personal sound’ to occur by default – “It’s like a musical fingerprint”, stated one. “You can get five people to play the same instrument, and you will most certainly get five different sounds”. The general consensus appeared to be that a personal sound is an inevitability, “due to our different body structures and physical limitations”; it also seemed to be thought of as interlinked with the sound of one’s voice by a number of participants. “One’s sound is essentially one’s voice. No one shares the exact same voice” said one, whereas another offered more particularly that “I think the way I use vibrato and phrase passages relates to my singing voice”17.

When asked to identify what it was about their sound that they particularly valued, a very common response from participants across the gamut was “That it is mine”. Repertoire performers, improvisers and composers alike all valued the personal elements, which they had previously stated to be both worked for and yet ultimately predestined, or already present even. Flexibility was another element considered to be of universal value; that is, the adaptability of one’s sound to the requirements of a given situation. Trends became more differentiable in the responses to this question; repertoire performers were more self-disparaging overall, while composers and improvisers appeared most comfortable in accepting, even cultivating, their individuality of sound. A repertoire-playing participant had decided that “the qualities of the sound as a musician are more important than the uniqueness

17 The role of ‘voice’ in music performance was considered by a number of participants – particularly improvisers – to be interchangeable, and even intertwined, with the idea of sound, although the intention in the asking of these questions was for sound to mean literally how the performer utilises timbre, and voice to refer to the metaphysical qualities in the performance; that is, what the performer uses their sound quality to say, if at all.
when you are a repertoire performer”¹⁸, but many more considered exploration of colour to be a vital element in their sound development, and surely some unique qualities would be of value to this process. Surely also the above participant would not by the same token value their anonymity as a repertoire musician. A repertoire participant turned composer gave this insight:

I studied opera with a teacher who taught me that every voice is unique. The idea is not to try to sound like someone else but to find out what your voice sounds like at its healthiest and most honest. In that discovery process, I found out that it takes a lot of strength to be honest, it takes a lot of energy to [be] fully present, and that ‘effort’ undermines both honesty and presence. So what I value most about my sound is that it is mine – and that it has emerged from an arduous journey towards honesty, presence, transparency.

Another repertoire participant raised the following point of interest:

[My sound] came pretty late unfortunately. I only developed [it] when I understood exactly what I wanted to say through my instrument.

This participant felt clearly that their sound development was dependent on the development of their musical – and artistic – maturity and was perhaps inseparable from notions of musical voice. However, when asked, *Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?*, a number of repertoire participants interpreted this question very literally and detailed the musicality they considered to be present in their singing voice (a result which perhaps in itself again indicates the lack of consideration in repertoire circles for the idea of voice and personal involvement in the music’s message). Once more, the repertoire participants’ responses presented as differentiable from those of other participants, being more focused around the perceived intentions of the composer and how best to remain true to these and their notational representations, while participants identifying with the other genres frequently referred to encapsulating the concept of shared human experience with their skills in musical performance. In regard to the idea of development of musical voice, the responses were again more general and spoke less of a sense of deliberate development than of all human progressions leading to the capacity to express more through musical means. Interestingly

¹⁸ A comment which has some relevance, for example when considered in the context of blending within an orchestral section.
and indeed as per my hypothesis, the only participants who stated that they did not consider themselves to have a musical voice were repertoire performers. Each such response referred to struggles with nerves and self-doubt and indicated a general disconnection with musical expression in favour of focus on physical facility. As one participant described,

I feel I am still struggling too much with self doubt and lack of experience to let myself speak through music with integrity. Whether or not this is justified, it does hinder my freedom and connection to the journey my music takes.

The question of interpretation when performing the music of others was an issue of some contention. Most performers surveyed found negotiating the boundaries of license and appropriateness to be tricky and sometimes altogether unclear. When asked to describe their interpretations of the term itself, repertoire participants gave the most comprehensive and lengthy responses. In these descriptions, however, the notion of personal ownership did not tend to be considered a priority; all responses described interpretation from the perspective of first attempting to understand the notated content on the printed page in the context of being true to the composer’s perceived intent, and only then overlaying this with elements of “personal taste and twist”. By contrast, an improvising respondent gave the following definition:

The interpretive process? I guess it is the process of abstracting symbols or instructions and creating art.

With which they belie their perception of their role as a performing musician – to be a creator of art, for whom an art form is the intended culmination of deliberate musical efforts. Thereby someone in charge, in possession, of their musical expression; as another improviser put it,

I always try to ‘own’ whatever music I play. I find that when I don’t, and try to hide my personality, the results are rarely satisfying to myself or others.

The repertoire musicians felt there to be certain pre-existing and unnegotiable parameters constraining their interpretive processes – preventing ownership. One explained it thus:
You start with the notes. You read them in time. Then you set about making it your own ...
Hopefully within the stylistic boundaries.

Another elaborated,

It’s about finding the composers’ point behind the dots, but also about finding out if that’s what you want to and can express so that you can meet somewhere amongst it.

A repeated theme can be observed here; the repertoire performers’ opinions are consistently felt by them to be subjugated by inherent and predominant notions of legacy, or integrity to the art left by another. The obvious potential result of this is performances of the ‘great’ works in which the performer goes to no lengths to do any communicating of their own, and presumes the work will say what it needs to as a matter of course. As Pierre Boulez put it (Dunsby 1995:80), “If you question the masters of an earlier period with perseverance and conviction you become the medium of their replies: they speak of you through you”. So reluctant are these repertoire musicians to be ‘wrong’, so tentative about their own artistic judgement under the shadow of the unquestioned superiority of the composer, that they are unable to ‘speak of themselves’ – to take that ownership. Interestingly enough, some composing participants contributed the following:

Interpretation is integral to every step of music-making. It is how we create uniqueness and individuality. I love the process of taking a piece to a musician. It is only half done at that point and the interpretation of the performer through workshops, rehearsal and finally on stage is all part of the creative journey.

[Interpretation] is essential to all music-making. My music would not have life or breath without someone’s contribution in performance.

I encourage [personal interpretation], partly because I feel like the instrumentalist knows their instrument better than I do ... but also because I like the idea that the less I prescribe, the more the musician is able to express themselves [sic] within the piece. I think it enables each of the instrumentalists to creatively contribute to a piece and to create a sound that is unique to [the] ensemble.
A performer, according to the above, is thus entirely allowed and even required to bring to the work as much of themselves and their ideas for a communicative and relevant artwork as they possibly can. And surely is likewise allowed to proceed similarly in their interpretations of the masterworks – and to trust (and take seriously) their own, intimate knowledge of the instrument they play. As a composing, repertoire-playing and improvising participant put it, interpretation “means using a score as a guideline for this communicative process – I don’t place ultimate authority on the score – I think that what I use it to try and say is ultimately more important and more engaging”.

Regarding the importance of ownership of interpretation – in the sense of conviction in a personal rendering of an existing work in performance – participants were quite decidedly divided. Many stated that they considered it to be entirely unimportant; negatory to spontaneity in performance, promoting of ego over musicality, or else that as “everyone has ownership of their own interpretations by default ... by that means it is unimportant.” Those who responded in a positive vein, however, elaborated also that artistic command was impossible without interpretive command – in this way, the affirmative respondents appeared also to be more concerned with artistry in their musical performance:

As someone currently developing her ‘voice’ as a musician, I think [ownership of interpretation is] invaluable. Even if it’s considered ‘wrong’ or inappropriate, everyone should give their first instincts a go before deciding on a final interpretation, in order to get to know [their] musicality and tastes.

[Ownership of interpretation is] as important as any creative ownership. We look to great interpretations of works as much as we look to great works, which proves the importance of good interpretation.

I think [ownership of interpretation] is the most important aspect of playing because the music was a concept before it was sound, and if the musician doesn’t know or care about the concept and is too wrapped up in their ego, self-doubt or the physical act of playing the music, the music will have no authenticity.

I think it’s important for a performer to own what they’re playing; they need to be submerged in the piece, not just attempting to play in a ‘popular’ or ‘accessible’ way, but how they feel the urge to play. Even if that means flouting ‘tradition’ or period interpretation.
The issue of ownership of interpretation in the performance of existing repertoire is a delicate one, and perhaps can be said to lead to a lot of the dilemmas faced by such performers in terms of their sound and voice (in other words, musical) identities. As repertoire players it would seem they feel obligated to do stylistic justice to a piece of music first, and do so with a sound that belongs to themselves and their imaginative faculties second (or last). By contrast, composers and performers of other musics demonstrated a clear idea of how their own sound was connected to the music they made, and while a number of repertoire performers could identify and appreciate the sound they perceived to be theirs, they did not always appear able to wittingly apply it to the music they were using it to play. While most participants argued that some infusion of personality into a performance was an artistic imperative, the repertoire participants – those doing the infusing through the notes of others – presented as universally unsure of their roles and significances as creators. In the following chapter, these ideas are examined further in the light of improvisatory experience and its impact.
Chapter Five:  

*To Thine Own Self Be True*

I think that the ideal way to go about making a performance ... is to assume that when you begin, you don’t quite know what it is about. You only come to know as you proceed.

Glenn Gould, in Jonathan Dunsby, *Performing Music: Shared Concerns*

I am always improvising whether I’m reading or not.

Questionnaire participant

In his text *Freeplay: Improvisation in Life and Art*, Stephen Nachmanovitch describes improvising as “a master key to creativity”, and reveals that when he first began exploring improvisation, he discovered “a kind of spiritual connectedness that went far beyond the scope of music-making” (1990:6). The final stage of the questionnaire process involved for the participants divulgence of their improvising history: whether they had one, how they felt about this, and what relationship (if any) they themselves could observe between these two aspects and their performance of pre-notated musics.

The responses from repertoire performers to the question, *Have you ever tried improvising?* indicated that in general these participants had done little or no improvising. One participant did state that they employed improvising “around scales [when practising] to gain a greater
understanding of hand shapes in various keys” – to better learn, therefore, their way around their instrument\(^\text{19}\). Most participants, however, confessed that they tended not to improvise unless a situation specifically required it of them:

It’s never out of my own choice – I have very little confidence in improv [sic].

As to how these participants found their improvisatory experiences, the responses were somewhat mixed, ranging from difficult, to freeing, and even “difficult at first”, which signifies that perhaps the participant’s first improvisation opened them up to further development and building of security. Similarly, another participant offered that improvising was “never as bad as I build it up to be. I find I am quite capable of it, if I don’t feel rushed”; yet another considered it “a good way to develop freedom and tone”. Two other participants stated, however, that while improvising “I don’t feel comfortable … I also don’t feel that close to my instrument”, and “I get frustrated at myself because I can't make it sound the way I hear it in my head – due to my poor aural skills and my inadequate understanding of harmony – and I can't reach that uninhibited freedom as I play”. Also, “the idea of limitless possibilities was incredibly frightening” stated one participant, and another held that overall, they found improvising “a challenge”:

As it isn’t something I do on a regular basis it usually requires a lot of concentration. I also find I need to shut out the critical part of my consciousness in order to keep going and ignore parts of the improvisation that I have been unhappy with.

Another (and still others), however, found improvising to be

the purest form of creative expression I’ve known. You become very dependent on your own knowledge of your instrument and the other musicians. Listening is fundamental.

Similar to this last repertoire participant, those who aligned themselves with all categories indicated that for them, improvisation was something to be utilised as a matter of course in

\(^{19}\) Another also described their use of improvisation when implementing ‘flow’ in their practise – this refers to a psychological state induced by intense concentration whereby any sense of external parameters such as time is lost in favour of focus on the task at hand; see the writings of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.
making contact with their creativity, and in allowing their natural voice to emerge, describing it as, in turn,

... an enjoyable experience, one in which I can be expressive and creative. I find it especially useful when composing or developing new work, as a way of finding out what I can do, and often something unexpected will happen in an improvisation that becomes the seed for a new piece or idea ... something that I might not have thought of otherwise.

... a normal part of my practice. [I find it] important [in helping to] develop a sense of play and creativity.

In spite of the lack of confidence in their improvising abilities expressed by many of the repertoire participants, when asked of their improvising process many demonstrated a clear sense of structure in their approach (employing imitative devices and their scalar knowledge), and of how their personality could be accessed by their playing in this context (as per the participants quoted above). One participant offered that they attempted

just to play and listen to the sound, [to] follow the music as it builds or stills, and to create sound that I like, and which seems to connect with the ways I am feeling at that particular moment.

Indeed “listening constantly” emerged as particularly important to the repertoire players who had improvised before.

Interestingly, the process elucidated by the improvisers was very similar, only perhaps a little further evolved, or considered. Most participants from this genre demonstrated experiencing a particular awareness of and engagement with the origins and directions of the notes they were playing –

I always try to be guided by the note I have just played – what does it imply, what does it need, what does it lead to? [And] also by the notes around me.

– and thereby they exhibited experiencing a strong concept of a piece overall as it was happening. This was reinforced by the following:
It is not an overly conscious act, but I guess I try to contribute to the overall sound of the music, letting each idea of mine and the other musicians shape the possibilities for what comes next. It is usually a case of interpreting what I hear someone else do, and trying to interact in a way that contributes to that idea.

Again, listening was a repeated feature:

That’s most of it. The sounds around me, whether I’m making them or not, become my world. Balancing the sound of the ensemble with my range of sounds ... is a big part of what I do also. Phrasing in a way that I feel reflects the phrasing of the other ensemble members.

Communicative contact within an improvising ensemble was considered universally vital by all the contributors. Perhaps the requisite ‘opening of the ears’ in the improvised situations the repertoire musicians cited experiencing would be of benefit in broadening the self-centred focus referred to in earlier chapters to a more encompassing awareness while making music. Emphasis also, however, was given by the improvisers to the importance of a certain element of commune with oneself, of drawing out the notes to be played from an intimate part of one’s psychic being. One improviser gave the following very personal response:

I try to say something meaningful rather than focus on note choice and other musical elements. However, improvisation is like having a conversation in that some days you have something interesting to say, other days you struggle. There are methods for improving your conversation so that you will always be able to speak clearly and meaningfully, but speaking from the heart is an uncertain thing.

When met by the question, How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?, repertoire participants offered a range of responses, starting with an appreciation for the perceived safety of notated music to alternately an enjoyment of the thrill of spontaneous creation. One participant suggested that, when improvising, “the potential for creativity and discovering new ideas is much more apparent”, which along with the similar evidence provided above by improvisers reinforces the idea that adopting an improvisatory approach when preparing repertoire may assist in development of a sense of personal creativity – a voice. Another appreciated the immediateness of improvising, and the consequent necessitation of engagement:
I listen much more closely and feel like I’m ‘in the sound’ – in that moment in time, instead of always thinking ahead to what is to come.

Many more participants were less positive than this, and some indeed were hyper-critical. One offered that “initially [improvising] made me feel stupid – when reading music I feel the ideas are already developed”, while another considered improvising to be

... more daunting [than reading music] – maybe [it] would be less so if I did it more! Even though it is said you can’t make mistakes in improvisation, for someone more accustomed to reading music it’s difficult to find that sense of freedom and lose inhibitions.

Another participant added that, when improvising,

I feel very free and unrestricted and like I could do anything ... [however] on occasions I feel aimless ... as though if I had more knowledge of harmony I could improvise to a higher level or do something more interesting.

Given that this person is likely to have spent countless hours practising their instrument and studying musical concepts, it is surely strange that when the printed page is taken away, so too is their sense of direction, and indeed faith in their accumulated knowledge. The potential for improvisation to be an avenue for the reinforcement of these aspects of a performer’s musicality is apparent here, and also indirectly acknowledged by the participant themselves.

When asked how they felt about reading music in the light of their improvisatory experiences, improvising participants referred often to the relative freedom they found in extemporising rather than the constriction they experienced when reading. In comparing their attitudes to reading and improvising, one participant offered that “in my opinion, if there was a scale from 1-10 for the freedom one has access to in music performance – where 10 is absolute freedom and 1 is absolute restriction – free improvisation would rate 10 and reading music from a score in an orchestral context would be 1”, before going on to emphasise that
I like to get up on stage knowing that if a moment or experience on stage changes me that I can change with it, heading in a new direction without fear of ramifications should I choose to perform something different[ly] to the original intention.

Another participant explained that,

The two processes can be very similar. I like to get comfortable with written scores to the point that I am almost improvising them – making fresh choices about phrasing and dynamics and tone colour on the fly. [However] when I can’t be that free, as in some situations that require serious sight-reading, I sometimes feel that I am not really playing music at all, just going through the [motions]. I am bound up, and can’t even integrate with the rest of the ensemble.

This participant finds themselves paralysed, almost, by the perceived opportunity to be wrong that a score presents its interpreters, and while they can appreciate the ideal – a capacity to perform that is not impeded by any imposed parameters – they have as yet been unable to incorporate it into their reality. Others described similar experiences with pre-composed musics, such as the following participant’s testimony:

Usually when reading I feel it is hard to connect with the music, but this is probably a product of my poor reading skills. Improvising ... allows me to consider different elements of the music being created beyond notes and rhythms.

These statements are reminiscent of those made by repertoire players on interpreting existing scores in the previous chapter, and music in notated form thus can be seen from the descriptions of both repertoire and improvising performers to form a barrier of sorts, preventing players from accessing a performance that is entirely relevant to the moment in which it occurs – and indeed in its prescriptive nature from allowing the players to relax and trust in their own technical abilities and creative judgement.

In terms of the perceived impact that experience in improvisation had had on their playing, respondents from across each genre were united – they found that it had enabled them to build confidence in both their facility and their (often latent) sense of artistry. The following telling comments were made by repertoire participants:
I feel that improvising has developed new musical ideas and ways of expression for me, and has made me feel more relaxed as a performer, even when playing technically complex work[s].

My experience with improvising helps me to conceptualise my musical voice as quite literally a voice, whereby I want everything I play to sound spontaneous.

I think it has made me more confident, and also more free and assured in my technique, as I am not trying to ‘get it right’ all the time, so the tension I get when playing written music is less. It has also made me more aware of what is going on around me, as I have HAD to be aware of the rest of the group. It’s made me more aware of myself in general – my tone and technique and posture and style. I feel I can control these things more. It has also improved my ear.

Yes, it frees up playing and helps you connect with the mindset of the composers – the fact that the music really comes from inside, and that we can connect with that – even if the sounds originally were someone else’s ideas. It also helps you to develop your own ‘voice’ which you can instill in your recreation of the composer’s ideas … It has given me more confidence in my sound and in my understanding of music and its connection with our aesthetic ideas and our need to express emotions. And I think it encourages greater spontaneity in performance – less fear of ‘obeying someone else's rules’.

All these testimonies support again the idea that exploring improvisation might, for classical musicians, promote artistic development and communicative engagement and confidence in their capacities in each. The responses from improvisers plumbed depths still further and really reinforced that for them, their craft allowed for greater development in terms of the breadth of their imagination as it applied to their music-making, and also in terms of self-knowledge and crystallisation of artistic purpose:

Improvisation has offered me a way of discovering who I am as a person. Through improvisation I have realised how important it is to me that I know who I am and where I fit in this world. I have then been able to translate this across to my role as musician and performer. I can create with a better sense of my intention and direction which are things that mean a lot to me in performance and composition of new works.

