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Soundpainting as a system for the collaborative creation of music in performance

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The man bent over his guitar,
A shearsman of sorts. The day was green.

They said, 'You have a blue guitar,
You do not play things as they are.'

The man replied, 'Things as they are
Are changed upon the blue guitar.'

And they said then, 'But play, you must,
A tune beyond us, yet ourselves,

A tune upon the blue guitar
Of things exactly as they are.'

Wallace Stevens, "The Man with the Blue Guitar"

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Acknowledgements

In spite of a persistent fiction, we never write on a blank page, but always on one that has already been written on.

Michel de Certeau (1988:43)

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Dedication

My observations regarding Soundpainting and improvisation are fuelled by some thirty-plus years of experience as an improvising musician and performer in the fields of ***jazz*** and free music, as well as so-called popular and world music (especially that originating from the Indian sub-continent). These experiences have led to the good fortune of working and playing with some wonderful musicians from all these genres both at home (in South Africa) and abroad. These encounters have not only enriched me as musician and hopefully as human being, but also encouraged the attitude of keeping an open mind (and ear).

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I dedicate this work to all these people from whom I have learned so much both personally and professionally, but especially to my wife Lydia for her tremendous encouragement, support, and advice.

Summary

Soundpainting is the method of "live composition" invented by New York-based composer and saxophonist Walter Thompson. Using physical gestures for the spontaneous creation of music, Soundpainting therefore shares similarities with other types of ***gesture***-based systems for music performance, such as orchestral conducting. Thompson himself (2006) describes his Soundpainting system as a "universal live composing sign language for the performing and visual arts," and therefore Soundpainting can be considered as a subset of other communication systems such as verbal and written language, ***kinesics***, and ***paralanguage***.

This thesis outlines the general principles of Soundpainting as a system for setting into motion spontaneously created music. The author's aim is to describe Soundpainting in relation to the ***linguistic turn*** in Thompson's own definition. This opens the way to a sociosemiotic analysis, in which it is susceptible to examination in the light of some theories of language that have emerged in the course of the twentieth century.

A theoretical framework is developed drawing on the work of such pioneers of ***semiotics*** as Saussure and Peirce, as well as the later work in philosophy of language of Wittgenstein, Barthes, Eco, Derrida, and others. The eclectic concerns of Soundpainting suggest situating Thompson's language in the context of current debates in ***critical theory*** about tonality, jazz, and improvisation as strategies for constructing identity. Soundpainting, by demonstrating that musical signification can be negotiated through consensus, problematizes the convention of the composer as the sole legitimating authority of the work.

Considering Soundpainting as a processual activity, this dissertation outlines the general principles of Soundpainting as a system for the spontaneous

creation of music. Emphasizing the process-based character of Soundpainting (and its affinity with other forms of improvised music) suggests that such categories of musical activity need to be studied from a different vantage point from that of historical musicology.

Keywords

Communication, Conducting, Critical theory, Experimental music, Free Improvisation, Musicking, Philosophy of Language, Semiotics, Soundpainting, Wittgenstein.

Notes to the reader

The author wishes to explain in advance a few conventions regarding proper names and references as used in this doctoral study. When the author cites a name such as Ferdinand de Saussure or Michel de Certeau in full, subsequent references will be cited as Saussure and Certeau.

Wittgenstein's writings are normally cited by title and paragraph number, not by page number. To alert the reader to this, the author uses the symbol <§>. A citation from *Philosophical Investigations* aphorism 9 is then understood as (Wittgenstein), PI §9. The author follows this convention also with regard to writings of Debord as cited.

Gestures in the Soundpainting language are indicated by enclosure within these symbols <>, as in the <long tone> gesture.

The whole gamut of musics known as "classical" is defined as largely tonal, notationally based music of the common practice period, dating from the time of Bach until the end of the nineteenth century, and is abbreviated WEAM (for Western European Art Music), after Conrad Cork's "felicitous acronym for

Western European Art Music" (Collier 1998:11).

For convenience, the author provides a glossary (section 1.10), following the convention that the first time such a term is introduced, it is placed in ***bold italics***, indicating that a further definition is available in the glossary.

Chapter 1 : Research outline

Introduction

Walter Thompson is a New York-based composer and saxophonist who derived the basic idea of using non-verbal signals for directing the course of a live ensemble performance in that city in the mid-1980s. Thompson (2006:12) describes the genesis of Soundpainting as follows:

> Thompson moved to New York City in 1980 and formed the Walter Thompson Big Band (now the Walter Thompson Orchestra) in 1984. During the first year with his orchestra, while conducting a performance in Brooklyn, New York, Thompson needed to communicate with the orchestra in the middle of one of his compositions. They were performing a section of improvisation where Trumpet 2 was soloing. During the solo, Thompson wanted to have one of the other trumpet players create a background. Not wanting to emulate bandleaders who yell or speak out loud to their orchestra, Thompson decided to use some of the signs he had experimented with in his Woodstock days.

As Thompson himself admits (*ibid.*), the initial experiment did not work as he had intended[1]: “In the moment he made up these signs: Trumpet I, Background, With, 2-Measure, Feel; Watch Me, 4 Beats. He tried it and there was no response!” He (Thompson 2006:13) concludes by saying: “But in the next rehearsal, members of his orchestra asked what the signing was about—and he told them. The orchestra members thought it was a very interesting direction and encouraged Thompson to develop the language further.” Fittingly perhaps, since Soundpainting to a large extent depends on collaboration between the Soundpainter and the ensemble, the support and encouragement of the members of Thompson’s orchestra spurred him on to continue developing and codifying Soundpainting.

Thompson's father (to whom *Soundpainting Workbook I* is dedicated) was an

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[1] The description of these gestures is drawn from Thompson (2006).

artist associated with Abstract Expressionism as practised by Jackson Pollock, and Walter Thompson's early years were spent listening to the various kinds of music emanating from his father's tape recorder (which he liked to use as accompaniment to his painting activities). This early exposure to music and the visual arts in close association may account for some of the Soundpainting gestures that derive from the visual arts, such as <pointillism>.

Thompson went on to study composition and saxophone with Anthony Braxton, a controversial figure in American improvised music, whose musical career (as composer and performer) incorporates an eclectic set of interests, ranging from John Cage and Charles Ives to ragtime and ***free jazz***. Braxton's vast and wide-ranging *oeuvre*, which incorporates elements from mainstream jazz, free improvisation, and experimental music, does not readily fit the stylistic criteria of what is marketed as "American jazz." As a consequence of Braxton's eclecticism, record companies have had considerable difficulties marketing his unpredictable and iconoclastic offerings in the wider American and international marketplace. Braxton's own compositions range from quite loosely arranged frameworks for improvisation to very meticulously and densely notated pieces, which may also have inspired some of Thompson's procedures in designing the Soundpainting system.

Using Walter Thompson's set of some 700 gestures, which serve as instructions to the performers to carry out specific tasks, it is possible to construct a wide variety of musical events. These range from basic material for beginner improvisers to complex large-scale performances such as Thompson's *PEXO* (2001), which he defines as a "Soundpainting symphony."

1.2 Background and justification

Soundpainting is an integrated system of some 700 gestures employed by the Soundpainter to indicate to the ensemble what is to be performed from moment to moment. Although there are obvious similarities in this regard to orthodox conducting, the intentions and results of a Soundpainting

performance differ very radically from an orchestral performance, in which the conductor directs musicians in the performance of a score (such as a Schubert symphony, for example). In the jazz context, a conductor may likewise direct a big band in the realization of an arrangement for such an ensemble by using gestures similar to those of orchestral conducting.

Soundpainting begins with a set of simple signs depicting musical concepts such as volume, tempo, pitch, and duration. Once the ensemble has mastered these musical building blocks, the Soundpainter introduces progressively more complex signals encompassing such notions as genre or style, key, memory, and more. Under the guidance of an expert Soundpainter, the performers interpret progressively more complex combinations of signs resulting in a fluid and flexible performance. In a given Soundpainting event, the result may incorporate sections of previously prepared music[2] as well as free improvisation.

Thompson started developing his system in 1984 and has since founded the Walter Thompson Soundpainting Orchestra (or WTSPO), based in New York and dedicated to the performance of Soundpainting creations. Beginning spontaneously during the course of a live performance, Soundpainting has grown over the twenty years of its existence into a robust and precise means of communication.

1.3 Research questions

The above discussion highlights the central concern of this thesis:

How does Soundpainting operate as a system for the collaborative creation of music in performance?

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[2] In Soundpainting parlance, such previously rehearsed sections are known as <palettes>. Gil Selinger has released a Soundpainting version of Haydn's Cello Concerto in C called *Deconstructing Haydn*, which links quotations from the original piece (in the form of <palettes>) with Soundpainting interludes.

Two related research sub-questions reveal themselves:

- What kind of musical skills should performers bring to bear during a Soundpainting performance? This sub-question is bound up with the nature of language acquisition in music, with reference to Thompson's approach to improvisation
- As it deliberately aims to include many of the possible genres of contemporary musical styles as part of its manifesto, under what terms and conditions is Soundpainting subject to analysis? In short, into exactly what kind of musical genre does Soundpainting fall?

Sub-areas considered in conjunction with the main research question are stated as follows:

- The nature of collaboration in creative activity, so as to describe the dynamics of the contribution of the participants in the musical process
- Contemporary trends in musical theory and analysis, which (in some quarters) display evidence of a radical interrogation of the assumptions of traditional musicology
- Linguistic theory as a comparable analytical methodology, suggested primarily by Thompson's description of Soundpainting as a language about music
- The relationship between music and media as reflecting a triadic modality of creation, mediation, and reception
- Historically informed performance, because the jazz idiom (like WEAM) subscribes to the notion of a canon of works as well as emphasizing the importance of the creative process
- Performance and the performative, because notions of agency and identity are central to certain areas of jazz improvisation.