Improvising has given me a different relationship with my instruments, helping me to listen to them and interact with them in ways I could not otherwise have imagined.

Improvising has become for me the very root of what makes music exhilarating.
As indicated by the responses received in this final section of the questionnaire, improvisation does not feature strongly in the musical experiences of the repertoire participants sampled, and is something by which most confess to be daunted. Many cited a lack of confidence in their ability to perform musical tasks spontaneously as a deterrent from doing so, and yet earlier many of these same participants also referred to their apprehension in trusting their capacity to perform even music which they had practised extensively; this in itself points to an overall confidence issue that is not specific or exclusive to improvisatory situations but perhaps instead made particularly clear under such conditions. However, as a number of these participants, and indeed many of the participants from other genres also, described the improvisatory process as ideally an exhilarating, freeing, and artistically unadulterated one, which promoted conscious and conscientious listening, then surely it exhibits potential for the reinforcement of personal creativity, musical voice and assurance of presence in performing musicians – and indeed also the bolstering of confidence through each of these elements. Those performers who did have experience improvising discussed their creative purpose/s with conviction and determination; through such honing of artistic direction, surely performers who employ improvisation as a developmental tool – or recognise its utility thus – would demonstrate refinement of interpretive concept, and similarly, their capacity to own these concepts and convince their audiences of their validity.
Conclusion

As blocked artists we tend to criticise ourselves mercilessly. Even if we look like functioning artists to the world, we feel we never do enough or what we do isn’t right. We are victims of our own internalised perfectionist, a nasty internal and eternal critic, the Censor, who resides in our (left) brain and keeps up a constant stream of subversive remarks that are often disguised as the truth ... Think of your Censor as a cartoon serpent, slithering around your creative Eden, hissing vile things to keep you off guard.

Julia Cameron, *The Artist's Way: A Course in Discovering and Recovering your Creative Self*

I don’t want to censor myself. That’s how creativity dies.

Chief Wiggum, *The Simpsons Movie*

With this thesis, it was my aim to explore past and present roles of improvisation in classical music performance, and investigate what I feel to be its future potential as regards the artistry of the players thereof, through personal assessments provided to me by those players, (being improvisers and composers alike). As myself a performer of pre-composed musics, it was with a most vested interest that I took this journey, and indeed I did so with a view particularly to weighing up the validity of exploring one’s creativity – and promoting creative voice – through exploration of improvisation. I do consider this validity to have received some affirmation in the experiences outlined by the participants in my survey.
Creativity is spontaneous; as a manifestation of the curiosity that drew many of us to our music-making in the first place, it is also inherently both original and personal. While, as it would seem from responses I gathered, improvising musicians (and indeed other writers of their own musical material) are expected to cultivate these latter elements in pursuit of artistic identity, conversely many repertoire performers appear surprised by (or unreceptive to) the notion of an artistic identity that is theirs in relation to the work that they do in reproducing the notes of others, and indeed as a collective are wholly bewildered by the idea of musical voice. Sounds – for them – are frequently a matter of physical execution, rather than emanation from a higher artistic purpose. Furthermore, few repertoire performers consider themselves creatively responsible for that which is voiced by the notes they play, let alone permitted to use those notes to voice something which they feel to be creatively their own.

As Mark Freeman tells us (1993:299), creativity is also

> inherently communicative; it is about sharing, even giving, something of one’s own to others.
> This is indeed the true meaning, it might be suggested, of having artistic ‘gifts’, a meaning that has apparently become debased over the course of time.

Indeed, art in general relies upon communication and its communicative potential for its relevance, something which many practising musicians are confronted by as they similarly assess the relevance of their career trajectory and aspirations. Based on the results of my questionnaire, repertoire musicians especially have considerable ground to cover in establishing and nourishing their creative selves and intentions. It is my belief that what a number of the repertoire performers lack in creative assertiveness the improvisers have actively fostered as they go about their own music-making, indeed through the own-ness of their music-making. The act of producing sound with any sort of intent could be described as an affirmation of both existence and identity – a pronouncement of the living ego, if you will. Voice, therefore, has a vital and undeniable part to play in these reproductions; as a voice-ing of perceived compositional intent it is both communicative, and confirmatory. A performer’s voice is their performative ‘face’ – in ideal terms, as much as the performer is representing the notes they play they are also representing themselves and the way they would have those notes exist, and as such should feel able to commit to that representation (and re-
representation) something of their experience of living. Genesis of the notes notwithstanding, the musical performer has an expressive responsibility in the performative process: to convince the audience of those notes’ relevance, and the performer’s own relevance as their conveyer. By extension, and as verified by many of the survey participants, composers included, the performer must also partake of some level of interpretive ownership of those notes.

While it no longer serves the expected function in classical music performances it had in earlier centuries, improvisation’s place in the classical performer’s palette need not be presumed defunct. Thinking of music in terms of how it should be played rather than how it can be played leaves no space for artistry to bloom and grow, and likewise the conceiving of the practice process as a matter of ‘fixing’ as opposed to ‘exploring’ is perhaps a fundamental issue in the problems of creative engagement experienced by the repertoire musicians I surveyed. Improvisation, as it was utilised in earlier societies, and as it is enjoyed by so many still today, is a communicative and exploratory tool and celebration which allows the ‘wrong’ answer to be the right one because it is yours. Subsequently, I feel that the building of skills in improvisation is a means for repertoire musicians to make contact with immediacy in creativity, and to access a capacity for spontaneous expression in all their musical endeavours. In their engagement with existing repertoire, classical music performers would surely aid and abet their re-realisations of those pre-composed works by experimenting with their personal musical voice/s through the medium of improvisation.

I am supported in these findings by the aforementioned research of David Dolan’s, investigating the potential for improvisatory exercises to assist in the personalising of and engagement with pre-composed musical works. Further investigation along this particular avenue – perhaps via dissection of case studies – could have meaningful implications for approaches to music education at all levels. Of corresponding interest could be the exploration of examples of the increasing numbers of classical performers working today in drawing elements of improvisation into their performance practice and their engagement with

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20 See Chapter One, p15.
the wider community, as they strive to sustain the relevance of classical music performance in modern Western society.
He leaned back in his chair and for the first time she saw him smile. He had only just thought of this new complex explanation of his conduct, but to him it seemed a very good one and he smiled. ‘Well, what do you think, Miss Darlington?’

‘I must say it’s very very interesting.’

Roald Dahl, “Mr Botibol”, in *Completely Unexpected Tales*
Bibliography


Appendix A: Questionnaire

Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

   Repertoire Performer
   Improviser
   Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

____________________________________________________

Repertoire Performer

1  a  What drew you to music initially?
    b  What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

2  a  What do you find musically inspiring?
    b  What do you find musically fulfilling?
    c  What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

3  a  Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?
    b  Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.
    c  Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

4  a  Describe the development of your sound.
b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

c What do you value about your sound?

5 Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

   Describe the development of your musical voice.

- If no, explain.

6 a What does the interpretive process mean to you?

b How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

7 Have you ever tried improvising?

- If yes, in what context?

   What was your process?

   How did you find improvising?

   How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

- If no, would you consider improvising?

8 Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

- If you have improvised before, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?
Improviser

1  a  What drew you to music initially?
    b  What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

2  a  What do you find musically inspiring?
    b  What do you find musically fulfilling?
    c  What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

3  a  Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?
    b  Do you consider yourself to be a creative person?  Explain.
    c  Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician?  Explain.

4  a  Describe the development of your sound.
    b  Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?
    c  What do you value about your sound?

5  Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?
   -  If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?
      Describe the development of your musical voice.
   -  If no, explain.

6  a  What does the interpretive process mean to you?
    b  How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?
Describe your process when improvising.

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

How do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician, and as a performer?
Composer

1  a  What drew you to music initially?
    b  What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

2  a  What do you find musically inspiring?
    b  What do you find musically fulfilling?
    c  What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

3  a  Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?
    b  Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.
    c  Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

4  a  Describe the development of your sound.
    b  Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?
    c  What do you value about your sound?

5  Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?
   - If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?
     Describe the development of your musical voice.
   - If no, explain.

6  a  What does the interpretive process mean to you?
    b  How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?
How much instruction do you include in your scores?

How do you feel about performers bringing their own interpretations to your compositions?
Appendix B: Participant responses

Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

   Repertoire Performer
   Improviser
   Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

Repertoire Performer

1 a What drew you to music initially?

   My parents never had the opportunity to learn music, so they wanted me to learn. My mum put me into piano lessons when I was five. Afterwards I wanted to play in the school band so I chose flute, which seemed to be a very popular instrument.

b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

   The popular girls in primary school played the flute so I think that may be the reason why I chose it.

2 a What do you find musically inspiring?

   When people play from their heart with passion and have strength of character. I am inspired when someone remains truthful to themselves and the music.
b  What do you find musically fulfilling?

To feel a sense of hope and empowerment from people’s playing, I listen for heart, soul and truthfulness in the music.

c  What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

When one learns something from the experience, or has gained something from the experience. I usually hope to walk away with a renewed sense of hope and to see the world differently or with a more open mind.

3  a  Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

Yes, one is forever imagining new worlds, thinking in different dimensions, trying to think of new ways of keeping the performance fresh, making connections between different experiences in one’s life, etc.

b  Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

Yes, I try to use my brain, my hands, my voice, to make new things and be spontaneous in my thinking and my feelings. Although, it does feel harder the older you get because you lose your childhood innocence, and you are told what to think and feel rather than letting it happen.

c  Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

Yes I like to make connections between all the sensations I experience as a human being, and because I am actively making new discoveries and finding new ways of playing, for example, a certain passage in the music, I feel creative. Although there is a high degree of memorisation and repetition in music, it’s about what you do with the music and how you make it sound natural, just like the natural flow of a river for example, that requires your imagination and creativity.

4  a  Describe the development of your sound.
It has gradually become more open and singing, and more resonant. But I find that it changes every day, largely due to what I’m thinking and feeling inside. External factors like the weather also affect it but not as much as the internal factors.

b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

Yes. I like to think I do. I think the way I use vibrato and phrase passages relates to my singing voice. But the material of the flute also determines this sound – I sound quite different on a gold flute compared to a silver one.

c What do you value about your sound?

The clarity, resonance, ’shinyness‘ [sic], openness, the flexibility to change tone colours is also very important to me.

Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

Character, a natural sense of flow, passion, a singing voice.

Describe the development of your musical voice.

I used to sing a lot when I was younger, I started to sing before I played any instruments. My voice is quite flexible, I can be husky or clear and sweet.

- If no, explain.

What does the interpretive process mean to you?

It means to study the background of the piece, to have an understanding of the style which is backed up by knowledge from trustful sources, but to
always relate style and history to your own feelings in the present moment; I believe that one shouldn’t do what is stylistically/historically correct if it doesn’t mean anything to you in your heart.

b  How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

Not very important. I think if you own a certain interpretation you are going to get stuck in this one interpretation and kill your creativity whilst fuelling your ego. And for those who want to copy your interpretation, they either feel insecure, are lazy and/or do not know essentially who they are and what the music wants to express for them. As for copying certain aspects of your interpretation, that is ok, as long as they honestly feel the same way about the figure/passage as you do – that’s more like being inspired by someone.

7  Have you ever tried improvising?

- If yes, in what context?

  In a jazz ensemble performance.

  What was your process?

  Using notes of that certain scale, copying people who were improvisers, such as repeating notes, mixing up fast and slow passages, using flat 7th’s, etc.

  How did you find improvising?

  Challenging because you have nothing to tell you what to play exactly. I find that you need a lot of confidence and creativity. But I find that it is also something which you have to practise, and I’m sure people who often do it have their own tricks and familiar ways of doing things each time.

  How do you feel when improvising, compared with
reading music?

Scared, insecure, under pressure.

- If no, would you consider improvising?

8 Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

- If you have improvised before, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

Yes, I think it is very useful as it frees up your technique and allows you to be spontaneous and creative – things you may slowly lose if you practised the same things every day. It also allows you to concentrate on one thing – letting the music flow out of you – which can be very liberating, since when you are reading music you worry about so many things at once. Also, a lot of music is intended to sound improvised, or just very natural, but because it is written with exact rhythms/dynamics etc. the repertoire performer is likely to focus on getting these exact details right, but may not be able to grasp the feel of the music. This is where improvising can help one to feel the natural contours of the music and give life to the notes on the page. I also find it interesting that when one improvises it is usually without music in front of them, and I find that memorisation helps to free up my playing.
PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

Repertoire Performer

Improviser

Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

Repertoire Performer

1. a What drew you to music initially?

The performance aspect of music – how performance was a way of expressing my creative self when I was young.

b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

The role that my instrument held in orchestra and chamber music – the supporting role that bridged the gap between the upper and lower instruments.

2. a What do you find musically inspiring?

Young musicians who are not afraid to take risks and unselfconsciousness.

b What do you find musically fulfilling?

Making chamber music, making music for money without being paid for it. Working with passionate people. Good practice!
c  What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

One that changes the way you play and perceive music on a whole.

3  a  Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

It was when I was young. Now I guess it is an essential pursuit.

b  Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

I would like to think so. I do not have a systematic brain. In every form of my daily life, when I am faced with an issue or dilemma, I problem solve in the most creative way possible. This is applies [sic] to my personal, practical, musical practice and (especially!) my wardrobe making decisions.

I guess I use this philosophy to make things fun. I’m sick of sorting out things the boring way. I have also discovered that this approach to life is much more fruitful!

c  Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

On one side of the coin I feel I am not so creative, because I am merely a repertoire performer – I play works that have been performed for hundreds of years thousands of times.

On another side I think I am creative as a musician because I believe that even though a work has been played a thousand times, I think I can still make it my own personal piece. Kind of like what David Oistrarch [sic] did to the Shostakovich Violin Concerto No. 1. His interpretation was so moving so powerful he made the work his own.

4  a  Describe the development of your sound.

It came pretty late unfortunately. I only developed my sound when I understood exactly what I wanted to say through my instrument. This
happened only three years ago.

b  Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

   Yes, it’s kind of deep and nutty.

c  What do you value about your sound?

   It doesn’t sound like anyone else’s sound, and I feel like I can transfer my individual sound from instrument to instrument, even if it is not my own instrument.

5  Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

   Not yet. That’s the next step!

   - If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

   Describe the development of your musical voice.

   - If no, explain.

       Well I just found my musical sound, and I feel like I don’t have enough experience to have developed my own musical voice. But I am trying.

6  a  What does the interpretive process mean to you?

       So important! It’s what differentiates you from the rest!

   b  How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

       Not so important.

7  Have you ever tried improvising?

       A little bit.
If yes, in what context?

String Quartet.

What was your process?

We developed ideas from simple rhythmic devices. We also improvised over a Kodaly trio.

How did you find improvising?

*I am not experienced, and I didn’t think I was good. I think I need a lot of structure and rules if I was to continue improvising [sic].*

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

*See above. I like the rules that reading music entails.*

If no, would you consider improvising?

Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

*I think it would be helpful for some. The lack of boundaries that improvisation has can open up doors of ideas for some that they can apply to repertoire.*

If you have improvised before, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

*I haven’t done enough improvisation to say that it has affected me as a performer at all.*
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

     Repertoire Performer

     Improviser

     Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

____________________________________________________

Repertoire Performer

1  a  What drew you to music initially?

     Wanting to be able to play a beautiful looking instrument that could make such lovely sounds. To be able to play in orchestras, be part of such an awesome community of people & to perform.

     b  What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

     I have no idea why I chose the violin when I was seven, I just thought it looked beautiful and loved the sound it made. Then in High School I picked up the Viola and immediately fell in love with the unique, mellow, ‘bigness’ of sound. To help ignite my passion was __________, who I went to school with. Watching [them] play and hearing [their] lovely tone fuelled my desire to learn the viola.

2  a  What do you find musically inspiring?

     Going to concerts – MSO, ACO etc. Participating in music camps – from State Music Camp to AYO National Camp. Being part of the musical community which thrives with inspiration, motivation & following your
dreams.

b What do you find musically fulfilling?

Practising a lot and then getting praise by my teacher [sic]. And those times in orchestra or quartet or something where a fellow musician says: “Hey you sound really good!”. Positive feedback from performances and making people happy by playing music.

c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

Listening to a performance that provokes me to question my own playing – whether it be a question of phrasing, technique or pure musicality. Being taught by professional musicians who really know their stuff and are willing to share their experience and techniques with you.

a Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

Yes. Music allows you to create sound – any sound that you want. Practising is creating. Rehearsing is creating. It is a creative pursuit because every performance is the end product or creation of the lessons and practice we are constantly doing.

b Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

Definitely [sic]! I loved doing school projects and artwork. I always did big coloured headings etc (still do). I love making thing like sewing, knitting and cooking [sic]. I love dressing creatively.

c Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

Yes and no. No, because I am terrible at improvising and composing music. I don’t like being put on the spot and I much prefer to play what is written on the page. Yes, because I think a lot about different ways of phrasing passages in pieces I’m playing and possibilities of fingerings and bowings to create desired sound [sic]. Also coming up with different
stories and emotions to depict music.

4 a Describe the development of your sound.

Last year = two hours a day of open strings & C Major for bowing looking in the mirror!!!!!! Argh! Yes, since I started uni I have needed to pay a lot of attention to the fundamentals of technique, but am gradually developing the desired tone. Also, playing a variety of styles of music that require me to develop different areas of technique. Orchestra is very good for this because orchestral music often incorporates a lot of different techniques.

b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

Not yet. First trying to get my technique good ... then comes individuality [sic]! I do like to think I’m not just another musician though, that maybe I stand out a bit!

c What do you value about your sound?

Good bow contact and intonation at the moment.

5 Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

Describe the development of your musical voice.

- If no, explain.

Not yet. I am still very much learning and at the moment I am just aiming on developing my ability to play the viola. When I do perform I struggle with nerves a lot so my ‘musical voice’ does not really come across. My main aim is just to reach the end of the piece with ok intonation and vibrato! Maybe when I’m at home in my room I have a musical voice ...
6  a  What does the interpretive process mean to you?

*Observing professional and fellow student musicians and how that impacts your musicality and playing of your instrument.*

b  How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

7  Have you ever tried improvising?

-  If *yes*, in what context?

  *Playing the violin in Melbourne Fiddlers we used to try and improv [sic].*

  What was your process?

  *Moving around the scale of the piece and using lots of different rhythms.*

  How did you find improvising?

  *Very hard!!*

  How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

  *Extremely uncomfortable – don’t like it at all [sic]!*

-  If *no*, would you consider improvising?

8  Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

-  **If you have improvised before**, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

  *The improvisation I have done is not enough to really*
have impacted my performing. BUT I do think musicians (especially rep) should be more exposed to improve because I think it could help break down mental barriers and blocks that cause us to become nervous when performing.
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

Repertoire Performer

Improviser

Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

Repertoire Performer

1  a  What drew you to music initially?

*The feeling of performing, particularly solo performing, was what drew me. The thought that I could create a beautiful sound was very appealing to me.*

b  What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

*Mainly an accident of circumstances; however, once I learned more about my instrument I think I was mostly interested in the types of sounds I could learn to make.*

2  a  What do you find musically inspiring?

*Making a beautiful sound and playing with other people when they have compatible musical ideas is very inspiring. Also, listening to other musicians who play in a way that I would like to be able to play, with regard to sound, musicality and general performance practice. I also find students very musically inspiring, when they begin to grasp complex*
musical ideas and the beauty of music becomes apparent to them.

b What do you find musically fulfilling?

Completing a performance in which I achieve all of the things I aim to achieve, and when all of this fits in with what all the other musicians are doing – this is very rare.

c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

I’m not really sure how to answer this because there are a lot of answers. I think any experience in which I am moved by music is meaningful – this could happen when I am performing or listening, and could involve repertoire or improvisation, classical or popular music. Sorry that I am unable to narrow it down any further – I think the one thing always required is that SOMETHING IS COMMUNICATED, and this often happens unexpectedly and in many different types of situations.

3 a Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

I think music performance requires elements of creativity, and I think the creativity is not just involved in the craft of music itself but also in ways of developing the craft; for example, creative ways of practicing and creative ways of becoming motivated. However, I feel that creativity is only one part of music performance and that many other elements are just as essential, if not more essential.

b Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

In some ways, yes. I try to be creative in many aspects of my life, for example in my academic studies, in the way I dress, and as a musician.

c Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

I do in the sense that I have an understanding of classical music expression and can create types of expression that are completely original but that also communicate something to the listener and to myself.
However, I am also very aware that in classical music, despite the element of creativity, there is a huge awareness of history and a development of technical skills that is involved. I feel less creative when developing these skills.

4 a Describe the development of your sound.

*I think I began by trying to make the types of sounds that I had heard on recordings; I soon realised that there were many sounds on recordings that I didn’t like, and so tried to work out what sort of sound I liked, and tried to aim for that, even though it only truly existed in my mind.*

b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

*Yes, definitely. I’m sure that many people could not differentiate between my sound and the sounds of others, but I feel that I have developed it in a way that is unique to any other player’s sound.*

c What do you value about your sound?

*I value that fact that it is unique, and also that it is (sometimes) flexible and can be changed subtly depending on what I am trying to express.*

5 Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

- If **yes**, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

*I couldn’t say for sure what exactly I aim to communicate, only that I know when I have communicated something, and then I would feel that my aim for the performance has been achieved.*

Describe the development of your musical voice.

*I feel that it is something I have always possessed, regardless of what instrument I was playing at the time.*
and I would mainly describe it as my ability to communicate something to my audience, and hopefully the audience feels that it is something that they have not heard before.

- If no, explain.

6  a  What does the interpretive process mean to you?

It means trying to understand what the composer meant (if performing repertoire) and once you feel you have worked that out, to communicate that meaning as faithfully as possible.

b  How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

Very important, but I feel that, when performing repertoire, this ‘ownership’ should refer to the performer’s attempt to communicate the meaning intended by the composer to the best of their abilities.

7  Have you ever tried improvising?

- If yes, in what context?

Mainly in a group context, with very few parameters – free improvisation. Also in private practice, beginning with the main themes of a particular piece and then improvising based on those themes.

What was your process?

In the group, just beginning with a particular motif that someone began, and building on it. In private practice, using a theme of a piece that I was perhaps unsure of the musical meaning, I would improvise over the theme in an attempt to discover the meaning behind it.
How did you find improvising?

*I find it very enjoyable and very freeing, particularly as a contrast to intense technical work.*

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

*I feel very relaxed and I think that the potential for creativity and discovering new ideas is much more apparent when improvising.*

- If no, would you consider improvising?

8  Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

Yes, definitely.

- If you have improvised before, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

*I feel that improvising has developed new musical ideas and ways of expression for me, and has made me feel more relaxed as a performer, even when playing technically complex work.*
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

- Repertoire Performer
- Improviser – within the context of “free improvisation” and folk/gypsy traditions
- Composer – I compose for bands I play in, not in the habit of making scores

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

Repertoire Performer

1. a What drew you to music initially?

   Hmm ... hard to say really. I suppose I was very active as a child and always wanted to be occupied with something creative and music was one of those things.

   b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

   Clarinet – I didn’t begin with clarinet, I played piano and recorder before that. I liked the timbre of the clarinet. I had been impressed by the clarinet playing in a Klezmer gig I saw and also liked the clarinet teacher at my primary school because of her enthusiasm at school concerts so I decided to learn ...

2. a What do you find musically inspiring?

   Wow! Loads of things ... discovering new sounds/approaches to playing (as in from other cultures/prepared instruments) unusual ways of playing, spontaneity, intricate detail, working with other amazing musicians and
non-musical artists.

b What do you find musically fulfilling?

_A good rehearsal/performance. Playing with like-minded musicians. Having other people perform and elaborate on my composition, mastering a seemingly impossible composition, discovering new sounds and extending my sound palette on the instrument._

c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

_For the audience? Or for me? I suppose any time when either the performer or any member of the audience has been deeply engaged in some musical way means that it was a meaningful experience._

3 a Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

Yes.

b Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

Yes. _I create music and feel like I want to spend my life contributing, even in some small sense, to what music is, so therefore yes. But I think any person’s creativity functions in all of their life, not just their particular field of artistic expertise._

c Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

Yes, as above ... _I explore what I can do with sound/musical structures._

4 a Describe the development of your sound.

_Tone? Classical training infiltrated by all my other musical interests. Klezmer and Balkan music has definitely me to develop a more flexible approach to my tone so that I can sound wildly different in different contexts._
b  Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?  

Yes, I’d [say] people who I have played with could pick my playing.

c  What do you value about your sound?  

The fact that it can change!

5  Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?  

Yes.

-  If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

This varies enormously depending on the context again ... usually fairly abstract in any case, which is in fact one of the things I value the most about music, that it doesn’t have to ‘mean’ anything or mean the same thing for one person as to the next.

Describe the development of your musical voice.

I think it has taken on the influences of all my various musical experiences ... playing different ‘classical’ and ‘world music’ styles, and also improvising, working with actors, sound designers as well as exploring my own sound in my practise. I often surprise myself to find that some music I write sounds like I have played a lot of jazz or other styles I have very little experience in, so I suppose the entire wealth of what I hear every day must be influencing my musical voice!

-  If no, explain.

6  a  What does the interpretive process mean to you?
A chance to see your instrument through someone else’s eyes ... this is why I am particularly drawn to the challenge of contemporary composition as learning these works often asks you try things which you have not imagined for yourself.

Gives life to someone else’s music – usually (hopefully) music which you have chosen to study as you think it is a great work worthy of many hours of your time!

b) How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

7) Have you ever tried improvising?

- If yes, in what context?

‘Free’ improvisation in various ‘gypsy’ and Balkan bands, a little jazz but I still have a great deal to learn! Jamming with other musicians generally.

What was your process?

Try! And try again ... when I wanted to sound more traditional in my solos (in Balkan music for example) I studied recorded solos.

How did you find improvising?

By playing.

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

I find it more challenging a lot of the time, probably as a result of my classical training. A thrill in performance!

- If no, would you consider improvising?
Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

Yes!

- If you have improvised before, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

Hugely.
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

- Repertoire Performer
- Improviser
- Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

-----------------------------------------------

**Improviser**

1. a What drew you to music initially?

   *It made me feel happy and because I suffered from a lot of insecurities and bullying when I was young, focusing on learning to play a musical instrument gave me a release from that turmoil. Music also meant that I could be involved in ensembles and concerts and that really interested me.*

   b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

   *I chose violin mainly because a few of my friends were learning it, too. However, I kept with it despite having the opportunity to learn other instrument because I loved it so much.*

2. a What do you find musically inspiring?

   *The creation of sounds on one’s instrument that are not typical or stereotypical. I like listening to a piece of music where I can’t be sure what instrument is making the sound.*
What do you find musically fulfilling?

Performance of music with a real sense of shape and form – nothing missing, nothing overworked.

What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

From the perspective of a performer it is the feeling of transcending the act of creating the music to the extent that all that remains is a positive and fulfilled feeling of the performance (rather than a detailed memory of what actually occurred).

Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

Yes.

Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

Yes. I am passionate about creating meaning in my life. I enjoy considering objects and experiences and then reconceptualising them. This often means coming up with numerous ideas of ways to interpret these objects and experiences. Every day I am creating new ways of understanding the world I live in (by new, I mean new to me).

Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

Yes. I interpret life around me in the search for truth and meaning of my life and life in general. Then, I want to translate this interpretation to an audience. The way I do this is through re-presenting my interpretation. However, because my interpretation of the world is subjective, the translation is a unique creation. Therefore, when I perform (or compose), I am creating something inspired by my interpretation of truth.

Describe the development of your sound.

My ‘sound’ is constantly evolving. I work on it all the time. I’m working on it when I’m listening to other musicians, when I’m experiencing an
intense emotion, after watching a film that provokes deep thought and also when my instrument is in my hand. As an electric violinist I have focused a lot of time on getting the desired sound from an amplifier with the aim of staying reasonably true to the sound I think a violin (acoustic) should make. My ‘sound’ is the most important thing to me. Without the desired sound, I cannot even begin to make music

b  Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

Yes. One’s sound is essentially one’s voice. No one shares the exact same voice.

c  What do you value about your sound?

That it is mine.

Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

Yes, but my musical voice is not distinguishable from my voice. I just choose to express my ‘voice’ through music.

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

My interpretation of truth in the hope that it may resonate with others. For me, we are all free in interpretation. We can change our emotional and physical response to life based on how we choose to interpret it. Music is freedom from being told what truth is.

Describe the development of your musical voice.

Development of one’s musical voice can only happen when one reaches a certain point of technical fluency on their instrument (and with their voice). Making sounds comes before making meaning (thus being creative). Like all things, learning to play an instrument requires skill. Once
you can ‘speak’ through your instrument, you can develop your musical voice. I began developing my musical voice with every new piece that I learnt. Some people called this ‘musicality’. I call it the maturity and desire to speak with and through the music rather than trying to master it.

- If no, explain.

6 a What does the interpretive process mean to you?

As I have already mentioned, my music is interpretation of life.

b How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

Everyone’s interpretation is unique so there are no problems with ownership. You always own your own interpretation. You may also share it with someone else.

7 Describe your process when improvising.

I try to say something meaningful rather than focus on note choice and other musical elements. However, improvisation is like having a conversation in that some days you have something interesting to say, other days you struggle. There are methods for improving your conversation so that you will always be able to speak clearly and meaningfully, but speaking from the heart is an uncertain thing.

8 How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

In my opinion, if there was a scale from 1-10 for the freedom one has access to in music performance – where 10 is absolute freedom and 1 is absolute restriction – free improvisation would rate 10 and reading music from a score in an orchestral context would be 1. However, this does not suggest that one is above the other, rather that they are very different. Having absolute freedom can be extremely daunting and can inspire
absolutely nothing, just like reading from a score in an ensemble context with specific instructions on how to ‘play’ can be incredibly stifling and mathematic. I love to improvise because I feel this freedom most strikingly. I think that life is about constant change and evolution and I like to get up on stage knowing that if a moment or experience on stage changes me that I can change with it, heading in a new direction without fear of ramifications should I choose to perform something different to the original intention.

How do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician, and as a performer?

*Improvisation has offered me a way of discovering who I am as a person. Through improvisation I have realised how important it is to me that I know who I am and where I fit in this world. I have then been able to translate this across to my role as musician and performer. I can create with a better sense of my intention and direction which are things that mean a lot to me in performance and composition of new works.*
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

Repertoire Performer

Improviser

Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

Composer

1  a  What drew you to music initially?

Working in a group and creativity.

b  What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

Best friend played clarinet, and through playing led to writing [sic].

2  a  What do you find musically inspiring?

Nature, friends, relationships and developing relationships through music.

b  What do you find musically fulfilling?

Generous performance and communication.

c  What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

Emotion, passion, precision, generosity, daringness.
3  

a  Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?  

   Yes.  

b  Do you consider yourself to be a creative person?  Explain.  

   Yes, always felt the need for expression through sound.  

c  Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician?  Explain.  

   Yes, as a composer/performer working in various [sic], I feel I’ve aided in some way and been affected.  

4  

a  Describe the development of your sound.  

   Diatonic world, moving to theatre music, evolving into more personal sophistication.  

b  Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?  

   A developing one.  

c  What do you value about your sound?  

   Spontaneity, accessibility but still new and creative, contrasting, dramatic.  

5  

Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?  

   -  If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?  

      Passion, emotion and to be moved.  

      Describe the development of your musical voice.  

      From personal ideas and vision, movement toward more humane vision to aid in someone else’s musical experience as well as my own.
What does the interpretive process mean to you?

*Communication and understanding with a performer.*

How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

*Very. As a performer as well as composer I feel and hope my music is 50% composer’s ideas and 50% performer.*

How much instruction do you include in your scores?

*As music as possible, but anything can be taken in a different light by various performers.*

How do you feel about performers bringing their own interpretations to your compositions?

*It is essential to all music-making. My music would not have life or breath without someone’s contribution in performance.*
PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

Repertoire Performer

Improviser

Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

Repertoire Performer

1 a What drew you to music initially?

It looked like fun! Especially percussion, all the big instruments ... I liked to dance as a kid and percussion is so theatrical by nature.

b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

I started on other instruments, clarinet and saxophone; because there was an opportunity to learn and they were the instruments I could get a sound out of. Percussion was my choice in the end, and it all started because of the reasons given above.

2 a What do you find musically inspiring?

Passion, attention to detail, performances (and recordings) that are well crafted. I think passion and commitment to a particular sound or idea can outweigh the other two though. Perhaps the words ‘energy’ and/or ‘charisma’ could also be interchanged with ‘passion’.

b What do you find musically fulfilling?
Watching/listening to someone (or to a group) who display some or all of the above qualities. Performing music that I have composed myself. Collaborating with like-minded musicians on new works. Performing with other musicians in a situation that is well-rehearsed and comfortable. Playing with musicians who I have a rapport with and connect with musically.

c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

A musical experience that I attach meaning to because of how I happen to be feeling in that place, at that time, given whatever else is going on in my world ... The meaning that I have found in a lot of musical experiences has been influenced by these external factors. The ‘meaning’ can also be attached later, I’ve found; listening to a particular piece of music that I associate with a particular event in the past.

3 a Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

Yes. At the same time I also consider setting the table and gardening and cooking to be creative pursuits.

b Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

Yes. Everyone is creative, I think, to the extent that we all make decisions about the way we do things in the world, such as how we dress, and also how we deal with change and hardship.

c Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

Sometimes (!). In some ways I see my music-making as a creative expression of my thoughts and feelings, and it is the best way I’ve found to communicate and reflect on those things. It is a difficult question to answer though, because as a freelance musician so much of what one does can become ‘work’, even though one is technically being ‘creative’, and there is this utopian ideal of creativity being very free and unrestrained. Also, being creative and being musically talented or
technically proficient are all very different things, but things that I think can be mixed up and mistaken for each other ...

4  a  Describe the development of your sound.

This is something that I feel is constantly changing and evolving, but has begun to be refined in the past few years through performances and recordings of my own compositions, and the subsequent reflection on those performances and recordings.

b  Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

When I play my own music, yes. When I am performing notated music in an ensemble (or solo) I display my particular interpretation and technique but I’m not sure if that same ‘sound’ is expressed in the same way.

c  What do you value about your sound?

That it is mine! And that it is something I have developed, and will continue to develop ... that I can see how my sound in 2010 relates to my sound in 2007 and how I have changed and grown since then.

5  Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

A lot of my own music is quite minimal, and simple on the surface, but there is actually a lot going on to make up those simple parts ... I think I am trying to communicate exactly that ... that there are beautiful things in life that are seemingly so simple but are actually quite intricate, like flowers and things in nature ...

Describe the development of your musical voice.
See Question 4a.

- If no, explain.

6 a What does the interpretive process mean to you?

Performing notated solo or chamber repertoire has given me the opportunity to present my feelings on particular works through my interpretation of those works. In large ensembles I have found my input into the interpretative process to be much less.

b How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

Not very ... I suppose it could me more important with a new work or a work that had been interpreted in a particularly radical way by someone, but I think that once a particular performance or interpretation is out in the public domain that to claim ownership over interpretation becomes difficult.

7 Have you ever tried improvising?

- If yes, in what context?

On my own, in the process of composing, when workshopping or creating new work with other musicians and artists. Also in performance, either in the context of completely improvised performances or as a section in a notated or directed work.

What was your process?

Listening, all the time, which is just as important when performing notated music, but I suppose there can be more unexpected elements in an improvisation so one needs to have all their senses heightened in order to be able to respond and communicate in the context of what’s going
on around them. I think this is just as important when improvising on one’s own.

How did you find improvising?

I find it to be an enjoyable experience, one in which I can be expressive and creative. I find it especially useful when composing or developing new work, as a way of finding out what I can do, and often something unexpected will happen in an improvisation that becomes the seed for a new piece or idea … something that I might not have thought of otherwise.

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

They are different, and both equally valid ways of making music, and I experience both regularly (in isolation and also together). I think, for me, feeling comfortable with my environment, feeling prepared for a rehearsal or performance, and feeling comfortable with the other musicians I’m playing with has more impact on my overall feelings, regardless of whether the music is notated or improvised.

It’s all expression of ideas, and the two can be very closely linked, depending on the situation.

- If no, would you consider improvising?

Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

I think it is a skill that every performer uses to some extent, whether they completely improvise an entire performance, or even a ‘repertoire’ musician who drops their music and has to decide on the spot whether to
play from memory or make something up or stop and pick up the music: this is improvisation. Some musicians are more comfortable with this idea than others, and I do think that being able to feel comfortable in the musical moment without being dictated to all the time is quite a freeing experience, but also a very personal one.

- **If you have improvised before**, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

  *I think my skills as an improver have developed alongside other musical skills, though after a lot of basic technique skills, and I wish that my first music teachers had been able to coax me into it earlier! I think learning to improvise after one has learnt to ‘play’ an instrument is like learning the dynamics after the notes in a piece of repertoire. I think being able to improvise and feeling comfortable improvising can give performers a certain level of confidence, even if they are interpreting notated music, and should be taught alongside repertoire and technique and scales and all those sorts of things …*
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

- Repertoire Performer
- Improviser
- Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

____________________________________________________

Repertoire Performer

1  a  What drew you to music initially?

I was initially drawn to music because of the clarinet and my desire to play it. I first saw and heard it when I was seven years old, watching a kids’ TV show where a police band demonstrated each instrument individually. As soon as I heard the clarinet I thought “that’s what I want to do!”.

b  What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

I was drawn to the clarinet because of its unique sound. I was drawn to the ‘repertoire’ discipline, as opposed to ‘improv’ or ‘jazz’, because I felt there was a wider range of styles and techniques to learn and experience. While I enjoyed and still do enjoy playing jazz and improvising, I didn’t want to limit myself to only playing jazz.

2  a  What do you find musically inspiring?

Music that inspires me is that which is performed demonstrating clear intentions; a sense of a story with human emotion expressed through
b What do you find musically fulfilling?

For me a fulfilling musical experience is knowing that I am performing/listening to a performance of music that truly expresses the composer’s and my/the performer/s intentions.

c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

I consider a meaningful musical experience to be one that is performed demonstrating clear intentions; a sense of a story with true human emotion expressed through instruments/voice. This makes the experience meaningful because I am able to relate to it and imagine what the composer was feeling and what the performer is feeling.