Semiotic analysis (especially in the field of WEAM) has concerned itself with the examination of musical scores as the *raison d'être* of musical and philosophical inquiry. Whether and how such methods will be useful as tools for the evaluation of Soundpainting (as a subset of improvised music) is also a central concern of this thesis. The author will suggest that the fluid nature of improvised music tends generally to resist such straightforward semiotic analyses, and therefore that a different strategic approach to the understanding of the nature of improvisation may be called for.

1.4 Purpose and aims

The purpose of this study is to interrogate Soundpainting from a number of theoretical vantage points, including those of semiotics, ***structuralism***, poststructuralism, and postmodernism. This approach is necessitated by the simple fact that Soundpainting is defined by Thompson as a sign language, and thus is susceptible to analysis as part of a broader set of languages whose primary purpose is communication. On the surface at least, this suggests that orthodox conducting and Soundpainting share similarities with one another, in that both activities depend on systems of physical gestures to achieve their purposes.

In comparing the roles of the orthodox conductor and the Soundpainter, the author will describe Soundpainting as a sign-system for the communication of musical ideas. The author will provide a survey of scholarship tracing the development of semiotic theory in general, and its application to the analysis of music in particular. As semiotics provides an analytical framework for describing the communication of ideas in general, the author will examine and evaluate its application to Soundpainting as a means of generating, and communicating, musical ideas in particular.

The author also aims to consider Soundpainting as a late twentieth-century musical phenomenon, which, by virtue of its origin in a particular historical moment, can be subjected to analysis using some of the available critical tools that have shaped human interaction not only with music, but also the world. Soundpainting, as a system for the collaborative creation of music in performance, has the potential to act as a deconstructor of traditional roles within such performances. Moreover, it exhibits in the range and eclecticism of its musical concerns (such as Western art music, musical theatre, jazz, and free improvisation) an awareness of postmodernism.

1.5 Justification

> Music exists as a three-fold series of processes: a first stage of creation, or composition; a middle stage of mediation, involving publication, production, performance, and dissemination; and a final one of reception and perception.
>
> (Hamm 1992:21)

1.5.1 A note on musicking

The way in which the term "making music" is used in everyday language highlights an odd paradox. If, in participating in the day-to-day activities that define their social and occupational roles, actors act, sculptors sculpt, composers compose, conductors conduct, and dancers dance, what is it exactly that musicians do? Oddly enough, they "make music."

For Christopher Small, this is an unfortunate shortcoming of ordinary language, because it implies the existence of music as a reified object out there, whose nature suggests somehow that it exists, and *continues to exist*, independently of those who create it. Small's terms, "to music" and "musicking," once one has become accustomed to the neologisms, go a long way to exposing the ideological assumptions at the root of this strange quirk of language. His definition of the term "to music" goes as follows (1998:9): "To music is to take part, in any capacity, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practising, by providing material for performance (which is called composing), or by dancing." By using the term "music" as a verb, rather than a noun, Small's fairly radical conclusion is that there is no such thing as music as an object *per se*, and therefore that music only exists as an activity.

Small's line of argument owes a certain amount to David Elliott's exposition of the idea of music as activity as set out in *Music Matters* (1995). The author will suggest (in chapter 3) that both these points of view can be subsumed under a Wittgensteinian interpretation of language as use.

1.5.2 Creation, mediation, and reception

Hamm's triad (that is, the "three-fold series of processes" described above) is useful as shorthand for describing the often-complex processes underlying musicking and its progress en route to reception. The production of the musical artefact at the centre of his discussion—Lionel Richie's song *All Night Long (All Night)*—takes place in a social milieu far removed from the audience that it reaches through the medium of radio. In this particular historical instance,[3] factors of distance both in time and space stretch the line of communication between creator and receiver. Hamm goes on to suggest that historical musicology, especially as practised in the United States, has focused its attention mainly on the stage of creation, and that studies of mass media and some branches of social science tend to examine the area of mediation and performance (the second part of the triad).

To some extent Hamm's preoccupations are far from unique: it is, after all, against this background or shift of focus that are ushered in the concerns of the so-called "New Musicology." With its origins in neo-Marxist critical theory, this methodology strives to acknowledge the social element in music by focussing on process rather than product, thereby emphasizing the people practising music, circumstances under which musicking takes place, the media influencing such practices and, in short, the entire web of relations in which musicking is located.

In Roland Barthes's essay, "The Photographic Message," he likewise reveals a threefold perceptual relationship at work between the viewer and the image, as follows (1977:15):

> The press photograph is a message. Considered overall this message is formed by a source of emission, a channel of transmission and a point of

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[3] Hamm (1992:26) refers to "this song at the moment it was heard over the radio by two young black women in November of 1984 in a black township in the Republic of South Africa."

> reception. The source of emission is the staff of the newspaper, the group of technicians certain of whom take the photo, some of whom choose, compose and treat it, while others, finally, give it a title, a caption, and a commentary. The point of reception is the public which reads the paper. As for the channel of transmission, this is the newspaper itself, or, more precisely, a complex of concurrent messages with the photograph as centre and surrounds constituted by the text, the title, the caption, the lay-out and, in a more abstract but no less 'informative' way, by the very name of the paper.[4]

Barthes goes on to argue that the photograph is "an object endowed with a structural autonomy" (*ibid.*) but in a process of communication with its commentary or text, in the literal sense. What is in common between these two analyses of such different objects of culture (as in a Lionel Richie pop song and a photograph in a newspaper) is above all that they are products of everyday society.[5] It is perhaps an indication of the quite radical shifts in twentieth century analytical views of cultural life that such "ordinary" products of mass culture are considered as worthy of analysis at all. The notion that such lowly forms of "art" are capable of saying something to their respective audiences is clearly a concern of the Information Age and its postmodern attitude to aesthetic problems, and also for the analysts and commentators trying to understand the dynamics at play.

Returning to Hamm's discussion, his self-avowedly modest intent is to privilege the moment of reception, by situating the listeners' responses to the song in the political context of 1980s South Africa, a time of great unrest and social upheaval. In seeing radio in this case as a promoter of the power interests of the white minority, he concludes by saying (1992:36): "Thus, at

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[4] Barthes goes on to suggest that: "This name represents a knowledge that can heavily orientate the reading of the message strictly speaking: a photograph can change its meaning as it passes from the very conservative *L'Aurore* to the communist *L'Humanité*."

[5] Kevin Korsyn (2003:17) prefers the term "the social," suggesting thereby that "society" is a construct reflecting a number of (sometimes deeply divided) smaller "micro-societies" and not a monolithic concept. Korsyn suggests (*ibid.*): "Just as the postmodern social is decentered, so too are its individuals. Identity today is constructed through participation in numerous and changing groups, which overlap and contradict each other." This viewpoint considers "society" as a product, and "the social" as a process, to some extent thereby allowing for a more fluid view of the mutations and migrations through which "the social" is constituted.

our moment of reception, the ambiguities deliberately built into Richie's song are particularized by specific conditions of history, society, and ethnicity." A crucial implication of Hamm's argument is his criticism of the idea of an unambiguous and final meaning located in the song, suggesting that its reception at that point in time largely depended on the circumstances under which it was received.

Creation, mediation, and reception are not, then, in Hamm's view, neutral terms, which portray an unambiguous relationship. He describes the song (1992:25) in terms of:

> Deliberately generalized product, a generic pop song of the early 1980s. The text is non-narrative, repetitious and episodic; its essence is stated in the first few lines, actually in the title itself, and there is no dramatic progression as the song unfolds. The music is likewise episodic, additive, open-ended.

If the listener's task in this triad is to situate meaning in the song, depending on the "specific conditions" of time and place, then the processes of creation, mediation, and reception each arise from relatively fluid ideological and cultural positions, which in turn depend on networks of relations. Hamm's contextualization of Richie's song (as received by those township women in that place at that time) reveals the deep irony of its message of "party on, regardless" against the backdrop of this violent and tumultuous period in South African history, thereby revealing the play of a multivalent dynamic of reception, as Hamm argues, deliberately "built-in" as part of the content of the song itself.

It should be pointed out here that the control of radio as a communication medium was by no means unique to *apartheid* culture in South Africa. As a vehicle for propaganda, radio has proved tremendously useful as a means of entrenching the dominant ideologies of various authorities. On a slightly less sinister level, Orson Welles's famous 1938 hoax news broadcast about the purported Martian invasion is a somewhat extreme illustration of the power of radio to influence and direct public opinion. As documented in Wilson and

Wilson (1998:219), the events unfolded as follows:

> On the eve of Halloween in 1938, a 23-year old radio producer and actor named Orson Welles broadcast his rendition of H. G. Wells's short novel *War of the Worlds* on 'The Mercury Theater of the Air.'
>
> All week the cast had been struggling to adapt the story to radio and was finding it difficult to make the drama believable. So Welles decided to present the story as an interruption of a regular music broadcast, with news reporters breathlessly cutting in to describe the landing of creatures from Mars.

Although there were announcements during the broadcast stating that the attack was fictional, Welles's hoax set off scenes of mass hysteria and panic as:

> By the end of the hour-long broadcast, people had attempted suicide, jammed long-distance telephone lines, and caused national pandemonium. Military personnel were called back to their bases. In Concrete, Washington, a power failure during the broadcast caused a traffic jam as most of the town's residents fled in their automobiles to escape the invading Martians.[6]

Welles's publicity stunt with regard to *The War of the Worlds* is a case of reception going badly awry, in which listeners reacted in panic to a spurious news broadcast. In contradistinction to the reception of Richie's pop song and the photographic message as described by Barthes, however, there exist instances of live performance in which the processes of composition, performance, and listening take place at the same time, in the present moment. Such performances often include an improvised component, such as the music of the Indian sub-continent, free jazz, contemporary avant-garde music, and certain instances of computer-generated (or algorithmic) pieces, for example.

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[6] Wilson and Wilson (1998:219) conclude: "An estimated 6 million people heard the Welles broadcast, and 1 million of them believed it. It's not known how many others were caught up in the mass hysteria. As a result, the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) quickly stepped in and banned fictional news bulletins from the airwaves."