3 a Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

Yes.

b Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

I consider myself to be a creative person because I am able to express my intentions and emotions intelligently through means other than direct communication. I am able to analyse problems and use methods that are different, more interesting and just as efficient (if not more so) as methods that one would be expecting for solving problems.

c Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

I consider myself to be a creative musician. I can express the given or interpreted narrative and consequent emotion of a composer's work in different ways, by the way I play the clarinet. I aim to express the music I make individually by demonstrating acquired knowledge and or techniques. I will try different approaches to solve musical problems so to achieve a clear interpretation and I will not limit my interpretations.
believe this makes me a creative musician.

4 a Describe the development of your sound.

My sound has developed in relation to my technique, knowledge and familiarity with my specific instrument. I think it took me much longer to hear my own sound properly – especially to hear good qualities in my sound - than most of my peers. Once I had made these realisations (during third year undergrad) I was able to make more decisions about how I wanted to use my sound and how to improve my instrument and its accessories to get a better sound.

b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

I do believe I have a personal sound. Everyone has a personal sound as everyone is different. I think it’s impossible to make exactly the same sound as somebody else, even when playing exactly the same instrument. My sound has grown and continues to grow with me and my experiences and I think this is true of everyone.

c What do you value about your sound?

I value the range of tone colours I am able to achieve with my sound as well as the richness of my overall sound. I also value the versatility of my sound as this helps me to achieve different expressions for demonstrating my musical intentions.

5 Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

Yes.

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

I aim to communicate the musical and even emotional intentions of the composer of a work, as well as my own
interpretations of the music and its emotional
meaning to the audience.

Describe the development of your musical voice.

My musical voice is related to my interpretations and
desire to put my ideas across to an audience. My voice has
developed with my musical knowledge and experience, as
the more I learn the clearer my voice becomes.

- If no, explain.

6

a What does the interpretive process mean to you?

The interpretive process means the process of trying to understand
something. In terms of my music-making, it is the process I will take to
try and understand how a composer wants me to express his/her music.
As this level of understanding is impossible to completely achieve, for me
it is an unending process as I will never know exactly what another
person is thinking or has thought.

b How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

I believe everyone has ownership of their own interpretations by default
and by that means it is unimportant. No two people will follow exactly the
same process for understanding a composer’s work, thus any
interpretation will always be individual to a person. More than one
person will inevitably have the same opinion and agree on many points of
the interpretation of a work. But while expression (a performance) is the
perceivable interpretation, an interpretation itself is different to its
expression. Attempting to replicate someone else’s perceived
interpretation, or mimicking, is therefore not the borrowing of the
interpretation itself but of the expression. Mimicking is only an attempt at
shortening the interpretive process and there is no threat towards
ownership of the interpretation in question. I therefore consider
Have you ever tried improvising?

Yes.

- If yes, in what context?

In high school I used to improvise when playing jazz in school bands. I would improvise as a compositional method for assignments - jazz and classical. I also participated in various free improvisation sessions in classes with other musicians. Since high school I have had to use improvisation in some sections of contemporary classical works where composers provide the frameworks. I have also attempted improvising cadenzas for classical works.

What was your process?

For jazz improvisation, my process was to follow a chordal framework and choose notes within each scale, respective of the chords. I would use my creativity to make melodic lines and to incorporate quotations from the head. Depending on my familiarity with the head, I would also try to use different compositional methods such as sequences, inversions or retrograde to play around with themes from the head. When improvising as a compositional method, I would either use elements of the above process for a jazz compositions, or I would use free improvisation. For attempting an improvised cadenza, I would try use the above process I learnt from Jazz, as there are a lot of parallels to the classical methods I had been shown.
How did you find improvising?

*I found improvising to be difficult at first. I always had more trouble adhering to chord or scale structures than I did with creating melodic lines and structures. As with any technique, my improvising needed practice.*

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

*When I improvised in high school, when I was more practiced at it, I felt more nervous compared to reading music. This is because I was putting my whole musical self out in front of everyone watching. At the same time it was a fun challenge, much like reading difficult music. If I were to improvise now, I would be much more anxious than I would be reading music as I am almost completely unpractised at it. Alternatively, I have since developed my musical voice more and have a greater understanding of the way I express music. I hope to get to a point where I am able to express myself completely through my instrument, so I want there to be no difference between my improvising and my reading music; I want to learn repertoire and express it as clearly as I would with spoken language and improvise expressing as I would with spoken language.*

- *If no, would you consider improvising?*

Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

*Definitely. Improvising is a useful skill for a repertoire performer, just as repertoire is useful to an improviser. Music is music. Any musical experience, skill, style, genre etc helps every other facet of one’s music-*
making. It all adds up to take you closer to the ultimate goal of mastering your instrument and voicing your music.

- **If you have improvised before**, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

*I believe my improvising experience has made an impact on my development, as a musician and a performer, more than I would have initially thought two years ago. Now that I have the belief that all music should be considered as fundamentally related, I aim to achieve a level of pure expression with my music-making, regardless of style or genre. My experience with improvising helps me to conceptualise my musical voice as quite literally a voice, whereby I want everything I play to sound spontaneous. I also plan on using improvisation in classical, folk, jazz and contemporary music in the future as part of my chamber music pursuits.*
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

Repertoire Performer

Improviser

Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

____________________________________________________

Repertoire Performer

1  a  What drew you to music initially?
    
    I grew up listening to my parents’ favourite music, my Dad loves opera
    (strangely, I don’t nowadays ... ) and my mum is a bit of a Britpop junkie,
    so I got a pretty broad aural education pretty much from birth.

    b  What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

    There was a travelling production of Toad of Toad Hall that came to my
    kindergarten, and the soundtrack was provided by a violinist who popped
    out of a box at the beginning. I hardly watched the show, I just remember
    watching her, and nagging my parents until they let me start playing!

2  a  What do you find musically inspiring?

    Other musicians’ performances and interpretations. Whether it be
    improvised or repertoire, formal or informal performance, even stuff on
    Youtube ... I just feed off other people’s loves and ideas of the music.

    b  What do you find musically fulfilling?

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The main thing that comes to mind is playing with other people. Mostly small ensembles, ones that really click, and enjoying the experience of creating something incredible together. On a more basic level, the sound I make when I play at my best. Just that sound makes me feel elated and rapt to be doing something so cool.

What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

Enjoying a performance with others – the musicians, the audience, whoever’s there. Music is all about giving, to me. Giving yourself to it and giving it to others.

Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

Definitely. Although there are moments in technical development where everything seems so analytical you want to punch something. But it’s all so you can create something wonderful in the end, so yes.

Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

Not particularly, actually. Within certain parameters I guess. I’ve always enjoyed ‘creative’ pursuits like music, writing, reading, drawing … But I wouldn’t say I’m a great creative mind. I have ideas, but they generally have a logical origin as opposed to truly original thoughts. I’m not sure. Ah, hard question!

Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

Again, not particularly. That sounds so horrible ... haha. I don’t compose or improvise on a regular basis at all, so on that front it’s a no. And in repertoire, my creative ideas generally come from a logical place – stylistic factors etc. But I like to think I interpret things in an interesting way, if not truly ‘creative’.

Describe the development of your sound.
I'm going to assume this means literal sound/tone? Its development tends to come with various teachers’ opinions on what a ‘good sound’ is. I recently started with a new teacher who wants a much larger, almost harsh sound to develop, so that I can pull back from there as opposed to trying to build from a weaker place. I’ve always needed and wanted a ‘bigger’ sound, really.

b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

I think so, yes. On a string instrument a lot depends on the instrument itself, and mine having sentimental value and being my grandfather’s instrument gives it its own ‘voice’ in a way, to me. I definitely think you can tell the difference between my sound and the next violinist’s, perhaps just from technique ... I don’t know really.

c What do you value about your sound?

I value that thing I couldn’t put my finger on in the last question … the ‘me-ness’ of it. I love the feeling that runs through me when my instrument vibrates in the way I wish it would on every note ... and produces the sound I wish I could call upon every second of playing I do. Ah well, that’s what practice is for.

Gosh I hope you meant literal sound ... haha.

Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

I’m actually not sure it's completely developed. I definitely have one somewhere, but the aim of my education in music is to fully develop my ‘voice’ ... but really, I’m not sure anyone ever stops developing it. I mean there are definitely things that stand musicians apart from one another, but there is always growth in a musical
voice, I think. As it’s developing, and when it gets to where I want it to be in a particular piece, I’d like to communicate a clear story to the audience. A beginning, middle, and end, and take them with me along the way, so they don’t wonder where they are at any one time. Bad analogy, sorry, but you get what I mean I hope.

Describe the development of your musical voice.

*Oh, see above?*

- If **no**, explain.

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6 a. What does the interpretive process mean to you?

> It means understanding first the period the work was written in, what inspired it and the context in which the composer wrote it, and interpreting that first of all in the music by listening to recordings and deciding what should feel how. Then putting your personal taste and twist of the piece on top of those basic roots.

6 b. How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

> As someone currently developing her ‘voice’ as a musician, I think it’s invaluable. Even if it’s considered ‘wrong’ or inappropriate, everyone should give their first instincts a go before deciding on a final interpretation, in order to get to know your own musicality and tastes.

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7 Have you ever tried improvising?

- If **yes**, in what context?

> In practice I do use improvising around scales to gain a greater understanding of hand shapes in various keys, but that’s not really musical. I’ve tried musical improvising in the context of folk fiddling when I was younger, which was
fun but dreadful to listen to … I was about 14 … Some of
my closest friends these days are improvisers and I’ve
experimented with them in group contexts, with pieces
they’ve written, but end up notating things anyway, as I
don’t feel I have a natural improvising gift as some of them
clearly do.

What was your process?

In the group contexts, it’s been with pieces my friends have
wanted a violin for and asked me to play, so my process
was one of collaboration and eventual notation … haha.

How did you find improvising?

Difficult. It’s a confidence thing too, I think. I don’t feel
comfortable so I probably don’t try a lot of things I could
try if I had the confidence. But I also don’t feel that close
my instrument when I’m improvising … again, because it’s
uncomfortable for me and I distance myself from what I’m
doing to avoid embarrassment, I think.

How do you feel when improvising, compared with
reading music?

Oh, see above again?

- If no, would you consider improvising?

Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire
performer?

I think it’s useful to know your instrument as well as you possibly can. If I
could improvise well on the violin, I would know where every single note
was and how to play anything that popped into my head, with good
technique, because I’d practised improvising. These are amazing things
to be able to do, and it is generally the improvisers who are able to do these things, not repertoire students. *In my experience.*

- **If you have improvised before**, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

  *I’ve not improvised enough to comment on this, I don’t think.*
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

- Repertoire Performer
- Improviser
- Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

Repertoire Performer

1. a What drew you to music initially?

   *Both my parents are music teachers.*

   b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

   *I learned piano since being a toddler, and cello since age nine. In both cases my parents chose those instruments for me.*

2. a What do you find musically inspiring?

   *Performers who have been in the profession many years, and still are full of enthusiasm and passion for their music.*

   b What do you find musically fulfilling?

   *Any musical performance/play-through/jam that is for the fun of it, and not for the money. It can be a paid gig, as long as you’re not doing it purely because it’s a paid gig.*

   c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?
Same as above. Nearly every musical experience is meaningful, if not every experience. Even if you’re not enjoying yourself, there’ll be at least one audience member that is, and that makes it meaningful.

3  

a  Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

Of course.

b  Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

Yes. Away from music I’m creative. Interior decorating I love, arts and crafts, fashion, paintings. I’m always looking to start a new project of some sort – usually they’re musical projects, whether it be starting up a chamber group, organising a concert, starting a chamber orchestra, etc.

c  Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

Yes. I think any successful musician is creative – that’s what a musician is. I think there is a very big difference between being a good player, and a good musician. I enjoy that fact that you can play the same piece 10 times, and each time will be different. You can play just one note 100 times and make it different. I love that about music.

4  

a  Describe the development of your sound.

I am always trying to develop my sound. If I see a player whose sound I love, I try to analyse what it is about it that I like, and try to produce that myself. Your sound also describes your mood at the time as well, and very much reflects your general personality. I think that a string player’s sound is the most important factor of their playing.

b  Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

Yes. Everyone has their own sound – it’s like a musical fingerprint. You can get five people to play the same instrument, and you will most certainly get five different sounds.
c What do you value about your sound?

That it’s mine, and no-one else can make it.

Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

Yes. *I aim to communicate what the composer wrote on the page* (sounds obvious, but it’s easy to be lazy and not actually do what he/she wrote), and also to add my own personality – something that changes from day to day, depending what mood I’m in.

Describe the development of your musical voice.

*I believe the development of anyone’s musical voice comes through development as a person – the more you age, the more ‘life experience’ you have that depends on your emotional and intellectual breadth.* Also of course, listening to a wide array of artists/works – and not just classical genre. Rock, jazz, folk, pop – it’s all linked and related to what you may play on the cello.

- If no, explain.

a What does the interpretive process mean to you?

*Listening to a couple of favourite recordings of the piece.* When learning it, first of all really make sure you’re honouring what’s on the page- every dynamic, articulation etc. The composer wrote it there for a reason. Make sure you know what are editor’s markings and what are composer’s markings. Then, go to town with your own emotions and gestures, without ‘re-composing’ the work.
b How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

Not very. Frankly I think it’s a bit wanky 😊. As long as you’re honouring what the composer wrote, and playing with whatever playing style you believe in, I think that is all that matters. I think as soon as the performer starts to really try to put their stamp on a piece, it becomes extremely contrived and somewhat insulting to the composer.

7 Have you ever tried improvising?

- If yes, in what context?

It’s never out of my own choice – I have very little confidence in improv [sic]. Usually it’s because I’m told to playing in a band, or doing a recording session for a ‘cello bit’ in a folk/pop/rock song.

What was your process?

Get comfortable with the chord structure (listening to the guitar part a few times). Then having a couple of practice runs, then do a few takes.

How did you find improvising?

Never as bad as I build it up to be. I find I am quite capable of it, if I don’t feel rushed.

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

Totally out of my element!

- If no, would you consider improvising?

8 Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?
If you have improvised before, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

*I feel it has given me more confidence in myself, and certainly allows you to play with more physical and emotional freedom. Pieces that are jazzy in style immediately leap out at you, and it’s much easier to have a more ‘improv’ style interpretation. For eg. 2\textsuperscript{nd} movement of Debussy [cello] sonata – really quite blues/jazz style.*
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

Repertoire Performer
Improviser
Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

Repertoire Performer

1 a What drew you to music initially?

*Circumstance, but eventually the feeling of unity created when everyone involved in the performance is on the same wavelength.

b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

*Again initially circumstance, but I grew to love how the violin has so many different colours and characters, and as I generally like having boundaries, structure etc. my personality is more suited to that of a repertoire rather than improv [sic] performer.

2 a What do you find musically inspiring?

*Seeing a performer that [sic] is 100% committed to what they’re playing, what the composer’s intentions were, and to conveying an idea /emotion to an audience.

b What do you find musically fulfilling?
When I feel like I’ve perfectly achieve what’s described above (2a).

c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

3

a Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

Yes.

b Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

Yes and no. I have become more creative through studying/performing more as a violinist, however I’m a very rational, straightforward person, not generally creative in ideas.

c Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

Unfortunately no. Too often I get caught up in technical restrictions and disregard the creative side of what we do. I would like to be more creative, definitely.

4

a Describe the development of your sound.

My sound has developed considerably over the time I have been at uni. And I feel as though I have learnt a lot about the many factors that contribute to its production.

b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

Yes and no. I think it is emerging, but as I am still exploring the possibilities and limits of violin playing. I think within the next five years or so a personal sound will develop out of choice, rather than me being restricted by what I am only able to create.

c What do you value about your sound?

I struggle to pick out anything in particular I am actually happy with within my sound. At the moment I feel everything needs improvement.
Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

Describe the development of your musical voice.

- If no, explain.

*As a repertoire performer, surely one’s musical voice is whatever the composer is trying to express? However if this is not the case, then no, I do not feel I have a musical voice as too often I am restricted by nerves technical ability etc.*

What does the interpretive process mean to you?

*It’s very important to me. We have such an important role in delivering the composer’s message to an audience, it’s extremely important that we think about how we interpret everything on the page.*

How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

*Not very important. Whilst it’s important not to copy others purposefully, surely if one performer feels the same way about a phrase as another, that gives the interpretation more weight?*

Have you ever tried improvising?

- If yes, in what context?

*In church music, and for a friend’s improv [sic] recital last year.*

What was your process?

*For church music it was to find another melodic line*
within the harmonic structure to add to that being sung by the congregation. For the recital, we had to create a mood of complete chaos, so was using lots of extended techniques.

How did you find improvising?

To me it was frightening and liberating at the same time. I like boundaries and structure, so it was easier when I had something to base it on, rather than doing anything I wanted. The idea of limitless possibilities was incredibly frightening.

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

Improvising made me even more aware that when I had something on my mind, wasn’t completely there, nothing worked, or it was much less inspired. I think with repertoire you have more to fall back on, on a bad day, however if the ecstasy/joy, inspiration isn’t there, it really does have an effect on the performance.

- If no, would you consider improvising?

Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

Yes, but not necessarily for everyone.

- If you have improvised before, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

Improvising helped me to open my ears to what else was happening in a performance, to respond to what others
were playing more easily. And as a performer, to be more relaxed, to enjoy it more – to recognise that the audience is there (generally) to be entertained and that if I’m enjoying myself (or look like I am), they will enjoy it more too.
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

- Repertoire Performer
- Improviser
- Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

Repertoire Performer

1. a What drew you to music initially?
   
   Making noise.

   b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?
   
   The woman who took my musical playgroup was a violinist, and she was always saying that when I went to school she would teach me ... and she did.

2. a What do you find musically inspiring?
   
   My teacher. Music that moves me in some way.

   b What do you find musically fulfilling?
   
   Playing with other people. Music that gives you the feeling that only comes from great music played with integrity and in my opinion proper style.

   c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?
One that moves you ... to sadness, happiness, etc. Playing with other people gives great satisfaction its meaningful in a different way [sic].

3
a Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?
YES.
b Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.
Yes. How does one explain that? I try to create therefore I am creative.
It comes naturally ... mostly.
c Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.
Yes. When I perform, mostly there is a lot of me in each performance.

4
a Describe the development of your sound.
It’s come a long way between the ages of 17 and 20.
b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?
Sometimes. There are things about my style that are personal.
c What do you value about your sound?
Not sure ...

5
Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?
- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

Emotion ... what I feel is in the music.
Describe the development of your musical voice.

It didn’t really occur to me that I had any voice ... or artistic licence until I was 17 or 18 ... so I’m working on it.
Personal style takes time.

- If no, explain.

6  a  What does the interpretive process mean to you?

*You start with the notes. You read them in time. Then you set about making it your own ... Hopefully within the stylistic boundaries.*

b  How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

*Very.*

7  Have you ever tried improvising?

- If yes, in what context?

What was your process?

How did you find improvising?

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

- If no, would you consider improvising?

*Not really. Someday yes definitely.*

8  Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

*Yes ... there is more to music than reading the notes.*

- If you have improvised before, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

- Repertoire Performer
- Improviser
- Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

______________________________

Repertoire Performer

1 a What drew you to music initially?

   *It was the unique, strong emotions I felt while listening to or playing it.*

1 b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

   *I think it was the tone, the look of it. Classical music’s structure yet endless varieties of colour and mood really appealed to me.*

2 a What do you find musically inspiring?

   *Evidence of someone giving themselves completely to the music, taking risks and leaving them vulnerable to imperfection.*

2 b What do you find musically fulfilling?

   *Being in the middle of an orchestra, in the middle of a sonorous, crazy harmony and knowing that you’re part of creating it.*

2 c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

   *I value music and performances that take my breath away, make me lose*
track of time, make me think and revalue my own life, surprise me and mesmerise me.

3 a Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

Definitely. A true musician speaks through his soul so every performance is a new creation even in the context of a single person.

b Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

I'm only creative in the way that I have a strong desire to bare my soul and innermost feelings.

c Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

I have little desire to compose or improvise, but music is closely linked to my imagination. Each performance is an emotional self-portrait.

4 a Describe the development of your sound.

It’s improved out of sight in the last few months. I’ve cast off inhibitions so it’s much less constricted and more open and honest.

b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

Yes, I think so. I certainly have a sound of my own that I want to produce, but it rarely happens exactly as I would like.

c What do you value about your sound?

I value its honesty, its ever-changing character, the subtle nuances I’m beginning to add to it, the way it’s maturing as I myself mature.

5 Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?
How I feel about the music I’m playing, my thoughts and reactions to it.

Describe the development of your musical voice.

As I’ve gained confidence and experience (in music and in my life), [my musical voice] has gained more and more freedom to emote and create.

- If no, explain.

6

a What does the interpretive process mean to you?

It’s about taking all the context, previous performances and your own self into account and combining them.

b How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

7

Have you ever tried improvising?

- If yes, in what context?

What was your process?

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

- If no, would you consider improvising?

Yes, I would. I also feel that I should know the ‘rules’ (I’m thinking of jazz) but perhaps I should just play around with it.

8

Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

Yes, I think it would free me up even more and think about the music
differently [sic].

- If you have improvised before, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

   Repertoire Performer

   Improviser

   Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

______________________________

Improviser

1  a  What drew you to music initially?

   My parents and grandparents were all amateur musicians, and as a child we would all sing around the piano. I don't remember a time when there wasn't music in the house.

   b  What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

   I had Suzuki piano lessons when I was three or four but didn't really get interested in playing until I took up the clarinet at nine. It just happened to be in the house – my elder brother had borrowed one from school but not stuck with it. I picked it up and started fiddling with it.

2  a  What do you find musically inspiring?

   Passion, intensity. Emotional expression

   b  What do you find musically fulfilling?

   Playing in an ensemble that listens to each other and supports each other.
c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

_Can be anything. Noodling around the house on an instrument I don’t really play can be quite amazing sometimes! For me, it’s often composing a particular piece that really moves me, or being part of an ensemble that plays in a way that is a transformative experience for both the performers and the audience. Conversely, a meaningless experience usually entails playing in (or listening to) a band that doesn’t listen to each other, is unnecessarily loud, and is unsupported by the audience (either because the audience doesn’t care about the band, or because the band doesn’t care about the audience!)._

3 a Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

_Always. (Except as above!)_

b Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

_I sometimes feel that the concept of improvising is common to many of my activities. I will often prefer to respond to situations as they arrive, rather than being painstakingly pre-organised. Teaching is a good example – I usually feel more comfortable teaching by being responsive to the needs of the student in the moment, rather than coming in with a prepared plan. I enjoy the challenge of finding new, tailored solutions to problems. Probably means I wind up reinventing the wheel a lot, but that can be satisfying, too._

c Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

_I don’t know whether I consider myself to be creative, so much as aim to be creative. One of the challenges of improvising for me is to keep things fresh. If I am not experiencing the music as fresh, I rapidly feel stale and dissatisfied. When things are working for me, it all feels fresh. When I am stuck, it all sounds tired, even though the outsider probably doesn’t notice any change. I guess what I am starting to say here is that the idea_
of being creative is very important to me, and that the psychological feeling of being creative is perhaps more influential on my personal satisfaction than the aural result is!

4. a Describe the development of your sound.

My early sound models were people like my Czech clarinet teacher — . He always had a colour and edge to his sound that [I] admired. Later, on saxophone, I wanted to emulate many of the great American jazz players without having any real idea of how to do it, but spent a great deal of time working on the overtones of the saxophone. I also listened intently to a number of local saxophonists, including Fred Bradshaw and Mark Simmonds. As well as studying free improvisation briefly in 1990-91, I spent some time working in rock, reggae and punk bands in the late 80s and early 90s, which all encouraged me to explore a range of alternative sound production techniques. In my undergraduate degree at VCA in the mid 90s, I had my first formal saxophone lessons, and started to understand the process of sound production is a more profound way. I started to gain some understanding of breathing technique, and listened to a lot of American saxophonist Pharoah Sanders, among others. Since then, I have steadily worked on opening up and developing my sound concept, inspired variously by African saxophonist Fela Kuti, American saxophonist Rahsaan Roland Kirk, and Jimi Hendrix, Carlos Santana and other electric guitarists, aiming for the power and intensity they carry in their sounds. In more recent years, I have listened to a great range of singers and have studied singing myself. This process has developed my understanding still further.

b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

I hope so, but I couldn’t explain it. I like to have at my disposal a great range of sounds, but still have an idea of what ‘my sound’ is.

c What do you value about your sound?
Body, flexibility, expressive potential.

Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

Hard to say ‘a’ musical voice. I feel that to some degree I have different musical ‘personas’ to suit different situations. The first and most obvious ‘persona’ is dynamic, intense, physical. A bandleader’s role. It wants to send energy out through the ensemble to the audience, entertain and engage. The second ‘persona’ that I can identify would be a more ambient one. It is contained and internally focused, peaceful and contemplative. There are probably others, but they would essentially be variations of these two core ideas.

- If **yes**, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

  Energy. Emotion. Joy. Often also specific messages of social justice carried in titles or lyrics.

  Describe the development of your musical voice.

  *My god, that’s a hard one – please insert my thesis here!* I think to a large extent it’s inherent, but then unlocked by all the music and musicians that I have heard and studied along the way.

  - If **no**, explain.

a  What does the interpretive process mean to you?

  *I always try to ‘own’ whatever music I play. I find that when I don’t, and try to hide my personality, the results are rarely satisfying to myself or to others.*

b  How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?
Describe your process when improvising.

I always try to be guided by the note I have just played – what does it imply, what does it need, what does it lead to? Also by the notes around me. I often have an orchestration concept in my head as I listen to the music unfold – what would work here? What is missing here? If I am playing a solo with accompaniment as in a jazz or rock setting, I like to be thoroughly pre-prepared so that in the moment I can be totally instinctive and not think about harmony at all, just responding directly to what I am hearing.

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

The two processes can be very similar. I like to get comfortable with written scores to the point that I am almost improvising them – making fresh choices about phrasing and dynamics and tone colour on the fly. When I can’t be that free, as in some situations that require serious sight-reading, I sometimes feel that I am not really playing music at all, just going through the emotions. I am bound up, and can’t even integrate with the rest of the ensemble.

How do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician, and as a performer?

Improvising has greatly expanded my horizons as a performer, helping me to open my mind and accept and learn to love all sorts of music that I would otherwise have struggled with. Improvising has given me a different relationship with my instruments, helping me to listen to them and interact with them in ways I could not otherwise have imagined.
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

- Repertoire Performer
- Improviser
- Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

-----------------------------------------------

Repertoire Performer

1  a  What drew you to music initially?

Expression, creativity, made me feel more complete, impossible to not do it.

b  What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

I have always sung and can’t stop (ever! Wherever I am!) so studying it seriously was a necessity so that I could protect my voice and do it with some quality. Having to sing and make noise is part of my need to express myself and expel creative energy as well.

2  a  What do you find musically inspiring?

Everything that happens sparks a musical thought and there are then some incredible moments of (eg) human interaction that spark the thought that begins a piece of music. When I am looking more deliberately for inspiration I look to music that broadens my experience – so has some unusual element or something I’ve never heard before. Those moments in art that change you – change something in your DNA makeup – are
usually the most unexpected and beautifully inspiring moments!

b  What do you find musically fulfilling?

Emotional fulfilment – like a soaring string section; the very, very complex and unusual – I get easily bored otherwise; life-changing live music experiences – especially the first time one of my pieces is workshopped or played; the moment that I’m singing a beautiful passage and I know all the notes are sitting perfectly so I can soar – which comes back to expression; the feeling of walking away from a passage in a piece I’ve been writing knowing it’s spot-on perfect; listening back to recordings of amazing musicians playing my music.

c  What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

I think it is different for everyone but generally art is about creating moments of life changing experiences for people. I think you have to challenge yourself all the time to realise your potential to accept genres across the spectrum (ie. pop to romantic to South Indian Carnatic improvisation to jazz etc!).

3  a  Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

Yes.

b  Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

Yes. I have a constant drive to express myself creatively. Every little moment that occurs throughout my day has a creative attachment – I dress according to my need for expression; I capture the sound of the water pouring from the kettle into my mug of tea and it sparks the basis for a piece of music. There is a constant need for a creative outlet.

c  Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

I think even when I’m bound to the notes on a page I interpret through my playing/ singing. There are always limitations and freedoms on creativity
in every situation from the most pure improv [sic] to being third clarinet in a community orchestra.

4  
a  Describe the development of your sound.

I’m still looking for it. I think my sound as a repertoire performer is influenced by my composition and listening – those are the key elements.

b  Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

Yes and I think it’s still developing.

c  What do you value about your sound?

The qualities of the sound as a musician are more important than the uniqueness when you are a repertoire performer I think. So I value my capacity to reach a top C from a leap over the uniqueness of my sound. Of course uniqueness is still important! But the technical skills are more important in this situation.

5  Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

-  If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

I think my sound has a unique character and my expression through singing captures that and projects it. But I think as a repertoire performer you also want to be communicating the composer’s aim in composing the piece.

Describe the development of your musical voice.

Again it develops through education – with experts and tutors but also through listening, composing, thinking about it, figuring out what I want to achieve and
performing.

- If no, explain.

6 a What does the interpretive process mean to you?

*It’s about finding the composers’ point behind the dots, but also about finding out if that’s what you want to and can express so that you can meet somewhere amongst it.*

b How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

*As important as any creative ownership. We look to great interpretations of works as much as we look to great works, which proves the importance of good interpretation. I think there’s a bit of glory in interpreting something well, as much as there is in composing the piece in the first place!*

7 Have you ever tried improvising?

Yes.

- If yes, in what context?

*In a classical music ensemble that was set up to play and perform new works from Music Faculty composers. We spent the last half hour of each rehearsal on pure improv [sic] (I was playing clarinet).*

What was your process?

*Sometimes the ensemble director would give a guideline, such as a mood or setting. Other times the indication would be which instrument should start and then the session would be developed from the mood they would create.*
How did you find improvising?

*It was the purest form of creative expression I’ve known. You become very dependent on your own knowledge of your instrument and the other musicians. Listening is fundamental.*

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

*More free but also more desperately reliant on my musicality and skill.*

- *If no, would you consider improvising?*

8 Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

Yes.

- **If you have improvised before**, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

*It is a great form of expression and shows you what is possible from an instrument and from yourself. Listening to improv [sic] recordings has influenced me greatly as well.*

*It frees you from inhibitions. It also shows you what you’re made of. I don’t think I’ve had enough opportunities to do it though and I’d like more, particularly as a singer.*
### Composer

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<td><em>I always wrote my own music from the first time I saw a piano but I started composing more and more because I needed the creative outlet – it wasn’t enough to play notes on paper. However some works have more capacity for creative expression and interpretation than others so I was drawn to those as well.</em></td>
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a Describe the development of your sound.

*My sound has developed as I have developed. It is more mature and confident than it was when I was [sic].*

b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

c What do you value about your sound?

*As a composer I value its uniqueness and its capacity to reflect me and what I am. It also reflects the music I love.*

---

5 Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

*Yes but as a composer I don’t think it is separate from my ‘sound’.*

   - If *yes*, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

   *To communicate what I am and also to offer an experience like any human interaction in which, should we be compatible, my music will help them reflect on and learn something about themselves and the world.*

   Describe the development of your musical voice.

   *As for ‘sound’.*

   - If *no*, explain.

---

6 a What does the interpretive process mean to you?

*Interpretation is integral to every step of music-making. It is how we create uniqueness and individuality. I love the process of taking a piece to a musician. It is only half done at that point and the interpretation of the performer through workshops, rehearsal and finally on stage is all part of the creative journey.*
How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

As above – it is as important as any creative ownership and it is vital to maintaining an amiable composer/performer relationship. Unlike a visual artist for eg I would be nowhere without people willing to sit down and take the time to interpret my work. I learn so much during that process and would get nowhere without it.

How much instruction do you include in your scores?

I think classical musicians need a certain amount to be comfortable. If it is the first performance and I expect a lot of time interacting and developing the piece I will include less than if I am separate from that process for obvious practical reasons. I would sometimes like to be able to include less and have the musicians lend a greater input, because they are the experts on their instrument, but depending on the musician this isn’t always practical.

How do you feel about performers bringing their own interpretations to your compositions?

Torn! In some ways it’s wonderful and necessary. But it is also my baby, an extension of my self, and it can be difficult to let go of full creative licence.
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

Repertoire Performer

Improviser

Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

____________________________________________________

Repertoire Performer

1. a What drew you to music initially?

   *I find it emotionally fulfilling to express myself through sounds and it is satisfying to work at technical challenges and experiment with sound to create something beautiful.*

   b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

   *I love the possibilities and range of colours and textures available on the piano because of how many notes you can produce at once, and the wealth of amazing ideas and musical concepts available in the repertoire of the great composers of the past.*

2. a What do you find musically inspiring?

   *Stories, emotions, poignant silence, sudden changes, introverted space, words and poetry to music.*

   b What do you find musically fulfilling?

   *Space to breathe in the music, the presence of the song without the...*
instrumentalist getting in the way, the lack of need of an audience, spontaneity, integrity.

c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

When it is evident that the music is the only logical means of expressing something, and whether or not it is heard by anyone other than the producer of the music is irrelevant. Humility in the performance.

3 a Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

Yes, but in varying degrees. It depends on the situation and how much 'license' there is to put some of yourself in it and how much the audience restricts your creative options. However, playing music is an aesthetically-based practice and there is always room to put some of yourself in the performance and make it your 'own'.

b Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

Yes, I am creative - I am idealistic about how I like things to be and always look to make things just the way I like them. But often I don't let my creativity surface because of what others want, for fear it will be inadequate, or because I don't have time or energy to invest in creating. When I let fear get in the way I wouldn't call myself creative.

c Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

Yes, I am often quite creative in my interpretation of what the notes are on the page! Haha. No, serious now. I am creative and like to experiment with music and the directions given and how far to take them. I don't think music can ever be played without some thought as to how it sounds, and I believe you need to be creative to find ways to match the your sound to the ideal sound you hear in your mind. I want the way I play to be my own and would never want to imitate and sound exactly the way someone else sounds so I suppose that would be defined as creativity.
a Describe the development of your sound.

I think I would have to say it has developed organically and independently of my control because I haven't really had any strategy for developing my sound – I have just become more aware of what I want my playing to sound like. And I have been greatly influenced by what I DON'T want to sound like.

b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

No, not really – I think my sound still needs to develop and I need to work more to get a sound that is my own, and a disciplined, uniform approach to my playing, no matter what the style.

c What do you value about your sound?

I love subtle colour and sensitivity – and hope this comes out in my sound. I listen carefully and pay attention to different voices and the interplay between them, and to create mood with space, silence and small changes in strength of tone. Something I value is room to let the music not only sound, but actually speak to the listener and for the listener to respond to it.

5 Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

Describe the development of your musical voice.

- If no, explain.

I don't think I have a musical voice yet - I feel I am still struggling too much with self-doubt and lack of experience to let myself speak through music with integrity. Whether or not this is justified, it does hinder my freedom and
connection to the journey my music takes.

a  What does the interpretive process mean to you?

I think it means everything – to play the music with authority you need to have interpreted it, just like speaking another language – and the interpretive process should always be at the basis of your practice and should dictate the way one handles technical and musical problems.

b  How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

I think it is the most important aspect of playing because the music was a concept before it was sound, and if the musician doesn’t know or care about the concept and is too wrapped up in their ego, self-doubt or the physical act of playing the music, the music will have no authenticity.

7  Have you ever tried improvising?

- If yes, in what context?

  In private, by myself at the piano, late at night when I am tired but feel like playing – sometimes playing with chords, others just fiddling with melodies and patterns.

What was your process?

  Just to play and listen to the sound, follow the music as it builds or stills, and to create sound that I like, and which seems to connect with the ways I am feeling at that particular moment.

How did you find improvising?

  I get frustrated at myself because I can’t make it sound the way I hear it in my head – due to my poor aural skills and my inadequate understanding of harmony – and I can’t reach that uninhibited freedom as I play. I also want it to
be more my own, more personal, which I find a struggle
because I don't know how to make the sounds I wanted to
make – also I always find I want words with it.

How do you feel when improvising, compared with
reading music?

I listen much more closely and feel like I'm 'in the sound' –
in that moment in time, instead of always thinking ahead to
what is to come. I enjoy the creative process, and find it to
be a refreshing change to work from my own mind and
inner ear rather than a page.

- If no, would you consider improvising?

8 Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire
performer?

Yes, it frees up playing and helps you connect with the mindset of the
composers – the face that the music really comes from inside, and that we
can connect with that – even if the sounds originally were someone else's
ideas. It also helps you to develop your own 'voice' which you can instil
in your recreation of the composer's ideas.

- If you have improvised before, how do you feel your
improvisation has impacted on your development as a
musician? As a performer?

It has given me more confidence in my sound and in my
understanding of music and its connection with our
aesthetic ideas and our need to express emotions. And I
think it encourages greater spontaneity in performance –
less fear of 'obeying someone else's rules'.

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Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

- Repertoire Performer
- Improviser
- Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

Composer

1. a What drew you to music initially?

I really can’t remember. My earliest memories of music were in church. My father was a preacher in a Southern US, African American, Baptist church and I was certainly drawn to the choir. But as a two-year-old, after every service I remember going to the piano, playing one note at a time and leaning in closely to ‘feel how each note ‘went’’ so to speak. Don’t know how else to describe it. When I was three my family bought a piano for my sister’s piano lessons. I would play by ear whatever she was learning in her lessons and started composing then as well. My mother could write music and I would get her to transcribe my compositions. Awareness/interest in classical music came in early adolescence (11 perhaps?) when I attended my first classical concert. I remember being particularly drawn to the harp.

b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

Again, origin is a tough one given the early age at which I began. The piano was my first best friend, and I often found myself altering the
repertoire I was working on with the presumptuous thought of ‘wouldn’t it be better if?’ . I’ve composed in some capacity for as long as I can remember. In fact, when I was a young child and either didn’t have a piano or couldn’t play the compositions in my head, I would give ‘air piano’ recitals where I’d make my family watch me play what I heard in my head on the piano in my mind. Got picked on a lot for that when I grew up!

What do you find musically inspiring?

I still like melody and tend to light up when I encounter unusual melodic motion that obscures tonality but has some emotional effect. I love turn-of-the-century French harmonies. I love structure/form, so I tend to remain more intrigued if a work feels like it has sound architecture overall. I also get inspired when a particular performer delivers an interpretation of a work that feels seamless - an integral part of their being - an infallible imprint on the space-time fabric. Such performances remind me of the illusory nature of limitations.