In the case of Soundpainting these processes also tend to unfold simultaneously, with the result that the divisions between the roles of composer, performer, and listener are not always obvious. The Soundpainter may take on the role of conductor, performer, or listener to varying degrees as the event unfolds, and this fluidity in respect of the boundaries of such roles suggests that Soundpainting may therefore be seen as a type of deconstruction of the power relations of nineteenth century symphonic music.

Kershaw (1999:13), in his discussion of the performative[7] society, has spoken of the “growing interest in performance” with special reference to theatre history and scholarship. This kind of thinking has tended (in some quarters) to move away from the historically based study of the theatrical text as object of inquiry to a more socially situated study of its expression in performance, where the aim is to situate the text in its social context. In musicology, too, these concerns are seen as more and more important.[8]

It is worth noting that the term “text” may refer to any phenomenon open to interpretation, so that in this case it might refer to the written score, to the performance thereof, or to the history of the music and the musician (the province of orthodox musicology), or even to musicology itself (when conceived of as a collection of texts).

1.5.3 The role of the conductor in orchestral performance

In the case of the two performance contexts mentioned above (that is, conducted orchestral and big band performances), the score is a central

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[7] Performative is defined as "relating to or denoting an utterance by means of which the speaker performs a particular act (e.g., I bet, I apologize, I promise)." Often contrasted with constative, "denoting a speech act or sentence that is a statement declaring something to be the case." This concept, originally from J. L. Austin, forms part of the author's later discussion on the construction of subjectivity within improvised music, as do Gates's theories of signifyin(g). Source: Oxford American Dictionary.

[8] As, for instance, Bowen in Cook and Everist (2001:424-451), Rink (2002).

element in the realization of these musical events. In such performances the score functions both as a mnemonic device and as a map of the musical territory to be traversed, which the conductor and performers navigate simultaneously. For Small (1998), in the somewhat ritualistic context of a WEAM performance, the score takes on an almost mystical significance as the literal and figurative centrepiece of the ceremony. In these circumstances, the conductor has to have supreme and unquestioned control over the orchestra or ensemble at his or her command.

Prévost[9] expresses the potentially negative results of this situation with vigour (1995:51): “When men are not in control of the music they make, when they feel compelled to listen out of duty, then it is clear that men are doing things to other men—that some form of authoritarianism is on the loose.” As a case of “authoritarianism on the loose,” what better example in a musical context than orthodox conducting, which operates, as the author will argue, not only as a sign-system but also as a reflection of power relations within the larger ambit of late capitalist society?

As Van Leeuwen (1999:82) claims: “The symphony orchestra thus celebrates and enacts discipline and control, the fragmentation of work into specialized functions, in short, the work values of the industrial age.” In this view, the role of the conductor can be seen as analogous to that of a foreman directing the workers (members of the orchestra) in the creation of a product (the music) designed by the owner (the composer) for the consumption of the audience. The kind of "discipline and control" to which van Leeuwen refers may also be addressed via the ***metaphor*** of music as a journey through time, in which case the conductor is in charge of the ship, so to speak.

Graham Collier suggests that the model of the symphony orchestra as a reflection of society is a pervasive one, in stating (1998:11):

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[9] Prévost is a British drummer and co-founder of the free improvisation ensemble AMM.

> It's one of the paradoxes of the world—at least the western world—that the values espoused by WEAM are those that dominate our lives. What we see, in the most common manifestations of WEAM, is a conductor in charge of an orchestra playing music which depends for its effect on everything being together. The only changes are those of tempo, dynamics, and so on, which are put into place by the conductor.
>
> Sounds familiar? This is what most governments would like society to be like. A government which knows best and a populace which believes—or at least can be made to suspend its disbelief—that the government is right.

The operations of the orchestra illustrate a fairly rigid organizational structure, in which the vector of communication is generally in one direction only, from the conductor to the orchestra members. This type of organization is generally categorized as "top-down," in which directions (or orders[10]) emanate from above, and tend for the most part to be obeyed without question.

By the end of the nineteenth century the orchestral resources in terms of the colours, available dynamic range, and sheer numbers of players available to composers had grown enormously by comparison with those in the days of Haydn and Mozart. This placed progressively greater resources (in terms of timbral variation, volume, and sheer numbers of players involved in the event) at the disposal of the composer and, by extension, the conductor as his intermediary.

In addition, the increasing complexity of much of this music (and that of the twentieth century) tends to demand far higher levels of technical skill (that is, specialization) from the performer. These factors tend to reinforce competition between performers (as job opportunities in orchestras are limited by economic constraints) and composers, many of whom depend on public funding for their survival. These phenomena suggest a reflection of the industrial work values that van Leeuwen mentions.

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[10] "Ordinary" orchestral musicians (not the leaders of the various sections) are sometimes referred to as "rank and file" players, indicating an obvious parallel with military organizations.

During the author's visit to Paris in March 2003, the opportunity arose to attend a public performance of two works composed and conducted by Pierre Boulez[11] at *Cité de la Musique*. At the time the need was apparent to compare the author's experience (as performer and listener in the Soundpainting workshops) with a kind of music that completely and intentionally excluded any possibility of improvisation. The sheer virtuosity of the performance left one with the aural impression of a rare and elegant piece of jewellery, of extraordinary intricacy and priceless value.

Anthèmes 2 (for solo violin and electronics) was performed by Hae-Sun Kang, a slight figure as she stood in a single spotlight in the centre of the vast auditorium. Around the auditorium were ranged in a circle a number of loudspeakers into which were fed very soft, mysterious electronic sounds. "*Dans sa réécriture de 1997, Anthèmes 2 fait dialoguer le violon solo avec un ordinateur qui le suit comme son ombre, pour lui répondre çà et là par un véritable contrepoint qui, spatializé sur des haut-parleurs, surgit autour du public*."[12]

Despite the use of the terms "dialogue" and "reply" in the programme notes, this listener felt very little sense of communication in the music and the overwhelming experience (reinforced to no small extent by the staging) was one of loneliness and desolation, a postmodernist map of human isolation against the backdrop of the Information Age. Compared to an orchestra performance as reflecting the ideology of the industrial revolution, the Boulez piece called to mind (both aurally and visually) the image of a faceless worker punching data into a computer terminal.

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[11] Boulez himself conducted two pieces, *Anthèmes 2* (for solo violin and electronics) and *Répons* (for seven soloists and ensemble).

[12] "In its 1997 revision, *Anthèmes 2* creates a dialogue between the solo violin and a computer which follows it like its shadow, replying to it here and there in a true counterpoint which, spatialized over the loudspeakers, surrounds [lit. emerges around] the audience." Programme notes for Boulez concert at *Cité de la Musique*. Paris, 15 March 2003. Author's translation.

1.5.4 Free jazz as ensemble performance

Beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s (and in stark contrast to the meticulous organization of much art music of the time) stands the genre of free jazz. This loose movement was initially spearheaded by musicians such as Cecil Taylor, Sun Ra, Ornette Coleman, and, later, John Coltrane. Any hint of "authoritarianism" was strenuously avoided, very often for ideological or political reasons, and performers made music spontaneously without the necessity for either score or conductor. There existed the assumption of a kind of musical democracy resulting in what might be termed composition by consensus. Often derided as the province of charlatans by more conservative jazz writers, free jazz makes its own demands of technique and concentration on player as well as audience.

Anderson (2002:133) describes the revolutionary impact of Ornette Coleman's music in these terms:

> The Ornette Coleman Quartet aroused a critical furor that polarized performers, journalists and fans immediately following its New York City debut in 1959. Coleman's compositions and alto saxophone playing reordered structural principles to afford maximum melodic and rhythmic freedom. By allowing each musician to play inside or outside conventional chord, bar, pitch, and tempo guidelines, he pursued an expressive and collective approach to improvisation pioneered by pianists Cecil Taylor and Sun Ra.

The elements in Coleman's early music point in an obviously "jazz" direction, unlike much of the music created by "experimental" composers with more overtly philosophical concerns. John Cage's interest in methods of indeterminacy, for example, was motivated largely by his need to avoid any semblance of "individual taste and memory,"[13] an antithetical position to the jazz musician's insistence on individuality of sound. By rigorously limiting the possibilities for individual expression, modernist "experimental" composers sought to constrain improvisation, thereby maintaining a form of control over

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[13] Potter (2000:6) discusses this concept in some detail.

the random elements within their compositions.

Berendt (1991:128) compares the “sound ideals” of jazz and orchestral musicians as follows:

> A jazz musician has to have a sound, his own personal sound by which the listener can, after a few bars, identify him. How different is the sound ideal of Western classical music: Basically and with a few grains of salt, there is one obligatory sound ideal for all musicians of an orchestra.

Lucy Green (2001:212) acknowledges the beauty as well as some of the negative elements of this orchestral *Klangideal*[14] when she states:

> Whereas the emphasis on achieving the 'right' tone quality or colour is in itself a beautiful aspect of classical music-making, it is also accompanied by some disadvantages: in particular, that in pursuing an ideal sound, idiosyncrasy must be controlled and is nearly always considered to be 'wrong,' there being only a few geniuses whose personal touch has been celebrated as such.

For Lewis, the individual sound of the jazz musician is a vital means of constructing identity. As he expresses it (2004a:4):

> In the context of improvised musics that exhibit strong influences from Afrological ways of music-making, musical sound—or rather, 'one's own sound'—becomes a carrier for history and cultural identity. 'Sound' becomes identifiable, not with timbre alone, but with the expression of personality, the assertion of agency, the assumption of responsibility and an encounter with history, memory and identity.

Whether the pioneers of free jazz in America were aware of the experimental music of Cage and others, which had preceded this revolution by some twenty years, is open to debate. Cage’s thinking was in any case not about the same kind of freedom that lay at the heart of the free jazz movement. Cage’s dictum (as discussed in Nyman 1999:32), was that: “The opposite and necessary coexistent of sound is silence,” which would have held little interest for Ornette Coleman at the time of the release of his seminal “Free Jazz”

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[14] The German term literally translates as "sound ideal."

recording.[15] Coleman later was to develop a theory of composition known as ***harmolodics***, in which ***horizontal*** content is the central motivating musical element.