What do you find musically fulfilling?

Recently I’ve been most fulfilled by performances, either my own or another’s, where the ‘mind work’ appears fully integrated with the body. For example, I recently attended a flamenco concert where the ensemble was pretty good but their dancer! – she seemed to hold the music in every cell of her body and released it all with such primordial grace. I’m remembering the intimate relationship between music and the body that the body’s meridians are design to vibrate and that music is in essence structured vibrations ... I have been witnessing a sacred relationship here and find music most fulfilling when that sacred relationship appears understood and is ultimately submitted to.

What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?
I experience most people participating in the practice of making music to be spiritual practitioners with a rich heritage so every musical experience is meaningful to the extent that I’m able to remain in that framework. I am (almost) equally inspired by neophytes who barely know what notes are for as I am by master interpreters of said notes. I mainly look for honesty, vulnerability, seekers. Any musical experience that reveals the universal seeker is a meaningful one.

a  Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

Definitely! Even if you’re improvising, a good performance is a practice in being ‘in the moment’ and is therefore created fresh every time! But there’s a larger creative context as well. The performer and observer are creating an experience together, they are held together by the form of ‘performance’, and while they are suspended together in that form they cannot go about the work of being ‘destructive’, a fact which has a creative magic of its own.

b  Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

I do consider myself to be a creative person, mainly because I don’t feel completely human unless I’m making stuff up – a solution to a problem, a new project, a new business plan, a new song – it all sort of runs together for me. My brain thinks that almost nothing it perceives has ever been there without someone else thinking of it and then making it. Nature totally blows its mind because what if that all happened spontaneously and no ‘thinking’ god came up with that mountain or that river or that tree? It means that everything that emerges has the potential to be as beautiful or as perfect as everything else, which in turn means that making stuff is breathtakingly awesome. Yes. I consider myself a creative person.

c  Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.
I do consider myself creative as a musician, but maybe not intellectually so. As a composer, I tend to work organically, checking in with how my body and general ‘being-ness’ responds to the work that’s being produced. I go out of my way to try not to try. That means I avoid adding things that feel like ‘extra’ and I avoid things that would be put there specifically to make an academic audience feel better. As a critic of my own work, I would say that this process can be limiting to my melodic and harmonic vocabulary, but that’s only with a snapshot view. Bird’s-eye view of my body of work may prove otherwise.

Describe the development of your sound.

My sound is a lot like my DNA. It is mutt – made up of everything that has inspired me over my short life. It has developed by me following anything that feels like ‘mystery’ to me, or anything that makes me want to ask questions about my being in the world. Developing my sound has been like falling down an endless rabbit hole ... and I suppose I don’t expect that to change anytime soon.

Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

Yes, as a pianist and a composer, but especially the latter.

What do you value about your sound?

I studied opera with a teacher who taught me that every voice is unique. The idea is not to try to sound like someone else but to find out what your voice sounds like at its healthiest and most honest. In that discovery process, I found out that it takes a lot of strength to be honest, it takes a lot of energy to fully present, and that ‘effort’ undermines both honesty and presence. So what I value most about my sound is that it is mine – and that it has emerged from an arduous journey towards honesty, presence, transparency. I value the trust I have in the fact that good or bad; whatever comes out of me is an expression of my curiosity and
meagre understandings about being alive on this weird planet.

Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

I guess I do. My musical voice is elusive because it doesn’t adhere to any specific genre or discipline. But I’ve come to believe that my ‘voice’ is to be used to help people pursue pathways to continue to challenges themselves to embrace personal challenges, questions their boundaries, access compassion for themselves and others, make choices that enrich their communities, reject apathy. I write a lot of songs about this stuff, but I’m pretty sure this intention shows up in everything I do.

Describe the development of your musical voice.

If my musical voice is in fact what I described above, it developed by way of the requirements and lessons of my own journey. When I experienced firsthand how beauty can save lives, it became an omnipresence [sic] in my heart of hearts to engage the practice of music with an eye focused on its social/personal healing properties.

- If no, explain.

What does the interpretive process mean to you?

As a singer, the interpretive process has always meant finding the place within my bones that resonates with the story that’s being told and then finding a way to make that relationship transparent. It’s about singing/playing the intention, not the song, and finding the back story in all the nooks and crannies of your being to inform the intention. I don’t
know if I’ve ever touched this with true sincerity or any degree of success as a pianist.

b How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

I’m not sure I understand this question – but I feel musicians fall into different categories. There are some musicians for whom it is very important to do what they are told. Execution and period/stylistic authenticity are more important than interpretation. Artists for whom their vision of the score is more prominent in their journey as a musician are different [sic], and ownership of interpretation becomes more relevant.

For myself as a performer, I can’t say that I can really claim much ‘ownership of interpretation’ because when I’m performing, I’m mainly trying to allow whatever information is present in the moment to pass through and reveal itself. I believe this to true for improvisers more than any other musician, because the improvisatory process seems to leave more room for interpreting the moment more than any other musical pursuit. I experience something similar when I’m composing. In fact, I try to leave ‘space’ in my compositions for ‘the moment’ to reveal itself instead of going about the business of trying to dictate every moment of the audience’s experience of a work by ‘over-composing’. (This is just in my mind of course. I don’t know if there actually is such a thing as ‘over-composing’.)

How much instruction do you include in your scores?

Not too much. Since my compositions are organic in construction, I hope they can be interpreted organically as well. I think too much instruction can yield a ‘tight'/mechanical experience for the performer and the ‘poetry' (i.e. space between/underlying intention) can become more difficult to access.
How do you feel about performers bringing their own interpretations to your compositions?

*Totally love it. Wish it happened more. If I see a performer struggling with a composition, I can help reveal where the heart of the piece ‘lives’ to unlock an easier relationship with it. Otherwise, as I mentioned before, when I’m composing I try to build in places where the performer must assert themselves and their point of view in the work for the moment to be successful or convincing. If they don’t take advantage then the ultimate experience of the work doesn’t always hold up. I feel like young musicians in the States don’t necessarily check in with their own sense of personal authority when going to interpret the music they perform which yields a one dimensional experience of the work in the end. I don’t know what that’s about, but I really like to empower the artists performing my music to be willing to reveal something about themselves in the process.*
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

Repertoire Performer

Improviser

Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

--------------------------------------------

Repertoire Performer

1  a  What drew you to music initially?

  Compulsory to learn an instrument in Year 2 at school.

  b  What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

  Violin: Strings were compulsory in Year 2.

  Piano: Older sister had some music lessons, and I wanted to try as well.

2  a  What do you find musically inspiring?

  Listening to street performers who are very talented.

  When musicians with humble beginnings get discovered and become famous. eg, Youtube musicians.

  b  What do you find musically fulfilling?

  Performing a solo concerto.

  Being completely in the zone during a piano improvisation.
c. What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

*Whenever someone else enjoys my music.*

3. a. Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

*Depends on the repertoire – when much freedom is allowed in an interpretation, it requires much creative thinking from the performer so as to produce a meaningful and unique interpretation.*

b. Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

*Not inherently creative, but I spend very much time experimenting with different musical ideas until I find something that I like.*

c. Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

*As above.*

4. a. Describe the development of your sound.

????

b. Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

*Violin: not particularly – I tend to base my interpretations on recordings that I enjoy.*

*Piano improvisation: Not usually. I mostly use basic chord progressions, and play in a style similar to other piano improvisers who I enjoy. However, if I get into a certain kind of zone, I think my sound does become unique and personal.*

c. What do you value about your sound?

*It is something I can so easily play and enjoy listening to whenever I want to.*
Others enjoy my sound.

5 Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

Describe the development of your musical voice.

If no, explain.

6 a What does the interpretive process mean to you?

An interpretation of a piece is as important as the composition itself. Without a unique perspective of a piece of music, there is little reason for people to listen to your version as oppose to another person’s.

b How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

Very. As explained above.

7 Have you ever tried improvising?

If yes, in what context?

Yes. On piano.

What was your process?

Mostly playing slowly in a minor key, usually arpeggiating simple chord progressions (with extra notes added) in the left hand with chords and simple melodies in the right hand.

Sometimes using melody around the blues scale.
Sometimes playing in D# minor randomly mashing black notes in the right hand with simple chords in the left.

How did you find improvising?

*Usually very satisfied when I’m finished, especially if I find that I reached a certain zone where I kind of forgot that I was improvising, and was just following the music in my head.*

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

*Improvising is far more satisfying.*

- If no, would you consider improvising?

8  

Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

- If you have improvised before, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

*Very little as a performer.*

*Has been an incredibly useful tool in learning about harmony, developing aural skills, and in composition.*
Composer

1. a What drew you to music initially?
   b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

2. a What do you find musically inspiring?
   b What do you find musically fulfilling?
   c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

3. a Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?
   b Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.
   c Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

4. a Describe the development of your sound.
   b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?
   c What do you value about your sound?

5. Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?
   - If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?
     Describe the development of your musical voice.
   - If no, explain.

6. a What does the interpretive process mean to you?
   b How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?
How much instruction do you include in your scores?

_Usually as detailed as possible._

How do you feel about performers bringing their own interpretations to your compositions?

_At times it has been extremely satisfying having music of mine thought of in a different way._

_Other times it has been very painful to listen to._
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

- Repertoire Performer
- Improviser
- Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

____________________________________________________

Repertoire Performer

1 a What drew you to music initially?

The emotional effect of the sound.

b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

The sound and the access to the instrument.

2 a What do you find musically inspiring?

Beautiful sound coupled with well thought out phrasing.

b What do you find musically fulfilling?

Bach, chamber music and choral music. Some new music.

c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

Interesting ideas which have been well thought out yet come across as free due to a high level of technical expertise that complete freedom is allowed.
3  a  Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

Absolutely – both in the challenge of recreating a story and finding technical solutions to problems.

b  Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

Yes – I try not to judge ideas and to allow them to flow. Ideas often come easily. Also I deliberately try to think of things from as many different perspectives and in as many different ways as possible.

c  Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

Yes – both in terms of surviving as a musician and in preparation/performance. No matter what the traditions are I need to find processes which work for me.

4  a  Describe the development of your sound.

A long process of learning how the instrument and body work, and how they can work together so as not to interfere with the sound.

b  Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

Yes – but only as a result of working for a long time to find the most resonance out of the instrument. It would follow that what I think sounds best is what I end up striving for so it would come across as ‘my’ sound.

c  What do you value about your sound?

The variety of colours and dynamics, the strength and the ability to affect people.

5  Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

Yes.
If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

Spirit/an experiences which is beyond the physical realm/the common experience of the human condition.

Describe the development of your musical voice.

It developed with education outside of musical [sic] and was facilitated by having a simple yet functional understanding of technique and the operation of the instrument.

If no, explain.

What does the interpretive process mean to you?

How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

Have you ever tried improvising?

If yes, in what context?

Yes – cello and guitar/voice, as a keyboardist in a jazz band.

What was your process?

Know the key and attempt to hear the notes ahead of time – and listening constantly!

How did you find improvising?

A good way to develop freedom and tone – when things developed to the point where most of the time it sounded ok.

How do you feel when improvising, compared with
reading music?

Initially it made me feel stupid – when reading music I feel the ideas are already developed. I generally felt as if a composition is the best bits of a composer’s improvisation, developed, structured and combined. Therefore I feel as if my improvisation is limited.

- If no, would you consider improvising?

Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

- If you have improvised before, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

Definite improvement in aural skills and memorisation process. More freedom on stage and less likely to feel ridiculous performing as I’ve felt more ridiculous improvising than when playing from memory/sheet music.
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

Repertoire Performer

Improviser

Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

Repertoire Performer

1  a  What drew you to music initially?

Mother is a musician so all of her children learned instruments.

b  What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

The advice of my mother as to which instrument would suit me.

2  a  What do you find musically inspiring?

Watching performances, listening to recordings, attending lessons/masterclasses.

b  What do you find musically fulfilling?

Learning a piece to as high a standard as I can, performing by myself and with others, careful practice.

c  What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

If the music means something to the performer and they are able to
convey it to the listeners.

3  a  Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?
   
   Yes.

b  Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

   Yes. Apart from the creative musical decisions I make when playing, I also like to paint, dance and write.

c  Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

   Yes, because of the ‘in the moment’ decisions that are made when I play, and can change every time. Also, playing my instrument evokes images in my mind.

4  a  Describe the development of your sound.

   It’s a continual process as a result of my conception of what I sound like and my ideas for what I should sound like.

b  Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

   Yes. I think that everyone has some sort of personal sound that is very much liked with their personality.

c  What do you value about your sound?

   The warmth and focus, and the resonance it creates.

5  Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

   Yes.

   - If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?
The feeling that I get when I’m playing, and the emotional meaning of the music.

Describe the development of your musical voice.

It develops as my knowledge of the music develops.

- If no, explain.

6  a  What does the interpretive process mean to you?

It’s your view of the music, and the things you put into your performance to convey that.

b  How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

It’s not like something that can be copyrighted, and you shouldn’t be banned from playing in a certain way because that’s how someone else does it.

7  Have you ever tried improvising?

- If yes, in what context?

Just mucking around when I get distracted from playing, or when playing with friends that [sic] usually improvise.

What was your process?

I thought about the key I was in and then just played whatever came into my head.

How did you find improvising?

It can be daunting at times, doing it with other people, but it can also be fun.

How do you feel when improvising, compared with

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reading music?

*Sometimes it feels freer, but I always feel much better reading music and then putting my own take on it.*

- If no, would you consider improvising?

8

Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

*It’s not an essential skill but can be fun.*

- If you have improvised before, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

*I think that it helps free up the brain; it creates a kind of direct connection between your brain and your fingers, and it makes you think more about what you’re playing.*
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

   Repertoire Performer

   Improviser

   Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

-----------------------------------------------

Repertoire Performer

1  a  What drew you to music initially?

   I didn’t make the choice to begin learning music – that was my parents. It seems in terms of my memory of early childhood that music – and learning music – was just always there. So I suppose I was never really drawn so much as didn’t know anything else.

   b  What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

   What then drew me to the instrument of my choice was probably groove. The discipline choice was something that happened because of my experience in the area with my first instrument but probably because I felt inadequate (compared to others at my school) in other disciplines.

2  a  What do you find musically inspiring?

   There are moments – listening or playing – in all musical genres that epitomise the awesomeness of that particular genre – I always find these inspiring. For example the end section of Mahler’s 2nd symphony with a choir singing at full strength and the feel of the organ playing – that
along with everything the orchestra’s doing makes it inspirational to either be a part of creating or to share listening. On the other hand listening to simple folk tune can be just as inspiring to me.

b What do you find musically fulfilling?

I definitely find playing one of those musically inspiring moments fulfilling – but I can also find working on and finding an understanding to a particular phrase fulfilling as well. At times I find fulfilment in teaching, performing, technical work, memorisation, listening, sight reading, improvising, etc ... I suppose it changes day to day and at many times these things can instead seem like a chore.

c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

One in which I realise something new either in a musical or technical sense – this could happen in performance or practice. These moments will often shape my opinions in terms of whatever musical style is being played, or the appropriate technique to use on a particular instrument/style of music.

3 a Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

Yes – the reality is even if you are performing something that’s been done three million times before you put your own stamp on everything you touch.

b Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

No – not really. I see creative people as those who do a whole lot of arty things. I’ve never worked out exactly what I define as being creative but I doubt I would put myself if that category if I ever do figure it out.

c Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

Not as much as I think I should be. I suppose, to look at it from a slightly more detached point of view, I must be creative in order to be able to pull
off any kind of performance. However I feel that all the things that hold me back as a musician (technique, experience, the ability to maintain a groove, etc) must be getting in the way of my creativity.

Describe the development of your sound.

My sound is something which I think has been influenced by every ensemble I’ve played in, every teacher I’ve learnt from, every performance I’ve seen, every recording I’ve listened to, every TV show/movie I’ve watched, what I’ve learnt about world history and society in general and all my personal experiences along with those I’ve heard of others’ (so pretty much everything). Obviously these things have influenced my sound in different ways and to different degrees. As it isn’t something I have really been consciously aware of I can’t really pinpoint what/where my sound has developed. At different points on different instruments I have been asked to specifically work on sound production and tone but these things are only one part of my sound and usually something that changes so gradually it is difficult to quantify.

Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

Yes.

What do you value about your sound?

That it’s mine. There are aspects to my sound which I like – and is why I continue to make those same sounds – but then there are aspects that I’m not so happy with and am constantly altering trying to find where and how I want them to be.

Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

Yes.

If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your
audience?

Usually my aim is to communicate the emotion which I believe the composer was intending for a particular work (this may either be how I feel when I play/listen to the music or what I know to be the influences or ‘story’ through studying the work). This is very much influenced by my own life experiences and understandings and so often I will be trying to bring my audience into the feeling—to share that same feeling. However, sometimes my job is purely to communicate time – act as a metronome.

Describe the development of your musical voice.

I suppose as I get older and experience more things I have more to draw on when trying to communicate with an audience. Also as my technical facility builds I gain more tools with which to do this. Likewise the more information I learn about composers, the circumstances in which they lived, world events which changed society’s perception etc ... will change how I interpret the information presented in a piece of music. All of these aspects have shaped my musical voice so far and will continue to do so.

- If no, explain.

6 a What does the interpretive process mean to you?

I would consider this to be probably the most important step to being able to actually perform a work. Obviously you need to know the notes but interpretation is being able to present those notes in a coherent form. There are occasions when not knowing how to present the notes isn’t such a big deal in terms of the piece but then there are areas where a work just won’t make sense or will seem wrong if the performer hasn’t managed to
b How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

For a repertoire musician – very important. It is what we own – we do not own the work but we own the way in which we present it.

7 Have you ever tried improvising?

Yes.

- If yes, in what context?

  a) In compositions where a section is marked for the performer to do as they please.

  b) Melodic improvisation in jazz standards – as part of class activities in uni.

  c) Rhythmic improvisation in jazz ensembles, African drumming ensembles, Latin ensembles and as part of the rock/ska band I play with. All of these have been done in a performance situation.

What was your process?

In a situation ‘a’ I would usually choose to make random sounds at random points – trying to capture something of the character of that part in the piece. Sometimes using part of the material that has already been presented also works well.

For situation ‘b’ we were learning different methods of approach to melodic soloing in jazz standards. We were using the one-note theory where we would pick one note and solo on that, then graduate to using two notes and so on. The idea being that there were no ‘wrong’ notes and
learning to listen to affect we were creating using these particular notes and exploring the importance of rhythmic phrases.

Situation ‘c’ is the one I’m most experienced in. My general approach is to ‘sing’ phrases in my head and attempt to reproduce the effect of the phrase on the particular instrument I’m playing. There are also particular rhythmic ideas common to each of these musical styles which I will often draw upon during a solo, along with material which has been played previously in the chart.

How did you find improvising?

On the whole I find improvising a challenge. As it isn’t something I do on a regular basis it usually requires a lot of concentration. I also find I need to shut out the critical part of my consciousness in order to keep going and ignore parts of the improvisation that I have been unhappy with (although in the context of ‘a’ I usually find I have an easier time coming up with material and am much less anxious).