1.5.5 The role of the Soundpainter in ensemble performance

The dynamics of orchestral performance, in which the conductor plays a pivotal role, and those of freely improvised music in which, ostensibly at least, there is no leader, suggest two extremes of power relations within musicking. In the orchestral context, the players are contractually obligated to follow the conductor's directions; in free improvisation, the leadership position is constantly under negotiation, as the dominant role is not formalized, and is assigned more or less accidentally as a consequence of the musical processes taking place. In free music, this "dominance" may be seen as a temporary by-product of the music itself, in which, for example, a player may cease playing for a time, thereby ceding an acoustic space to the other musicians.

In orthodox orchestral performance, the conductor uses the score as a guide to directing the musicians in the interpretation of the composer's intentions. Obviously the quality of these performances will depend on the training and technical abilities of the musicians and the conductor. Their ability to read sometimes extremely complex and difficult music while producing an acceptable sound from their instrument of choice becomes significant. The work of the Portsmouth Sinfonia (as documented in Nyman 1999:161-2) is an extreme instance of what happens when these conventions of Western art music are intentionally subverted, often to hilarious effect.

The staging of a Soundpainting event, by contrast, differs from a performance

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[15] The guitarist Pat Metheny (influenced by Coleman's music in his early career) has released a recording called *Zero Tolerance for Silence*. Metheny's collaboration with Coleman is documented on the recording *Song X*.

by an orchestra or a jazz ensemble in the sense that in Soundpainting the score generally does not take pride of place; the musicians create improvised music on the spur of the moment without reference to textual instructions. The performers are free to be influenced by the musical results of their interpretation of the gestures and to go where the music leads them. This state of affairs carries with it, however, the responsibility of active and concentrated listening as well as the need to do honour to the sign in question.

The Soundpainter “hovers” between these two dynamics of power relations as discussed above,[16] allowing the performance to emerge in a manner fundamentally different from the orthodox conductor’s contribution to the musicking process.[17] Unlike the clearly-defined boundaries of the conductor's job, the Soundpainter's task may subsume the role of conductor, composer, or performer to varying degrees in the same instant, the boundaries of which may shift from moment to moment as the music unfolds.

Despite the improvised nature of a Soundpainting performance and the amount of freedom allotted to the participants, it should be emphasized that the gestures of this form of spontaneous musicking are very precise indeed.[18] While the ensemble's musical journey may eventually reach a hitherto uncharted destination, the gestures involved in getting there are designed to be unambiguous, to be delivered after the Soundpainter has acquired a thorough knowledge of their execution through diligent practice. While the gestures of Soundpainting brook no ambiguity in themselves, their interpretation by the performers involved allows room for a wide range of musical results, from quite specific details as in <play a long Ab pianissimo> to a much more general gesture, such as <improvise freely>.

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[16] The comparison is between orchestral music and free improvisation.
[17] This is not to suggest that WEAM somehow is lacking in authenticity as compared with Soundpainting, but rather that the rules and results of their respective games are different.
[18] Thompson emphasized the need for precision in signing the gestures throughout the workshops that the author attended (Paris, March 2003).

The way in which this form of musicking is generated by a set of physical gestures suggests that it is open to analysis on the most immediate level as a semiotic system, in which the performers respond to Thompson's sign language on the basis of a shared understanding of what a given sign means. In this view, the gestures of the Soundpainting language themselves may be categorized as first-order phenomena, in other words, as uninterpreted data.[19] Acknowledging the different musical results of each activity, Soundpainting has more in common than one might have imagined with orthodox conducting. The crucial difference for the author lies in the opportunities for indeterminacy provided by Thompson's language, opportunities for what Heble, referring to the music of the Art Ensemble of Chicago (AEC), has termed "impromptu explorations of a semiotic freedom" (2000:72).

In this sense, the author asserts that Soundpainting interrogates Western art music's necessary separation of the roles of performer and conductor, as both interact in the live moment of making music, foreshadowing Pierce's term (section 4.1), "in character." The signs of Soundpainting have the potential to set in motion an infinite number of such spontaneously invented musical moments. The Soundpainter's task is not to edit or comment on or repress such moment-to-moment events but to allow them to unfold without interference. This requires respect for the performer's contribution, in whatever situation.[20]

The key issue is that the Soundpainting experience (from the vantage point of conductor or performer) tends to lead the participant into the fundamental issues of musicking. There are no mistakes, only the subjective expression of

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[19] Heylighen and Joslyn distinguish between first-order and second-order cybernetics on the following basis (2001:3-4): "An engineer, scientist, or 'first-order' cybeneticist, will study a system as if it were a passively, objectively given 'thing,' that can be freely observed, maipulated, and taken apart. A second-order cyberneticist working with an organism or social system, on the other hand, recognizes that system as an agent in its own right, interacting with another agent, the observer."

[20] It is regarded as bad etiquette in Soundpainting to signal "silence" to a performer in the midst of an improvised solo, for example.

the tasks at hand. The conductor might ask of himself: Are my gestures clear and comprehensible to all present? The performer might ask: Do I understand what is required of me within the boundaries of the sign-system, as I have interpreted it? Essentially, the system operates effectively if there is a shared semiotic musicking system in place.

In Soundpainting, the separation of conductor from performer (a necessary element in orthodox conducting) dissolves into a collaborative experience of musicking. Thompson[21] points out that what is of primary concern here is the "communal experience." The value of this experience lies precisely in Soundpainting's potential adaptability to different levels of musical skill. Children, for instance, as well as musicians who do not have the reading or technical skills of orchestral players, can participate in a performance in a somewhat less threatening musical environment than that of the orchestra.[22]

The Soundpainter requires, as a consequence, a degree of alertness to the cultural differences, expectations, and competencies embodied in the disparate sound potentialities at hand. In this situation, the Soundpainter must manage such variables as divergent levels of training, skill, acculturation, and musical talent so as to produce a cohesive performance or product. To some extent these variables are taken care of by Thompson's emphasis on process rather than product.

1.5.6 The Soundpainter as ensemble director

This study of a contemporary form of spontaneous music-making called Soundpainting, while conscious of the difficulties in comparing orthodox conducting with such a manifestation of late twentieth century cultural activity as Soundpainting, needs nonetheless to take account of some obvious

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[21] Author's interview with Walter Thompson, Paris 2003.
[22] During the Grahamstown National Youth Jazz Festival in 2004 and 2006, the author directed two Soundpainting ensembles with participants ranging in age from 13-18 years.

surface similarities between these approaches to musicking. In each case, specific elements[23] of the musical journey are entrusted to a single person in the figure of the conductor or Soundpainter. This individual is responsible for managing both the on-stage performance, as well as the rehearsal time allocated to the musicians in such a way as to generate the best performance possible in the most time-efficient manner.

The Soundpainter controls the flow of the music by using physical movements of his or her body which suggest a course of action for the musicians to follow: for example, a movement of the arms and body in a certain direction may suggest an increase in tempo or a diminution of volume. In orthodox conducting, these movements may provide additional interpretive information to the members of the orchestra, which supplements that contained in the symbolic language of the score; in Soundpainting, these movements, in appearance very different, confirm memorized responses on the part of the musicians to the Soundpainter's instructions. A comparative study between these two modes of musicking is therefore appropriate to this research because "the closest thing" to Soundpainting (on the physical level of what is actually taking place) is orthodox conducting.

These physical similarities notwithstanding, the repertoire of these two approaches to musicking is very different, and, obviously therefore, the results obtained (what kind of music is produced by these activities). The different types of music so resulting, in turn, confirm that WEAM conducting and Soundpainting have very different agendas and audiences. The fundamental agenda of WEAM conducting is to conform to the intentions of the composer as manifested in the symbolic language of the score as accurately as possible, and achieving this aim must of necessity vest control in the conductor's hands or baton.

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[23] As Thompson suggests (author's interview), the conductor "improvises" for the most part only with the elements of tempo and dynamics.

For the above reasons, the author limits the field of study mostly to these forms of music that employ a director, and, as a consequence, situates the essential emphasis on the very complex set of events, which take place during musicking in these two fields. The focus on performance which results from these considerations is then appropriate to the study as it attempts to answer unsolved questions raised during the author's own experience as a performing musician in a variety of musical styles. This suggests a potential area of conflict between the orchestral musician and the improviser, in that the orchestral musician deals mainly with the performance of the music of a particular historical era, in which the symphony orchestra, simply put, takes part both as interpreter and vehicle for a largely tonal repertoire, while the improviser's identity tends to be forged on the spot in a wide variety of social and performance situations, necessitated by the demands of his or her circumstances of employment.[24]

1.6 Chapter divisions

The layout of this thesis is as follows:

Chapter 1 contains introductory material relating to the author's research into Soundpainting as a system for the collaborative creation of music in performance. After discussing the creation-performance-reception framework and comparing the orthodox role of the conductor in Western art music with that of the Soundpainter, the author considers these activities from the viewpoint of the power relations underlying them. The origins of semiotic theory are examined as a starting point, in addition to material relating to some other possible theoretical frameworks for the analysis of improvised

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[24] While it is noted that some compositions for orchestra call for the musicians to improvise and also that some jazz performances are very precisely notated (Duke Ellington's *Suites* for instance), the author aims to limit the discussion to musics that are more or less created in the moment, such as "traditional" jazz, free jazz, and Soundpainting.

music in general, and Soundpainting in particular.

Chapter 2 traces salient developments within critical theory and the philosophy of language as a background to the application of semiotics to notated music. The work of Saussure and Peirce is discussed as the origin of many of the most important theories about language and culture to emerge during the course of the twentieth century. Following Bowen (2001:424-451) and Goehr (1992), the distinction is drawn between music "as work" and music "as event," and the necessity in this thesis for the study of music as performance is highlighted. The implications of this distinction are significant for an understanding of the different set of critical tools required in the case of a spontaneously negotiated type of music such as Soundpainting.

In chapter 3, the author applies a sociolinguistic framework to the analysis of musical performance, especially those performances which depend on improvisation as an organizing principle. The author's aim is to arrive at an approach to the analysis of improvised music that accounts for some of its fluid and spontaneous nature. Considering Soundpainting as a specific case of music as "event," the author next discusses the kind of methods best suited for the analysis of Soundpainting, with a view to suggesting some possible frameworks for analyzing the process of improvisation in general.

In chapter 4, the author considers the metaphorical links between jazz improvisation and language, especially spoken language. The author also examines the tensions that may arise between the individual jazz musician and the norms of other musicians with whom he or she is interacting, as well as the nature of this interaction in relation to the audience's reception of such musicking. Such issues throw into relief the nature of the Soundpainting event as a case of nearly free improvisation, and help to situate Soundpainting at a point on a continuum between organization and total freedom, one of the tenets of the 1960s free jazz movement.

Chapter 5 examines some key concepts in the writings of Bourdieu (1990, 1991), Czikszentmihalyi (1991, 1997), and Sawyer (1999, 2002, 2003a,

2003b, 2006a), in the context of communication, collaboration, and creativity in improvised music. Various theories of communication and creativity are examined so as to examine these processes at work in Soundpainting. The cybernetic theories of Bateson and others are also considered.

Chapter 6 explores the origins and historical background of Soundpainting as a sign-system for improvised musicking, in order to situate Soundpainting in the context of late twentieth-century music performance practice. Examining Soundpainting in some of its manifestations, the author describes what and how Thompson's language communicates.

Chapter 7 suggests some conclusions and recommendations drawn from the author’s research with regard to Soundpainting as a language for live performance. As argued above (section 1.5.5), Soundpainting can provide a positive and non-critical environment for music creation and a supplement to more traditional text-based improvisation methods.

1.7 Methodology

Recalling Thompson's definition (2006) of Soundpainting as a "universal live composing sign language for the performing and visual arts," the author's methodology is to examine various theories of the sign within the broader context of twentieth-century critical theory so as to introduce some key concepts for the analysis of spontaneously created musical performances. These modern theories of signification derive primarily from the work of such authors as Saussure and Peirce, and are later developed in the work of Barthes, Eco, and others. The author draws on key concepts from Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, such as his notions of language as use, the ***language-game***, family resemblances, and Wishart's definitions of conventionalized and direct "utterance" as applied to music.

By drawing on interviews recorded with Thompson in Paris 2003 and the first-hand experience of Thompson's approach to using the gestures as conveyed

in the workshops and performances in which the author took part, the author develops a set of critical tools to analyze and evaluate Soundpainting as a manifestation of late twentieth-century performance practice. Thompson's insights into the history and operations of the system form the kernel of this thesis. Selected Soundpainting works such as Gil Selinger's *Deconstructing Haydn* and Thompson's own *PEXO Symphony* will also form an important component of the discussion.

1.7.1 Survey of scholarship

Semiotics, or the theory of signs, has its modern beginnings[25] in the work of two pioneers, the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. Saussure's thinking led him to an interpretation of the structure of language based on binary oppositions. For Samuels (1999:3):

> Saussure's basic armoury of concepts proceeds in binary oppositions. First, he distinguishes 'synchronic' analysis from 'diachronic.' Synchronic analysis attempts to reconstruct the totality of relations between signifiers in a system at a given moment of time; diachronic analysis traces the evolution of signifiers through time. Secondly, language exists both as an abstract system of rules, which Saussure terms 'langue,' and as particular instances of spoken or written utterance, which he terms 'parole.' Thirdly, the analysis of language must be both 'paradigmatic' and ' syntagmatic.' Paradigms are groups of signs which may theoretically substitute for one another, whereas syntagms are allowable ('grammatical') sequences of signs.

Aston and Savona (1991:5-6) summarize this central oppositional aspect of Saussure's thinking as follows:

> What emerged from Saussure's work was an understanding of language as a sign-system, in which the linguistic sign was further presented in binary terms as signifier and signified, or 'sound-image' and 'concept.'

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[25] Theories of signification (how words and other signs convey meaning) have been a central concern of Western philosophical inquiry since ancient times. Early formulations of semiotic theory are found in Greek philosophy and the later work of Locke.

> The two sides of the linguistic sign are arbitrary, which enables language to be a self-regulating, abstract system, capable of transformation.

Peirce's work, on the other hand, revolves around a tripartite approach, one of the most widely known examples of which is his concept of icon, index, and symbol, where icon indicates a sign linked by resemblance to its signified, index, one which "points to" its object, and symbol, one where the connection is a matter of convention. In this instance Aston and Savona's (1991:6) citations of photograph, smoke as related to fire, and the dove as a symbol of peace are useful examples of each concept.

These two interpretations of language as a sign-system soon found application in the fields of theatre (the Prague structuralists), literary criticism (Barthes and Eco), and analysis and theory of music (Agawu, Nattiez, Tarasti, and Monelle, to name a few). Monelle's seminal work, *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music* (1992), ranges widely from discussions of intonation theories[26] to analyses of popular music, and has proved to be influential in bringing semiotic concepts into musicology, while such writers as Tarasti (1987), Agawu (1991), and Samuels (1999) are chiefly concerned with the application of semiotics to the notated music of composers such as Sibelius, Wagner, Mozart, and Mahler. For the most part, semiotic theory as analytical methodology has been applied to music where the score is of necessity a central structural element of the musical event.

1.7.2 Theoretical frameworks

As Soundpainting consists for the most part of improvised music which functions without a score, it may be more suited to the type of popular music analysis as seen in Hamm (1992) and Tagg (1999). This type of analysis, while acknowledging semiotics as a point of departure, also takes cognizance of the fact that the spontaneous creation of music is a part of everyday human

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[26] These apply to the work of Asafiev with regard to the relationship between intonation and meaning in language and not theories about musical intonation as such.

activity, as is concert music in its customarily more formal setting. Small's notion of "musicking" is an important conceptual tool, as it emphasizes the activity of creation rather than the product generated by such activity. Such an emphasis recognizes the spontaneous and provisional nature of improvisation, and that "meaning," *per se*, is generated by the human beings that bring such music to realization.

As Ramanna (1998:2) states it:

> Music is significant precisely because of its meaningful inter-connectedness with the flux of everyday life. As such, we need to be cognisant of the people actually composing, performing, recording, producing, and listening to this music. To write meaningfully about music, I think, is to write with an awareness of the actual human beings producing and consuming it.

Ramanna's important notion (1998:213-238) of "***discourse*** of place"[27] emphasizes that variables such as geographical locale, levels of skill, and diversity of musical backgrounds are factors, which affect the activities of creation, mediation, and reception in the musicking process. Such variables will obviously have an important bearing on the qualities performers bring to any live performance, but become especially important in improvised music like Soundpainting, because quite literally no one knows what the outcome will be in advance. In these circumstances, trust between the Soundpainter and the ensemble and a willingness to "go with the flow" are imperative. Unlike an orchestral performance, in Soundpainting, there is no overt map provided for the performers, no parts or score to guide the way.[28]

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[27] Ramanna (1998:216) views this notion as consisting of two questions: "1) Where is the music heard? How do its meanings emerge and evolve in relation to the venues in which it is performed/heard?" and "2) Is Durban a place of any significance in terms of the forms which the music takes? Would the music be different if it had been performed/composed in Johannesburg or Cape Town, New York or Reykjavik?"

[28] During both performances in Paris in March 2003, the author observed that Thompson at times consulted a list of the signs he had explained and rehearsed during the workshops. When asked if he was using this as a plan of action for the compositions, he made it clear that the list was merely there to prevent him from signing a gesture that the ensemble had not prepared in advance.

"Discourse of place," as theorized by Ramanna, further implies that no musicking takes place in a vacuum. His study describes the reactions of performers and audience members alike to the musical event: not only to the music as first-order event, but to the entire web of relations from which the music (and the social environment from which it springs) is constructed. This web or network, Ramanna argues, is intersubjective, in that it consists of a collectively negotiated understanding between audience and performers of the mostly unfamiliar territory[29] traversed during a performance by Ramanna's group Mosaic.

1.7.3 Theories of improvisation

While Soundpainting may at times draw from genres as diverse as Western art music,[30] experimental music, minimalism, free jazz, or even the local music of South Africa,[31] its main area of activity is that of improvised music. Defining what is understood by improvisation begins with the distinction between the pragmatics of the art and what might be termed its philosophical and political implications.

By pragmatics the author has in mind the wealth of practical method books available, whose main aim is to assist the student of improvisation in the process of language acquisition. This process of learning the language is often presented in notated form, showing (for the most part) little evidence of engagement with current debates around the place of improvisation in the wider context of critical theory. This is perhaps to be expected, since many of the authors of such pedagogical methods are first and foremost practical musicians, and not theoreticians of jazz studies as a discipline.

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[29] The repertoire of this group consisted mainly of original compositions drawing from a hybrid of jazz and Indian music performed on acoustic instruments at relatively low volume levels.
[30] Gil Selinger's *Deconstructing Haydn* has been mentioned earlier with reference to the use of <palettes>.
[31] In Jeanneau's workshops in Pretoria we used Abdullah Ibrahim's piece *Mannenberg* as a <palette>.

The aim and object of many such methods is to expose the student of improvisation to discrete elements of the language (such as phrasing, for example) and to assist novices in the internalization of key elements of the vocabulary of the genre under discussion. Methods by musicians such as Lateef (1975), Baker (1987a, 1987b, 1987c), Steinel (1995), Voelpel (2001), Sher and Johnson (2005), and Evans (2006a, 2006b) exemplify the practical side of this process of language acquisition. Where theoretical elements are employed in such methods, they are largely concerned with the musical relationship between the horizontal (melodic) element and the vertical (harmonic) one, so as to assist the novice in making the appropriate note choices.