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

I sometimes find it daunting and often feel disappointed with what I end up producing. I usually feel that if I spent more time working with the style and learning new rhythmic ideas or phrases then I would be much better equipped to produce worthy material. That being said it is fun being able to control the direction of a piece as opposed to having it all meticulously mapped out.
Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

Yes – even if it is just so you have the ability to do what is asked of you during an ad lib solo in a piece of music.

- **If you have improvised before**, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

  *Learning to block out a negative stream of consciousness has been useful. I think improvising has also helped when needing to come up with technical exercises for certain passages in my repertoire (and when creating exercises for my students). It has helped me to better understand certain styles of music. It has also helped me to understand a little more about the importance of the theatrical side to performing.*
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

- Repertoire Performer
- Improviser
- Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

________________

Repertoire Performer

1 a What drew you to music initially?

_A fascination with all kinds of sound, and with the art of performance._

b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

_I see instruments and disciplines as vehicles for me to be able to say what I want in sound. At the moment they are what work best for me to achieve this._

2 a What do you find musically inspiring?

_Mainly non-musical things – everyday sounds, stories, films, ideas ..._

b What do you find musically fulfilling?

_The sense of connection with the audience one gains as a performer._

c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

_Anything that doesn’t betray my own personal musical ideologies._
3  a  Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

   Yes.

 b  Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

   Yes.

c  Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

   Yes. I believe that the ability to interpret a work is a creative act unto itself. I don’t believe that you can truly connect with an audience if you are not a creative person at heart.

4  a  Describe the development of your sound.

   The culmination of many hours of active listening, thinking and engaging with other peoples’ art work together with rigorous analysis and review of my own work and creative processes.

 b  Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

   Yes.

c  What do you value about your sound?

   Its uniqueness, and what I feel to be its artistic relevance.

5  Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

   Yes.

   - If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

      No message as such, but rather some kind of shared experience of the human condition.
Describe the development of your musical voice.

*It grew out of a strong attempt to connect with the physical world.*

- If **no**, explain.

6 a What does the interpretive process mean to you?

*It means using a score as a guideline for this communicative process – I don’t place ultimate authority on the score – I think that what I use it to try and say is ultimately more important and more engaging.*

b How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

*Not at all.*

7 Have you ever tried improvising?

- If **yes**, in what context?

*Yes, many times, in many contexts – from free improv [sic] to jazz to rock to electro acoustic etc etc.*

What was your process?

*Pick up an instrument and play. Try and let as much of my life and as little of my musical training show through to the audience (but also don’t disregard my training).*

How did you find improvising?

*It’s a normal part of my practise. Important to help develop a sense of play and creativity.*

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

*Just as comfortable – in some ways more comfortable (no*
pressure to play ‘right’ notes), in some ways less (no score to blame crap music on).

- If no, would you consider improvising?

Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

- If you have improvised before, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

It has had a strong impact on my development as an artist.
It has helped me develop my own aesthetic, tastes, etc.
Improviser

1  a  What drew you to music initially?

* A fascination with sounds, people, and performance.*

b  What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

* My instrument is whatever the best conduit for my creativity at that time and place is.*

2  a  What do you find musically inspiring?

* Everyday sounds, stories, emotions, the human condition.*

b  What do you find musically fulfilling?

* Sense of freedom attached to the creative act.*

c  What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

* One that connects with [sic].*

3  a  Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

* Absolutely.*

b  Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

* Yes. I create artworks from sound/sound producing objects, and aside from this, I love all creative pursuits.*

c  Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

* Yes. My musical [sic] has a strong preoccupation with creative expression of my own subjective condition.*

4  a  Describe the development of your sound.
The synthesis of a bunch of influences, coming from both aural and non-aural realms (for example the sound of the city at peak hour/dead of the night, the music of Iannis Xenakis, my own emotional issues, and peculiarities).

b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

Yes.

c What do you value about your sound?

Its flexibility, the fact that it has roots in many areas but doesn’t clearly belong to any of them.

5 Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

   Something about the human condition I guess.

   Describe the development of your musical voice.

   Listening, practice, listening practice, introspection, psychotherapy.

   - If no, explain.

6 a What does the interpretive process mean to you?

   Filtering an ideas [sic] through my own experiences/idiosyncrasies.

b How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

   Very.

7 Describe your process when improvising.
A twofold process of thinking/feeling, and instinctual reactions.

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

Sometimes freer, sometimes not so free.

How do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician, and as a performer?

It is an intrinsic part of my practice – it informs my interpretation of written music, and my compositional choices.
1 a What drew you to music initially?

_A desire to express myself through sound (or go insane)._ Externalise _what’s going on inside._

b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

_A long process of self-discovery._

2 a What do you find musically inspiring?

_Real-world experiences, strong emotions, etc etc._

b What do you find musically fulfilling?

_Every aspect of music._

c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

_One which is not counterfeit, which doesn’t compromise artistic vision._

3 a Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

_YES._

b Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

_YES – it is at the core of what I do, both musically and non-musically._

c Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

_YES. I try to do my own thing, not copy people/cheat ..._“

4 a Describe the development of your sound.

_A long process of introspection, listening, reviewing, creating._
b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

Yes.

c What do you value about your sound?

That it is a bizarre pastiche of ideas, influences, thoughts, and feelings.

5 Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

I hope to externalise the internal, and to share that experience.

Describe the development of your musical voice.

It’s ongoing, but it’s more about the crystallisation of all aspects of my life – experiences, thoughts, ideas, feelings, as well as more direct musical influences.

- If no, explain.

6 a What does the interpretive process mean to you?

Filtering an idea through your own experiences and ideas to bring it to life.

b How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

Very important – otherwise how do you bring an idea to life?

7 How much instruction do you include in your scores?

I don’t write scores as such, I design environments for performers to inhabit. What they do inside that environment is up to them, but I do
control all the ‘laws of physics’ inside that world, so to speak ...

How do you feel about performers bringing their own interpretations to your compositions?

*It’s absolutely necessary!*
PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

- Repertoire Performer
- Improviser
- Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

____________________________________________________

Improviser

1 a What drew you to music initially?

*I found myself getting satisfaction from the experience of playing music at an early age. I was wanting to work out how to play songs I knew on the recorder. The feeling I got from playing music was one that I couldn’t get from other activities.*

b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

*I am not sure what drew me to my instrument (saxophone). I don’t think I really knew much about the instrument or had seen many people play it before deciding I wanted to learn it. I started to take it more seriously and choose it as my primary instrument when I began to study improvisation. A teacher of mine introduced me to jazz music in high school and I was excited by the idea of being able to play through changes and understand harmony as a saxophone player.*

2 a What do you find musically inspiring?

*As a musician I feel inspired when playing with a group of musicians that...*
come together and create a sound that is seemingly unified. Where the music feels greater than the sum of its parts.

As a listener I am inspired by music that moves me in some way. Usually it is music that stirs identifiable or unidentifiable emotions, or music that transforms the space I am in (whether that is at home in my bedroom or in a concert hall). I think this generally comes from musicians who have something earnest and unique to offer, as well as being in the right mood.

b  What do you find musically fulfilling?

I find the creation of something new highly satisfying. I think it is the feeling of having played a role in the creation of a new and completed work.

c  What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

When the music I am playing/listening to stirs something in me not typically experienced in the day to day; an intensity of experience.

3  a  Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

I think it definitely can be, but in some contexts it is much closer to resembling a technical pursuit or even a trade in the carpenter/mason sense of the word. I don’t think I believe that all acts of music creation are inherently ‘creative’ in the sense that they are an expression of something, an artistic gesture. I think the apparent level of ‘creativity’ in a music performance varies greatly.

b  Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

I think I am a creative person. As pretentious as it sounds, I feel I can best express myself through the creation of things. The creation of something be it music, cardboard scenery, writing (no matter how bad) often feels like an outlet for emotions/thoughts/ideas that haven’t had the opportunity to manifest themselves in other ways in other areas of my life.
I consider these things to form a part of my identity.

c  Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

   Yes. I would like to think of myself as a creative musician as I am always trying to find a way to make music that I feel expresses something important to me, even if I am unsure of what that is. I want to make music that will affect people, or offer a different experience. Whether I am playing music or writing music, it is not enough simply to be considered technically good or valid. I try to make/play music that I am comfortable putting out into the world as an expression of me at that time.

4  a  Describe the development of your sound.

   I think I began wanting to emulate the sound of players that I admired. As a saxophonist I wanted my sound to be considered a good saxophone sound and for the music I was making to be recognisable as good saxophone playing. I think my saxophone playing began to change a lot when I started getting more interested in writing music. I started to be more aware of how I wanted the overall piece of music to sound and then tried to find the role of the saxophone within that. Rather than the music of the band forming a backdrop to my saxophone, I wanted my saxophone to be contributing equally the overall sound of the ensemble. I still don’t think I have ever felt my ‘sound’ has ever matched the idea I have had of what I wanted my sound to be.

   b  Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

      To some extent. I think there are things I do with my saxophone that are probably idiosyncratic. Often these are unintentional and sometimes undesirable.

   c  What do you value about your sound?

      I would like to have a sound that is recognisably mine. I would like my sound to be unique to me, for better or for worse. I wouldn’t like people
to hear it as an emulation of someone else. I also don’t think I am there yet.

Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

I am not sure. I would like to have one. In terms of communication with an audience, I think I am just trying to communicate the same sense of experience beyond the day to day, the kind of expressive outlet that I sometimes get from laying/composing. Ideally I would like them to experience that through my music.

Describe the development of your musical voice.

I think this is quite similar to the development of my ‘sound’ as described above. I do think that my musical voice has changed as I became more aware of what it is that I wanted to experience through music. Rather than just wanting to get good at music, I began to consider more what I wanted my music to do. I think I began thinking of my music from the perspective of ‘what would I like to experience as a listener/audience member?’ and ‘how can I create that experience for others?’

- If no, explain.

What does the interpretive process mean to you?

*Drawing on idea/concept/thing or the expression of another and trying to express that in a way that resonates with you.*

How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?
I am not sure I entirely understand the question but I do think that it is very important to interpret something in a way that resonates with you. I don’t know whether you can successfully interpret something without having your own personal input or slant on it.

Describe your process when improvising.

It is not an overly conscious act, but I guess I try to contribute to the overall sound of the music, letting each idea of mine and the other musicians shape the possibilities for what comes next. It is usually a case of interpreting what I hear someone else do, and trying to interact in a way that contributes to that idea.

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

I have never really felt comfortable with reading music, not worked on a piece long enough to get away from the page. Usually when reading I feel it is hard to connect with the music, but this is probably a product of my poor reading skills. Improvising in some contexts allows me to consider different elements of the music being created beyond notes and rhythms etc. This isn’t always the case especially if improvising over something challenging rhythmically or harmonically.

How do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician, and as a performer?

I think it has helped to make me listen more closely to what is going on musically within the entire ensemble, and it has also made me closely consider my own contribution to the overall sound of an ensemble. It has definitely made me curious about how to genuinely express myself through music. I think I have thought a lot about how much control I have over what my instrument is playing at any given time. How much of what comes out of the saxophone is ‘me’, and how much of it is a product
of technique and mechanics. I think it has probably encouraged me to develop my own musical sound ...
Composer

1. a What drew you to music initially?
   b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

2. a What do you find musically inspiring?
   b What do you find musically fulfilling?
   c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

3. a Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?
   b Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.
   c Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

4. a Describe the development of your sound.
   b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?
   c What do you value about your sound?

5. Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?
   - If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?
   
   Describe the development of your musical voice.
   
   - If no, explain.

6. a What does the interpretive process mean to you?
   b How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?
How much instruction do you include in your scores?

Not much.

How do you feel about performers bringing their own interpretations to your compositions?

I encourage it. Partly because I feel like the instrumentalist knows their instrument better than I do (something which I would like to become more informed about) but also because I like the idea that the less I prescribe, the more the musician is able to express themselves within the piece. I think it enables each of the instrumentalists to creatively contribute to a piece and to create a sound that is unique to ensemble.
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

Repertoire Performer

Improviser

Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

Repertoire Performer

1  a  What drew you to music initially?

An avenue to express feelings; a way to connect with myself and others.

b  What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

Attended a music information night at the start of secondary schooling. Was immediately drawn to the oboe – its sound and appearance. For some unexplainable reason I felt an immediate connection with the instrument. 15 years later I finally began learning the instrument!

2  a  What do you find musically inspiring?

Watching and listening to someone perform with conviction, honesty and love.

b  What do you find musically fulfilling?

Practising by myself at home; rehearsing with others for chamber music or orchestral performances; attending musical performances; singing
along with my favourite singers as I drive or cook dinner or clean the house!

c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

If I am playing, the musical experience is meaningful if I have reached a state of 'flow', where the oboe is simply an extension of my body and I play with conviction with no critical self-talk.

As a listener, again when I reach a flow-like state – where I am aware of my surroundings yet not at all interacting with it; rather I am totally absorbed by the music.

3 a Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

Yes.

b Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

Yes. I am able to think 'outside the square'.

c Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

Sometimes. When in a state of flow, or at least, when I am not being self-critical, I am able to think and play with creativity. However, if I am being self-critical then I find it much more difficult to play freely and to be creative.

4 a Describe the development of your sound.

The development of my sound has largely been, and continues to be, linked with the way that I physically use my body. As I have learned to more effectively use my body and breath in a relaxed and full state my sound has become fuller and more resonant.

b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

Yes, because I am singing through my instrument. I therefore think that
everyone has their own 'personal sound'.

c  What do you value about your sound?

_When I play freely, my sound is warm, open, resonant and flexible, allowing me to convey many moods on my instrument._

5  Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

No.

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

  Describe the development of your musical voice.

- If no, explain.

  I have never felt confident singing; I have never engaged in musical voice training, and singing openly and freely is not a skill that comes naturally to me.

6  a  What does the interpretive process mean to you?

_ I consider the interpretive process to mean making sense of the composition through consideration of mood, dynamics, articulations, etc. I think it means trying to play the piece in the style that the composer intended. However, I also think that there is some room for flexibility and that there may be multiple and equally valid ways to interpret a composition._

b  How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

_Not important. Interpretation is not the composition. Ownership of the composition is very important. Two different players may unknowingly have an identical interpretation of the same composition. And even if one musician 'copies' another musician's interpretation, the outcome will_
never be identical as the musicians are different people and therefore inherently bring different qualities to the performance.

Have you ever tried improvising?

Yes, sort of (but not much at all!).

- If yes, in what context?

  I improvised on my oboe when composing a short piece of music for a ‘Languages of Music’ assignment.

  During practice session I spend short periods playing random notes connected to each other, but these strings of notes are not typically played with emotional meaning.

  What was your process?

  I decided on a ‘mood’ for my composition, which intuitively influenced the tempo. I then just played a few notes seemingly without any reference to each other until I felt that the string of notes ‘made sense’, at which point I started to notate them.

  How did you find improvising?

  Awkward!

  How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

  I felt a little lost when improvising! In a way it was somewhat overwhelming knowing that I had 100% control over what I played with no boundaries. Playing from written music provides me with a liked balance between having structure and boundaries versus flexibility to be creative within these boundaries.
- If no, would you consider improvising?

Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

Yes, during practice it may help the performer to adopt a more flexible mental attitude which may be transferred to the learning of classical repertoire.

- If you have improvised before, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

Repertoire Performer

Improviser

Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

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Repertoire Performer

1 a What drew you to music initially?

I don’t remember as I started young, but I loved listening to music as a kid and singing along.

b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

My sister and my dad played it, and I wanted to be like them.

2 a What do you find musically inspiring?

People that [sic] are ridiculously passionate about their music-making.

Beautiful timbre. People that have fun when playing music.

b What do you find musically fulfilling?

Playing with a group of people, small or large, who are committed to the same goal with in a positive way, creating energy and fun during a performance.

c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?
Being totally immersed and engaged in the music you’re playing and deriving some kind of joy from it during and afterwards.

3  a  Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

   Yes, depending on the group of people I am playing with at the time.

   b  Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

   Yes and no; I find I am more creative outside of music, when I am drawing or writing or imagining things. Musically I am less creative, and often scared to voice my ideas.

   c  Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

   I try to be creative, and am more and more every time. When playing classical music, I find it daunting because of what a tutor or teacher may say, however playing pop and jazz music, I feel more creative, however still not that much, as those fields are more foreign to me, and it is still daunting.

4  a  Describe the development of your sound.

   For me, ‘sound’ and ‘voice’ are one and the same. ‘Sound’, whether you’re referring to tone colour or stylistic implications, is something absorbed into your musical voice. Once I began to have more control of my instrument during university, and was able to control the colours I was creating, I began to consider the colours I was making. This was emphasised when I began to be able to improvise and thus feel freer with what I was creating. I then felt able to venture away from the tone colours that my previous teacher would try and get me to create, and feel free to create different sounds each time I play.

   Also, the more repertoire I play, in any orchestra, recital or band, the more ideas I develop and can incorporate into my voice.
b  Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

Yes.

c  What do you value about your sound?

*I value that I can manipulate my sound for the various groups I play in, but I hope that at the same time my sound is recognisable within each group. Not sure about that just yet.*

Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

Yes.

-  If *yes*, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

*I try and communicate whichever emotion I find is inherent in a piece, or perhaps the emotion I am feeling at the moment I am playing. I don’t always try to communicate something, I just play how I play and emphasise everything as much as possible.*

Describe the development of your musical voice.

-  If *no*, explain.

What does the interpretive process mean to you?

*It means finding out about the composer’s intentions, but it’s more about finding what speaks to ME in a piece, and attempting to draw that out when playing the piece.*

How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

*I think it’s important for a performer to own what they’re playing; they need to be submerged in the piece, not just attempting to play in a ‘popular’ or ‘accessible’ way, but how they feel the urge to play. Even if*
that means flouting ‘tradition’ or period interpretation.

Have you ever tried improvising?

Yes.

- If yes, in what context?

  In the context of a small jazz ensemble, on my own when practising ‘flow’ or mucking around, and attempting Baroque ornaments/cadenzas.

What was your process?

  In the jazz ensemble, I try and tap into the vibe of the rest of the musicians, and the vibe of the piece we’re playing. On my own, I just play and let whatever come out, going with how I am feeling that day.

How did you find improvising?

  It used to be daunting, however I am much more comfortable with it now, after practising ‘flow’ a lot on my own, and breaking down the nervousness barrier.

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

  I feel very free and unrestricted and like I could do anything, but also on occasions I feel aimless, feeling as though if I had more knowledge of harmony I could improvise to a higher level or do something more interesting.

- If no, would you consider improvising?

  Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire
performer?

Yes.

- If you have improvised before, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

  I think it has made me more confident, and also more free and assured in my technique, as I am not trying to ‘get it right’ all the time, so the tension I get when playing written music is less. It has also made me more aware of what is going on around me, as I have HAD to be aware of the rest of the group. It’s made me more aware of myself in general – my tone and technique and posture and style. I feel I can control these things more. It has also improved my ear.
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

Repertoire Performer

Improviser

Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

____________________________________________________

Repertoire Performer

1 a What drew you to music initially?

Family involvement.

b What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

Can’t remember – but supposedly attended some kind of children’s concert and at the end there was an opportunity to go and look at the instruments and I pointed and said ‘I want to play that one!’.

2 a What do you find musically inspiring?