In tonal improvisation, the appropriate note choices are governed by a protocol known as the ***chord scale***, which codifies the relationship between the horizontal and vertical elements in a systematic way. By analyzing the harmonic implications of the chord progression of a given piece in advance, the novice improviser is able to choose the appropriate chord scales to assist him or her in soloing over such sections of the piece where this is called for. With practice and familiarity, this procedure becomes internalized, and the fluency of the improvisation gains in leaps and bounds. In jazz parlance, great improvisers so demonstrate their "chops," a term which implies both fluency and technical mastery of their instrument of choice.

Improvisation can also however be theorized from a rather more abstract vantage point, a political/philosophical one (in which it is conceived of as linked to the negotiation of identity). By conceiving of improvisation as a social activity, the "new jazz studies" draw on developments in critical theory to demonstrate how performers interrogate subjectivity in the course of performance. This new approach to jazz scholarship finds expression in the work of such critics as Paul Berliner (1994), Ingrid Monson (1996, 1998), Dana Reason (2004), Robert O'Meally *et al.* (2004), George Lewis (2000, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d), and Ajay Heble (2000), who underscores the necessity of exploring the links between jazz studies and critical theory as

follows (2000:12):

> By tracing particular aspects in the history and development of jazz from its origins to the present day, we can observe the ways in which fundamental changes have taken place both in theories about jazz and in theories about language (and its relation to social realities). Similar kinds of reorientations of interpretive strategies in these adjacent (and, indeed, interpenetrating) discourses of jazz and literary theory suggest to me that much might be gained through a rigorous attempt to theorize the history of jazz in relation to the broader debates about language, culture, and identity that get played out in the history of contemporary critical theory.

On a more prosaic level perhaps, improvising is also often viewed as akin to conversation, not only by theorists, but also by musicians themselves. The discourse of improvisation, the author will argue, is pervaded by metaphors of music as speech and/or narrative. As Kane (2006:50) states:

> Improvisation is, after all, a language. And like language, a significant amount of time is necessary for students to develop confidence and technical proficiency needed to communicate improvisationally through a musical instrument.

Kane uses the metaphor of improvisation as language to reinforce a common idea that both music (in this instance, improvised music) and language communicate something. Kane's metaphor is predicated on the idea that scales (and, in particular, the object of his discussion,[32] the blues scale) possess the ability to convey meaning. As he states it (*ibid.*): "Students continue to fixate on the blues scale (even after having been introduced to more interesting melodic/harmonic alternatives) because they can hear its inherent communicative qualities." This raises a vexing question at the forefront of the new jazz studies, namely: How and what can such musical materials as scales be said to communicate?

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[32] Kane's argument hinges on the suitability of the blues scale as a starting point for novice improvisers, one of the most useful characteristics of this scale being its *holus-bolus* applicability to the harmonic structure of the blues. As he suggests (2006:50): "The blues scale also offers students the opportunity to explore improvisation without regard to correct or incorrect note choices. In other words, every note in the blues scale sounds good over a blues form."

Part of the answer to this question may lie with the notion of signifyin(g), a concept of Henry Louis Gates, which in turn is connected to the manipulation of language for the purpose of subverting the *status quo*. Theorizing a link between music and literary language (as in "the blues aesthetic and the African-American signifying tradition"), Ayana Smith (2005:179) notes:

> Both the blues aesthetic and the African-American signifying tradition have engendered a diverse array of new critical approaches to African-American literature. Many of these approaches pertinent to literary studies are also applicable to music. Since the very nature of the blues incorporates an oral form of literacy, it is only natural that commonalities should exist between these two art forms.

So saying, Smith finds a degree of common ground between two artistic practices on the basis of their grounding in an oral tradition. In this regard, Roach has employed Ngugi wa'Thiongo's term "orature," defined as (1995:45): "The range of cultural forms invested in speech, gesture, song, dance, storytelling, proverbs, customs, rites, and rituals." By placing value on such a range of cultural forms, these authors valorize the oral as cultural practice. Similarly, Sawyer (2002:32) defines one of the key characteristics of improvisation as its manifestation in "an oral performance, not a written product."

The key concern of this section might be simply phrased as this question: How do musicians learn to improvise? The answer is on the one hand, by engaging with music on a "pre-literate" basis, acquiring musical skills by ear, and, on the other, for "schooled" musicians, by learning through such methods as have been discussed. While access to such methods obviously presupposes a reasonable degree of musical literacy, it is important to note that Soundpainting does not require the ability to read music as a prerequisite for performance.

1.7.4 Group improvisation as a collaborative process

Sawyer highlights the collaborative element of improvisation in stating

(1999:202):

> Socioculturalists study multiple levels simultaneously by choosing as their unit of analysis the micro-processes of interaction during specific events. I believe this is the only way to understand group improvisation fully—its moment-to-moment unpredictability, its collaboratively created nature, its constant dialectic between individual creative actions and the collaboratively created flow of the improvisation.

Sawyer's studies have included children's games, improvised comedy, jazz performance, and everyday conversation, all of which share an improvised character. What is at stake for Sawyer in his examination of "the micro-processes of interaction" are three elements that unite such practices: their unpredictability, their collaborative nature, and the way in which the dialectic between individual and group is negotiated.

In two critical respects, Sawyer's defining characteristics of group improvisation (collaboration, and the individual/group dialectic) are common to many styles of music, which may or may not include improvisation. For example, the performance of a concerto from the symphonic repertoire by an orchestra obviously depends on collaboration between the conductor and the orchestra for its realization. However, this realization takes place in a highly structured way, both in terms of its dependency on the symbolic language of music notation (that is, what is played), and, with respect to the organizational structure of the orchestra itself, in which the various roles of conductor, soloist, and players (as in the individual/group dialectic) are rigidly defined (that is, how what is played is to be negotiated). One might say that the rigidity of this organizational structure is to ensure that the boundaries of the idiosyncratic, random elements of such performance are similarly patrolled.

In contradistinction to free jazz, in which the random element is allowed to predominate, however, it is possible to theorize Soundpainting as a system for limiting the unpredictable results of such improvisational activities by means of an agreed-upon set of rules, the Soundpainting gestures themselves. Therefore it is necessary to conclude that Soundpainting, although Thompson has obvious sympathies with the aesthetics of free jazz, is not a typical

example of free improvisation, as the presence of the Soundpainter and the repertoire of signals at the Soundpainter's disposal suggest the aptness of Thompson's definition of this form of musicking as "live composition."

1.8 Relevance of this study

In considering how Soundpainting operates, the author adopts a framework drawn from the field of sociolinguistics to situate this study in the context of current debates within critical theory around the notions of performance and agency within certain genres of contemporary music. Thompson's view of Soundpainting as a language forms the point of departure for this argument, which therefore brings attention to the fluid and provisional nature of such music, which is mainly improvised. Although the metaphor of music as language forms a central pillar in the ordinary speech of some musicians, the extent to which this metaphor is a viable one is crucial on the way to an understanding of how musicians negotiate performance.

As a subset of a class of improvised musics, Soundpainting requires a range of cognitive and musical skills from its participants, which are different in some respects from both those brought to a performance of free music or a concerto respectively. The ways in which such skills are acquired and deployed in the realization of such performances are also highly relevant to this study.

Raising the aesthetic problem of Soundpainting as a genre, the author examines the ***grammar*** of related musical styles such as free jazz, "conventional" jazz, as Bailey (1993) categorizes it, with a view to defining how musicians in various historical periods have negotiated the dialectic between individual and group to regain control of the means of musical expression. Soundpainting (whether considered as process or product), in common with other contemporary styles of music and performance, borrows strategies from the postmodern in an often self-reflexive and ironic fashion, thereby exhibiting a somewhat sceptical attitude to its own methods. Some

current studies in the field (Auslander 1999, 2003a, 2003b) view music (and musical performance) as irretrievably "mediatized," and the author sees the necessity of examining this process as part of the way in which such performances are created, negotiated, and received.

The Soundpainting environment is designed to be above all a non-threatening and non-prescriptive one. Being a non-verbal system, it may also serve to transcend the barriers of language and cultural expectation, once the gestures have been learned and rehearsed. Further it provides musicians at whatever level of training and from whatever musical style with room to explore basic or advanced concepts of musicking. In this sense, it has potential as a method for novice improvisers and teachers of improvisation who may feel they lack the skills and resources to tackle the subject. In essence, the relevance of this study lies in the way that Soundpainting allows and fosters a way of interrogating power dynamics in musicking.

1.9 Scope and limits

It is no easy task, given the need for precision in language, even to begin to define such terms as "perform," "improvise," "music," and many others so as to free them of their ideological burden, imported after the fact of performance as a descriptive and sometimes prescriptive tool. Although the author aims to engage with some of these problems on a theoretical level, it seems apparent that these also represent real problems for practical musicians, precisely because they are bound up in a web of signifying rules, the task of much contemporary music scholarship seemingly then the unravelling of these rules of linguistic engagement.

The limitations as evidenced in this study are based on a theoretical survey of two fields of musical discourse, historical moments in time, so to speak, commonly known as Western European art music and jazz. Despite the very

different languages within which their discursive frameworks operate, they do share some significant "isomorphisms," in Hofstadter's terms;[33] for the author, these revolve around the adoption of the tonally-based major-minor system as their harmonic and melodic methodology.[34] In the light of the longevity of this system,[35] and its political and socio-linguistic implications, the author examines various other musical systems that challenge its dominance.

There are a number of lines of argument, or opportunities for debate, emanating from the above statement of limitations. Firstly, following the work of McClary (2000) and Heble (2000), the author suggests that in the performance conventions of tonal music is sometimes exposed the telic and legitimating ideology of tonality as a hegemonic reinforcement of the *status quo*, and further that jazz's adoption of this system problematizes this cultural legacy. This is clearly not an unproblematic encounter, as it is deeply bound up in political responses to the prevailing social circumstances of the time (the legacy of slavery, the civil rights movements of the 1960s, and other controversial issues around the problem of identity formation in the geographically complex locale of the United States).