Performers who are absolutely entirely involved in what they are doing in every possible way, on every note that they play; performances that make something new out of a familiar work; music that just ‘works’ for the instrument and is a joy to play.

b What do you find musically fulfilling?

Playing with other musicians who do the above; playing with people who, because of their skills, instantly encourage me to rise to a new level;
What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

One where I feel involved and engaged (as a player or listener) and part of something significant; as a performer, when I play with a group and things happen in a performance spontaneously and perfectly ...

Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

It is for some, and not others ... can be creative, but isn’t necessarily.

Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

Not overall – as an ‘interpreter’ rather than a composer, I need the starting point of dots on a page and other people’s ideas and input before I manage to create something that is actually genuinely my own interpretation of an existing work. I have never written new music or engaged in any other kind of art form ... my own ideas take a lot of prodding in order to appear.

Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

To a degree, but as I said above, I’ve never really created something that is entirely my own and a new thing – some creativity is involved but I feel that compared to a composer or another type of artist, creativity is not the main element in my musicianship.

Describe the development of your sound.

Inextricably linked to my instrument and how I’ve been taught to use it over time.

Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

Not really ... I would like to, but realistically I don’t think so!
c What do you value about your sound?

5 Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

Describe the development of your musical voice.

- If no, explain.

*Don’t entirely understand the question ... does that make it a ‘no’?*

6 a What does the interpretive process mean to you?

*Making sense of what’s written on the page and turning it into music which communicates something and means something more than a string of notes.*

b How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

*It is important, but perhaps not given enough consideration ... but at the tertiary stage of study, maybe it’s something that is yet to be developed for many – in prioritising, developing technique and musicality may be more important than developing individual interpretations.*

7 Have you ever tried improvising?

- If yes, in what context?

*Only minimally, and a long time ago, in Klezmer music.*

What was your process?

*Used given chords as a basis for primarily rhythmic improv [sic] as a bass line, not particularly complex.*
How did you find improvising?

*On that level, quite easy and fun, but melodic improvising or anything more exposed would be quite a challenge.*

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

*It’s more daunting – maybe would be less so if I did it more! Even though it is said you can’t make mistakes in improvisation, for someone more accustomed to reading music it’s difficult to find that sense of freedom and lose inhibitions.*

- If **no**, would you consider improvising?

8 Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

*Yes, definitely – and not encouraged enough – I wish I had been encouraged to do this early on.*

- **If you have improvised before**, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

*Haven’t done it enough for any effect.*
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

   Repertoire Performer

   Improviser

   Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

__________________________________________________________________________

Improviser

1  a  What drew you to music initially?

   The feeling it gave me whenever I listened to it; the way it fired my imagination (imagery/fantasy) and even brought on pleasurable physical sensations.

   b  What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

    Not having to practice scales!  Thinking that drums and percussive noises were generally ‘cool’.  The belief that drummers were energetic and exuberant people and that I wanted this in my life.

2  a  What do you find musically inspiring?

    Blissful moments in performed/recorded music. Cohesiveness within an ensemble. Witnessing a heartfelt performance – when I get the sense that the only thing important to a performer(s) is the act of making music and expressing themselves – commitment! Originality, resourcefulness (regarding usage of sounds/techniques or a musician overcoming lack of...
b What do you find musically fulfilling?

*Playing and listening to music generally! Collaborating with people and talking through ideas, then performing them, then changing things, working on parts ie. shaping arrangements with an ensemble.*

*Also - practicing complex rhythmic concepts with musicians who challenge and inspire me.*

*Also – hitting the absolute crap out of drums while listening to my favourite rock records.*

*Many other things.*

c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

*Feeling like I’m part of a performance or ensemble or even recording session that satisfies my ideas and ‘sense’ (some sort of non-intellectual intelligence) of what makes great music. My ideas and sense of what makes music great is something that has been shaped over the course of my life. It is something which I can (and have) discussed at great length. However much of it is also too subtle or ethereal for me to express in dialogue. I don’t feel like this survey is an appropriate place to discuss the specifics of what we can call ‘My personal ideas and sense of what makes great music’.*

3 a Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

*Yes.*

b Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

*Yes. I not only make music but also am an improviser in life, generally making up games, songs, jokes etc. in day to day life. Being a creative person is full time! My relationship with creativity is malleable, inspiring*
but also can be addictive (which of course, is unhealthy and must be dealt with appropriately). Creative pursuits take any form that one chooses so long as they feel they are engaging with the parameters and aesthetic notions they formulate regarding composition and improvisation.

c Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

Of course! This ‘personal creativity’ generally is most clearly manifested when performing/composing/improvising/recording. Playing music is sometimes both source and output for creative concepts/vibrations. It comes from hearing and feeling music and is expressed through music. Of course inspiration can come from any other art form, any general life experience, or any moment of transcendence.

4 a Describe the development of your sound.

Initially it was something like this – steal what you like and call it your own! This goes for sounds of recordings, live performances, instrumentalists, or environmental sounds/incidental ‘music’ (from birdcalls to jackhammers). As far as ‘stealing’ from other performers/instrumentalists they don’t have to play my instrument necessarily. I have been influenced by the way, for example, a brass player or pianist influences a musical situation with the decisions they make. The attractive or demanding nature of their playing. Tone, rhythm and phrasing of ideas are all parameters common to performers of repertoire and improvisation alike. So I consider myself to be a great ‘borrower’ from others.

As well as this I spend time playing, either privately or with others (so long as I feel unrestricted and able to experiment), simply allowing things to unfold. This is a rather subtle process that I feel somehow involves ‘getting out of your own way’, seeing where the sounds take you and not being concerned if you feel nothing or if the sounds take you nowhere. It is worth noting that, of course, you are taken nowhere physically. It is a
psychological or spiritual process (which, confusingly, is actually physical at some chemical level) offering a transcendental experience. This process can vary greatly between individuals and also within individuals. To some people it seems very elusive, to others perfectly clear. To some it is a quaint, simple game with potentially remarkable consequences. To others it is more like a mountain that must be climbed. Through this process, one can develop a sense of abstract creation without pressure from their own or others’ judgements. This is pivotal to developing a unique artistic voice.

I find this quote from Bruce Lee a rather powerful guide regarding the process of developing a sound or voice within an artistic/abstract pursuit: “Absorb what is useful, discard what is not, add what is uniquely your own”.

b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

Definitely. Everything is personal – physiology, influences, beliefs, practices, behaviour, appearance. Although all humans are basically the same the tiny variations between us make no two people completely alike. This is therefore a no-brainer especially in regard to a creative and expressive pursuit.

c What do you value about your sound?

Ultimately, I believe it is something that makes the world a better place. I believe my sound has the power to make people more energetic, more compassionate, more reflective, more accepting and basically happier. However just because I believe it ‘has’ the power doesn’t mean it is necessarily accessed, used appropriately, realised or appreciated.

I value that my sound is (at least on a good day!) fresh! It is unique yet greatly informed by various musical/artistic traditions and styles as well as by philosophical and spiritual enquiry. My improvisation is lyrical, complex yet danceable. It can be dense, gross, humorous or light, spacious or perhaps even sentimental, or aggressive. It has the potential
to evoke visions and feelings both horrible and wonderful in people. This helps people to grow, to challenge ideas or behaviours old and new, to feel like it's okay to accept that dull feeling in your stomach until it becomes a raging fire. It's okay to be angry, it's okay to be sad, it's okay to be unlike anything or anyone you've known or even heard about. Life is your choice. I believe my sound can help people to realise and live this. I believe that helping people to grow like this makes the world a better place!

5  Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?
   - If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?
     Yes. Well ... see above.
     Describe the development of your musical voice.
     I consider this to be the same as my personal sound.
   - If no, explain.

6  a  What does the interpretive process mean to you?
    The interpretive process? I guess it is the process of abstracting symbols or instructions and creating art.

    b  How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?
    Ownership of interpretation? I'm not sure I understand the question ... but I guess it depends how you feel about how much of yourself you expressed through/invested in a piece of music that you didn't write.
    Maybe. Me personally ... I'm not sure ... is there money involved?

7  Describe your process when improvising.
Listening. That’s most of it. The sounds around me, whether I’m making them or not, become my world. Balancing the sound of the ensemble with my range of sounds (which, with a drumkit, are various and colourful) is a big part of what I do also. Phrasing in a way that I feel reflects the phrasing of the other ensemble members. Outlining the form of a composition (whether it’s set or I’m just trying to imply something in a free improvisation), manipulating thematic material. At a more basic level, I’m just trying to tell a story, and be part of storytelling within a group. Music is great at that, there are no words (unless of course, it’s a song) but it can be so vivid, descriptive and enticing.

8 How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

I am always improvising whether I’m reading or not. It’s a matter of how much attention I pay to the role of improvising versus outlining compositional parameters that are outlined on the chart/score/part.

9 How do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician, and as a performer?

It has impacted by defining what I want to do when I play! Improvising has become for me the very root of what makes music exhilarating.
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

   Repertoire Performer
   Improviser
   Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

Repertoire Performer

1  a  What drew you to music initially?

   As a youth, opportunity for social interaction and personal expression (outlet for stress, escape from social activity!).

   b  What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

   Initially, piano: readily accessible, immediately clear and rewarding sound/tone, ease.

   Later, trombone (age 10): social interaction, participation in school programs, etc.

   Composition: access to music that was personally achievable and rewarding.

2  a  What do you find musically inspiring?

   Expressive originality (within reasonable bounds of the stated genre), perceived control and/or achievement.
b What do you find musically fulfilling?

*Shared performative experiences, especially and critically produced [sic] products* (well-unified time/rhythm/expressions, whether contrived or improvised).

c What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

*Performances or products that warrant and/or produce a shared musical experience. For myself, I currently most value performances that unify across the stage (with other performers) rather than through the hall (with audience). (Frankly I see that as a bit of a personal shortcoming, but I’m working on it!)*

3 a Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

*Yes, without doubt.*

b Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

*Yes. As an individual, I believe I have a strong ability to produce original and/or pragmatic content under constraint (musical or non-musical brainstorming).*

c Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

*Yes. From the aspect of ‘original’ content, I feel I have little difficulty producing clear and flexible ideas and expressions (improvisational or compositional seeds). I feel I also have reasonable strength at the (reasonably more challenging) task of creative modification/improvisation around a single idea – again, improvisation or composition within reasonable bounds.*

4 a Describe the development of your sound.

*At the trombone [sic], my sound of improvisation [sic] has been affected (and continues to grow) mostly by exposure to traditional jazz, swing, and
bebop. My interpretive/creative sound for traditional/legitimate/classical repertoire has developed (continues to develop) by listening across strong professional, classical performers. The most significant influences to the latter are vocal and string soloists.

b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?
Yes.

c What do you value about your sound?
Clarity, simplicity, some immaturity (if I was pleased or ‘done’ refining my sound … what fun would the process be?).

Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?
No.

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

Describe the development of your musical voice.

- If no, explain.

For myself, I consider voice/sound to be synonyms – I will have to review/divide those for the future!

What does the interpretive process mean to you?

Stepping through a long, information-losing process: someone has an idea, they put it onto a paper (losing some information), give someone that paper.

To me, interpretation is when a second person (perhaps me and perhaps not) makes a guess as to what the first person actually wanted – either a communicative goal, or a strict, technical ‘do this’ goal. The interpreter may or may not have the additional role of integrating or ignoring
external information with internal/provided information. External information might come from peers, conductors, past performances, recordings, interviews with the composer, other works/music played, restrictions of the performance space ... just about anywhere. Internal/provided information would be suggestions within the score or original performance.

Notably, I keep ‘composer’s first-hand commentary’ as an external/secondary influence, as composers change their minds like everybody else. Scores and primary recordings are, barring editorial changes, the only primary sources for interpretation.

b How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

‘Ownership’?

As in copyright: unimportant – I don’t think it’s possible for me to prevent another person from (a) flat-out copying my interpretation or (b) stepping through their interpretive process and coming up with something that is very similar to my own interpretation. In live performance, however ... I don’t think either one is completely possible. Even in live performance of recorded works, I think this is unlikely.

As in ‘product which shows personal processing of a work of music’, ‘personal ownership/command’: very. I must take the time to step through and interpret a work – this is the rewarding part of musical practice/preparation.

Have you ever tried improvising?

Yep.

- If yes, in what context?

  Individual (alone in the closet/practice room/studio), at the piano, on the trombone, on other instruments – voice,
guitar, clarinet, MIDI studio, etc. Whatever is handy.

What was your process?

In youth (ages 10-14): piano – slow production or short, random melodies and harmonies. Trombone – nonexistent.

14-18: piano – gradual integration of triadic and pandiatonic harmonies, non-classical harmonic function (not ii-V-I). Trombone – first melodic improvisation, continuous creation of new ideas.

18-22: Piano – changeover into more traditional harmonic function, exploration of non-diatonic keys. Simultaneous return to piano-based improvisations for producing relatively tonal, predictable/neo-romantic compositions. Trombone – first attempts at integrating change-based improvisations – strictly following printed changes, to the point of interrupting musical ideas because of attempts to follow changes.

23-25: Piano – improvisation-composition of works based on retrograde-harmonic functions (plagal harmonic functions). Trombone – gradual expansion into melodic improvisation that moves into and just outside of printed changes, more creative use of printed chords as ‘guides’ for improvisation. Gradual integration and application of tall chords (7ths and above). Return also to improvisation in a very tonal, non-jazz style.

26-30 (present): cease of piano improvisation/playing due to advanced trombone study. Significant limitation of trombone improvisation due to focus on classical trombone performance.

Notably, my process for studying improvisation is a little
more refined now. I listen to recordings more (previously completely ignored!), and spend more time imitating, integrating, and reflecting on other people’s improvisation.

How did you find improvising?

*Cathartic, relaxing, open-ended, rewarding.*

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

*Less strict, less ‘expectant’. Rather than waiting for or expecting ‘the next quantitative error in reproducing the printed page’, I am able to evaluate my improvisation based on qualitative criteria – desirable, less desirable, etc.*

- If no, would you consider improvising?

8

Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

*Yes. (I would suggest it is an absolutely necessary skill.)*

- If you have improvised before, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

*Improvisation at a young age was the door which brought me to music performance (solo/ensemble) and composition. I just wouldn’t be a musician if I hadn’t been improvising at the piano when I was young.*

*As a performer, my knowledge of improvisation gives me a fairly wide appreciation for individual interpretations, and a wide palette for my own possible interpretations. Although I largely filter down my own interpretation printed works to a relatively well-defined set of*
expectations, I believe I start off with a fairly wide set of initial possibilities/influences.
**Composer**

1. a. What drew you to music initially?
   b. What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?

2. a. What do you find musically inspiring?
   b. What do you find musically fulfilling?
   c. What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?

3. a. Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?
   b. Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.
   c. Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

4. a. Describe the development of your sound.
   b. Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?
   c. What do you value about your sound?

5. Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?
   - If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?
     Describe the development of your musical voice.
   - If no, explain.

6. a. What does the interpretive process mean to you?
   b. How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?
How much instruction do you include in your scores?

*On a historical scale, a ‘moderately conservative’ volume of instruction. Not as blank as Bach Cello Suites, but equally far from any attempt at absolute control. I include roughly classical/romantic instructions – tempi, dynamics, and expressions in both Italian or plain English as suitable. My expressive directions lean toward rhetorical/orative verbs or adverbs: digressing, questioning, interrupting, firmly, gently, etc. rather than adjectives: dark, mysterious, bright, etc.*

How do you feel about performers bringing their own interpretations to your compositions?

*Supportive in an interactive sense. I am interested to see what information people bring in, see, or choose when performing my compositions.*
Creativity and Improvisation in Classical Music: An Exploration of Interpretation and Ownership

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Nominate your area/s of current practice (please underline):

- Repertoire Performer
- Improviser
- Composer

Please answer the questions corresponding to your nominated area/s of current practice.

Repertoire Performer

1  a  What drew you to music initially?
   *Childhood opportunity to play music in a government school.*

   b  What drew you to your particular instrument and/or discipline?
   *I was allocated to learn the cello by my school.*

2  a  What do you find musically inspiring?
   *All kinds of music that are performed or written well.*

   b  What do you find musically fulfilling?
   *Participating in performances where the connection with my fellow musicians and the audience is successful.*

   c  What do you consider to be a meaningful musical experience?
   *I am not sure how to answer this question – all music is meaningful to a certain extent.*
a Do you consider music performance to be a creative pursuit?

Yes.

b Do you consider yourself to be a creative person? Explain.

Yes – music is an art form. We create sounds and structures that are for entertainment and also for communication.

c Do you consider yourself to be creative as a musician? Explain.

Yes. I think that all musicians are creative – but of course some more than others. People easily forget that every sound we make as a musician requires choice and creativity. The stereotype is that classical musicians are less creative, but I do not subscribe to this theory.

4 a Describe the development of your sound.

With the cello, I think that there is a natural sound for every instrument and performer – and sometimes the idea of developing your sound is false. The optimal goal is to be able to use as many colours and effects as possible using all of the tools at your disposal ... bow weight, speed, angle to the string and contact with the string are all important for the right hand – vibrato, pressure, technique and shifting are equally important for the left hand.

b Do you consider yourself to have a personal ‘sound’?

Yes – actually, I think everyone has a personal sound due to our different body structures and physical limitation. We all play different instruments and all hear slightly differently.

c What do you value about your sound?

Personally, I like to think that I have a warm tone, and have the ability to produce a big sound when necessary.
Do you consider yourself to have a musical voice?

Yes.

- If yes, what is it that you aim to communicate to your audience?

    Whatever the music requires to be effective.

Describe the development of your musical voice.

    I think that experiences in performance situations and a physical and mental freedom are necessary to have a truly free musical voice – but again I am not convinced that it is something that is developed.

- If no, explain.

What does the interpretive process mean to you?

    It means that you try and understand how the music was intended to be performed, and then try and play the music using the instrument that you have with [sic] and understanding of all of the influences that we also have in our 21st century lives.

b How important do you consider ownership of interpretation to be?

    Not very important.

Have you ever tried improvising?

- If yes, in what context?

    Yes – I play in a jazz quartet as a side project.

What was your process?

    It follows the standard jazz forms – the theme and then
improvisations using the theme and other interesting motifs that appear in performance.

How did you find improvising?

I find it a very creative and liberating experience. It makes me really ‘open my ears’ and listen with great focus to what the other musicians are doing at all times.

How do you feel when improvising, compared with reading music?

It depends on the situation – I think that you can have creative freedom while reading music and while improvising. I think that the skill of reading music with creative freedom is a skill that has to be practised just as the skill of improvisation has to be practised.

- If no, would you consider improvising?

Do you consider improvising to be a useful skill for a repertoire performer?

Yes.

- If you have improvised before, how do you feel your improvisation has impacted on your development as a musician? As a performer?

I consider it to be useful – but not necessarily in a professional manner. I think that as a repertoire performer, I am required to read music, interpret it and perform it with other musicians. Perhaps my experience with improvisation has allowed me to be able to focus more intensely on the other musicians in a classical situation, but I am not sure whether this is a result of my
improvisation, or just a result of my continued studies as a classical musician.

I think that it has given me a greater confidence to play music of all genres, and to be able to work better with musicians from different fields (improvisers etc). In my situation, it has given me a greater understanding of how jazz music is created and developed – and has given me a greater appreciation of jazz as a result.
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