In the second place, it is part of the author's theorizing around musical language as a vehicle for identity-formation to consider that these rebellions and skirmishes take place through the work of individuals (or groups) at the boundaries of the linguistic ***code*** at work in the music. These solecisms both are grounded in, and chafe against, the animating conventions of the style, for they can only be defined as such with reference to the rules of the existing

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[33] Hofstadter (1999:262) defines isomorphisms (mappings between notational systems) as "information-preserving transformations," suggesting that their operation is "like playing the same melody on two different instruments."
[34] The major-minor system is the common terrain traversed not only by WEAM and "conventional" jazz, but also by popular music to this day, which suggests that this system is not without hegemonic power and longevity.
[35] Obviously, such a broad statement needs qualification, as there are countless examples which prove that the contrary is also true, but the dominance of the language of tonality animates both genres until the appearance of the Tristan chord and the 1959 first recording of free jazz, respectively.

game. It is through the chafing at the boundaries of the language, then, that new musical languages are formed.

Undeniably influenced by such trivial social pursuits as television, fashion, and the music industry as many contemporary musical genres may be, it is part of their agenda of marketing to consider carefully the balance between innovation and repetition. In these operations of what Adorno and Horkheimer referred to as "the culture industry," Adorno was able to detect the fostering of a hegemony[36] based on popular music being the new "opium of the people."[37] Nonetheless, the author is conscious of a certain sympathy with Adorno's position, especially since the focus of this study is on genres of little relative sales volume in the global picture of the music industry. It is possible to find ample evidence of the music industry's manipulation of musical "fashion trends," and the literal manufacture of "boy bands" and the "Idols" phenomenon are obvious confirmations of some of Adorno's pessimism.

This examination of only two sites of performance does not presuppose the hidden attribution of value to either one, or any at all of the numerous genres of music available for study as part of human musicking. Moreover, in practice

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[36] The idea of cultural hegemony originally comes from Antonio Gramsci, and is linked to the Marxist concept of “false consciousness”:

> Gramsci argued that the failure of the workers to make anti-capitalist revolution was due to the successful capture of the workers' ideology, self-understanding, and organizations by the hegemonic (ruling) culture. In other words, the perspective of the ruling class had been absorbed by the masses of workers. In 'advanced' industrial societies hegemonic cultural innovations such as compulsory schooling, mass media, and popular culture had indoctrinated workers to a false consciousness. Instead of working towards a revolution that would truly serve their collective needs (according to Marxists), workers in 'advanced' societies were listening to the rhetoric of nationalist leaders, seeking consumer opportunities and middle-class status, embracing an individualist ethos of success through competition, and/or accepting the guidance of bourgeois religious leaders.

Available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_hegemony.

[37] The quotation is from Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, and reads: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people." Available from http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/31765.html.

there is considerable intersection between these and other styles in this postmodern brave new world, and it is perhaps a characteristic of this ethos that the nature of boundaries themselves is under close scrutiny.

The ***performance artist*** Laurie Anderson sums up the situation[38] in typically laconic fashion in saying: "Postmodernism means never having to change the subject." For the author, this has two implications: subject as in field of interest and subject as human individual. In this view, genre-boundaries or style-boundaries become sites of negotiation with a heavily mediatized world in which access to areas of power is likewise heavily guarded, because there is a great deal of money (sometimes, astronomical amounts) at stake.

In the following chapter, the author provides a survey of scholarship with the aim of examining salient concepts from critical theory as applicable to musical analysis in general, and Thompson's practice of Soundpainting in particular. In so doing, the author develops a theoretical framework, drawing on semiotics and its related potential linguistic and cultural underpinnings, for the explanation of the dynamics and functioning of Soundpainting as a system for the collaborative creation of music in performance.

1.10 Glossary

The author here provides a glossary of terms that may be unfamiliar to the reader, with a view to obviating the inconvenience of extraneous footnotes.

Aporia: Defined as "an irresolvable internal contradiction or logical disjunction in a text, argument, or theory: the celebrated aporia whereby a Cretan declares all Cretans to be liars" (Oxford American Dictionary). The term is also defined in Selden (1989:79) as "infinite regress."

Bebop: (Bop): Peter Gammond defines this form of musicking as follows

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[38] Laurie Anderson, multimedia exhibition, London 1997.

(2002a): "A new style of jazz developed in the 1940s, emphasizing more sophisticated harmonies and rhythms than earlier jazz. It was pioneered by Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Thelonious Monk." Bebop sought to re-establish the African American's position within jazz less as entertainer than as artist.

Bricolage:

> A metaphor introduced by Claude Lévi-Strauss to describe the improvised construction of mythical thought from the heterogeneous, often recycled materials of earlier myths, stories, and experiences. In French, the term refers to the work of a handyman or jack-of-all-trades. Following Jacques Derrida's characterization of bricolage as the condition of all discourse and cultural production (*Writing and Difference*, 1978), it has become a widely used and debated concept.
>
> (Calhoun 2002)

Changes: Short for “chord changes,” this term refers to the harmonic form (chord progression) underpinning the form of a given piece. In tonal jazz, after the initial statement of the theme, each soloist in turn improvises over this harmonic structure, in a practice known as "running the changes."

Chord scale: Pease and Pullig (2001:41) define the chord scale as: “A set of stepwise pitches assigned to a chord symbol to provide a supply of notes compatible with that chord’s sound and its tonal or modal function.” Chord scales in tonal or modal jazz are thus explicitly bound to the harmonic function of the chord in question.

Chorus: As defined by Van Heerden (1996:28): “In jazz performance, one complete cycle of the chord sequence.”

Code: Baldick (1996) describes this in the following terms:

> A shared set of rules or conventions by which signs can be combined to permit a message to be communicated from one person to another; it may consist of a language in the normal sense (e.g. English, Urdu) or of a smaller-scale ‘language’ such as the set of hand-signals, horns,

grimaces, and flashing lights used by motorists.

Conduction: Butch Morris's term for his approach to signal-based directed improvisation. In his own words:

> Conduction (conducted interpretation/ improvisation) is a vocabulary of ideographic signs and gestures activated to modify or construct a real-time musical arrangement or composition. Each sign and gesture transmits generative information for interpretation and provides instantaneous possibilities for altering or initiating harmony, melody, rhythm, articulation, phrasing or form.

Source: http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=689.

Critical theory:

> Critical theory is a general term for new theoretical developments (roughly since the 1960s) in a variety of fields, informed by structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstruction, Marxist theory, and several other areas of thought. It encompasses many related developments in literary theory (which is often a rough synonym) and cultural studies, aesthetics, theoretical sociology and social theory, continental philosophy more generally. Despite the difficulties in defining its boundaries or its origins, some statements can be made about critical theory. It is often informed by postmodern and post-structuralist theory, though it is not strictly postmodernist. Its major concerns are questions of identity, both within the private sphere and within the public sphere, and particularly in questions of dissonance between those two identities. A major focus of critical theory, then, is on the process through which these identities are developed.

Source: http://www.answers.com/critical theory.

Cybernetics: As defined by Gregory (2001):

> The science of control. Its name, appropriately suggested by the mathematician Norbert Wiener (1894–1964), is derived from the Greek for 'steersman', pointing to the essence of cybernetics as the study and design of devices for maintaining stability, or for homing in on a goal or target. Its central concept is *feedback*. Since the 'devices' may be living or man-made, cybernetics bridges biology and engineering.

Différance: With reference to this term in Derrida's strategy of deconstruction,

Sim and Van Loon (2005:89, emphasis in original) state: "He made up this word in French to describe the process by which meaning 'slips' in the act of transmission. Words always contain within themselves traces of other meanings than their assumed primary one. It would probably be better to talk of a *field* of meaning rather than a precise one-to-one correspondence between word and meaning."

Differend: This concept, deriving from Lyotard, is described as follows (Sim and van Loon 2005:97): "Differends are irresolvable disputes in which neither side can accept the terms of reference of the other."

Discourse: For Sardar and van Loon (1999:14), "A discourse consists of culturally or socially produced groups of ideas containing texts (which contain signs and codes) and representations (which describe power in relation to Others). As a way of thinking, a discourse often represents a structure of knowledge and power. A discursive analysis exposes these structures and locates the discourse within wider historical, cultural and social relations."

Form of life: With reference to Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, Hacker describes this in the following terms (2005):

> Wittgenstein employed it to indicate the roots of language and of agreement in application of linguistic rules, in consensual, regular forms of behaviour. This includes natural, species-specific action and response, as well as concept-laden, acculturated activities. Speaking a language is part of a form of life (a culture) and to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life. What has to be accepted, the given, is not the empiricist's mythical sense-data constituting the foundations of knowledge, but forms of life that lie beyond being justified or unjustified.

Free jazz: As defined by Peter Gammond (2002), this term refers to: "The avant-garde jazz style of the 1960s associated with Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, and others, where the performers were given a free reign with regard to tonality and chord sequences. The freedom it accorded resulted in jazz that was extreme even by most modern jazz standards."

Generative grammar: In linguistics, a generative grammar (associated with

Chomsky's work in the field) is defined as: "A type of grammar that describes a language in terms of a set of logical rules formulated so as to be capable of generating the infinite number of possible sentences of that language and providing them with the correct structural description." Source: Oxford American Dictionary.

Gesture: Thompson uses this term in referring to the various signals of the Soundpainting language.

Grammar: Referring to Wittgenstein's use of the term in the context of a set of rules for making sense.

Harmolodics: As defined by McKean (2005): "A form of free jazz in which musicians improvise simultaneously on a melodic line at various pitches. Origin 1970s: coined by the American saxophonist Ornette Coleman (b. 1930) and said to be a blend of *harmony*, *movement*, and *melodic*."

Head: For jazz musicians, the initial statement of the melodic theme.

Horizontal: Melody can be seen as forming a horizontal structure as it unfolds through time.

Jazz: Kennedy 1996 *(etymology obscure)* "A term, which came into general use *c.*1913–15, for a type of music which developed in the Southern States of USA in the late 19th century and came into prominence at the turn of the century in New Orleans, chiefly (but not exclusively) among black musicians. Elements which contributed to jazz were the rhythms of West Africa, European harmony, and American 'gospel' singing."[39]

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[39] In noting that some so-called "jazz" players (whom he interviewed in the course of his research) preferred to be known simply as improvising musicians, Ramanna (1998, 2005) employs the term jazz while conscious of the issues of problematized identities encompassed therein. The author considers jazz (after Lewis 2002, Monson 1996, 1998) as a potential site of resistance or struggle.

Kinesics: "The study of the ways in which people use body movements, for example shrugging, to communicate without speaking." (Encarta Dictionary)

Language-game:

> Wittgensteinian term of art, introduced in *The Blue and Brown Books* when rejecting the calculus model of language which had dominated his *Tractatus*. It highlights the fact that language use is a form of human rule governed activity, integrated into human transactions and social behaviour, context-dependent and purpose relative. Analogies between games and language, playing games and speaking, justify it. Imaginary language-games are introduced as simplified, readily surveyable objects of comparison to illuminate actual language-games, either by way of contrast or similarity.

(Hacker 2005b)

Linguistic turn: As defined by Christopher Norris (2005):

> Collective designation for a range of otherwise quite disparate trends in twentieth-century thought. What they all have in common is an appeal to language, to discourse, or forms of linguistic representation as the furthest point that philosophy can reach in its quest for knowledge and truth. There are no 'facts' outside language, and no 'reality' other than that which presents itself under some linguistic description. Thus philosophers can only be deluded if they seek to render language more accurate or perspicuous by removing its various natural imperfections—ambiguity, metaphor, opaque reference, etc.—and achieving a crystalline transparency of logical form.

Metaphor: 1) Implicit comparison: the application of a word or phrase to somebody or something that is not meant literally, but to make a comparison, for example saying that somebody is a snake 2) Figurative language: all language that involves figures of speech or symbolism and does not literally represent real things 3) Symbol: one thing used or considered to represent another. Source: Encarta Dictionary.

Metonymy: A figure of speech in which an attribute of something is used to stand for the thing itself, such as 'laurels' when it stands for 'glory' or 'brass' when it stands for 'military officers' (Encarta Dictionary).

Modal jazz: George Russell is widely regarded as having brought the modes back into jazz. Historically, modality in jazz improvisation can be traced back to Miles Davis' late 1950s recording *Kind of Blue*, which explores for the first time very simple harmonic structures as vehicles for improvisation.[40]

Paralanguage: Nonverbal vocal elements in communication that may add a nuance of meaning to language as it is used in context, for example tone of voice or whispering (Encarta Dictionary). Also see Bateson (2000).

Performance art: As defined by Oliver Parfitt (2001):

> A term which arose in the late 1960s in an attempt to account for an increasingly diverse range of forms taken by art in that decade. Performance art combined elements of theatre, music, and the visual arts; its deliberate blurring of previously distinct aesthetic categories was intended to focus attention on the relationships between artist, work, and spectator, and to question critical judgements about what does or does not constitute art. In its hostility towards formalism, Performance art related to other contemporary movements, including Conceptual art and Environmental art. It was also closely connected with 'happenings' (the two terms are sometimes used synonymously), but Performance art was usually more carefully planned, and generally did not involve audience participation.

Polysemy: Polysemy is defined as "the coexistence of many possible meanings for a word or phrase" (Oxford American Dictionary).

Semantics: "The relationship of signs to what they stand for" (Hodge 2003).

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[40] *So What*, the album's opening piece, has an AABA harmonic structure as follows:

[A] D-7 (D dorian) (8 bars repeated)
[B] Eb-7 (Eb dorian) (8 bars)
[A] D-7 (D dorian) (8 bars).

Semiotics: "Semiotics and the branch of linguistics known as Semantics have a common concern with the meaning of signs. Semantics focuses on what words mean while semiotics is concerned with how signs mean" (Hodge 2003).

Slippage: "When meaning moves due to a signifier calling on multiple signifieds. Also known as skidding" (Hodge 2003).

Social Semiotics: As defined by Hodge (2003), this area of study within linguistics "has taken the structuralist concern with the internal relations of parts within a self-contained system to the next level, seeking to explore the use of signs in specific social situations".

Structuralism is "an analytical method used by many semioticians. Structuralists seek to describe the overall organization of sign systems as languages. They search for the deep and complex structures underlying the surface features of phenomena" (Hodge 2003).

Swing: Widely considered as one of the defining characteristics of the jazz language, swing is a rhythmic approach to phrasing in which a pair of eighth-notes is interpreted as two parts of a triplet phrased short-long.

Synecdoche: A figure of speech in which the word for part of something is used to mean the whole, for example ‘sail’ for ‘boat’, or vice versa. (Encarta Dictionary)

Syntax: As defined by Hodge (2003): "The formal or structural relations between signs."

Trope: A figurative or metaphorical use of a word or expression, as in: "He used the two-Americas trope to explain how a nation free and democratic at home could act wantonly abroad." A conventional idea or phrase, as in: "Her suspicion of ambiguity was more a trope than a fact." (Oxford American Dictionary)

Chapter 2 : Music as sign-system—a survey of scholarship

The best way to predict the future is to invent it.

(Sinister CIA-type character, *The X-Files*)

For surely we want to make a new start which is no longer ideological, essentialist, racist or secretly nationalistic. In other words, a new beginning which is inherently neither consciously nor unconsciously making differences and evaluations.

(Tarasti 1997:180)

2.1 Introduction: Semiotics and linguistic theory

Semiotics tells us things we already know in a language we will never understand.

(Whannel, in Hodge 2003)

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a theoretical framework, drawing on semiotics and its related potential linguistic and cultural underpinnings, for the explanation of the dynamics and functioning of Soundpainting as a system for the collaborative creation of music in performance. An overview of contemporary critical theory provides the reader with a survey of some of the main currents of this thinking as a background to the application of semiotics to notated music. The author contends that semiotics, while very much a part of contemporary linguistic theory, has certain limitations as far as the analysis of improvised music is concerned, especially when such analysis is harnessed to a focus on musical works as formal objects.

The work of Saussure and Peirce is discussed as the origin of many of the most important contemporary theories about language and culture to emerge during the course of the twentieth century. Following from an examination of Saussure and Peirce, the author considers the applications of structuralist thinking as evidenced by early Barthes and goes on to examine poststructuralism as a shift in Barthes's thinking from work to text. The purpose of this examination is to provide a theoretical foundation for analyzing improvisation with reference to Barthes's new understanding of textuality, as relevant to contemporary creative practice.

Following Small (1998) and Bowen (2001), the distinction is drawn between music "as text" and music "as event," and the necessity for the study of the performance elements of improvised music in general, and Soundpainting in particular, is highlighted. Considering Soundpainting as a specific case of music as "event," the author next discusses the kind of methods best suited for the analysis of a Soundpainting performance, with a view to suggesting some possible models for analyzing the process of improvisation in general.

The Greek word *sêmeîon,* meaning sign, forms the root of both semiology and semiotics, these terms being understood as the science of the sign. Both terms are used more or less interchangeably, with Continental philosophers tending to employ the term "semiology" and their American counterparts generally favouring "semiotics."[41] Underlying these terms are two different structural conceptions of language and how linguistic signs operate, these differences being understood as a dyadic/oppositional (in Saussure) or triadic (in Peirce) conception of the nature of the sign. Since its beginnings in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, semiotics (not without its share of controversy) has gained ground in many areas of research and in the fields of zoosemiotics and medicine has moved into the natural and health sciences.

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[41] Monelle (1992:26) has a detailed discussion of the history of these terms and suggests using them as follows: "Semiotics" and "semiologist" preferred to "semiology" and "semiotician."

As David Clarke states (1996:5):

> Semiotics itself—the study of signs, of how things come to be meaningful—is a discipline that has strong connections with linguistics. Although its historical roots can be traced back to Aristotle, its entry into the eventual mainstream of contemporary ideas can be traced back to the early part of the 20th century, one of its two principal originators being the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1915).

With regard to Soundpainting, the author has emphasized the fact that it operates first and foremost as a system of gestures for creating music. On this basis, as already suggested, it shares certain similarities with similar systems like orchestral conducting, both of which may be characterized as "systems of signs," whose primary purpose, like other sign-systems, is the communication of ideas.

In discussing the work and influence of these two great intellectual masters, the author aims to reveal some of the richness as well as the limitations of certain semiotic strategies. Bouissac (2003), quoting from Jakobson's *Essais de linguistique générale*, highlights a potential danger of such strategies as follows:

> Those attempts made to construct a linguistic model without any connection to a speaker or a listener and which therefore hypostatize a code detached from actual communication, risk reducing language to a scholastic fiction.

Jakobson highlights a difficulty in the separation of language from the context in which communication is taking place. It seems reasonable to propose that Jakobson is suggesting that the act of communicating may (and often does) include non-verbal elements, which may influence the content and context of the message. By way of an example, people talking on mobile phones still have an inclination to using the same types of kinesic hand gestures that are used in the presence of a real listener during a face-to face conversation.

These gestures may be used for rhetorical purposes, so as to persuade the

unseen listener, or to reinforce a point being made, or as part of the complex set of what Wittgenstein[42] has referred to as language-games. The danger here seems to be the privileging of codes over the context in which they are being used, to the exclusion of essential non-verbal elements such as hand gestures and facial expressions, which "add value" to the communication process.

To some extent this may be seen as one of the flaws in some semiotic analyses of music. Some of these formalist analyses work by focusing attention on the symbolic language (i.e. notation) as opposed to the contexts in which they operate, which contexts in turn seem to be bound up in various discursive and ideological frameworks, making the apparent scientific objectivity of these analyses somewhat spurious.

2.1.1 Saussure's concept of language as a sign-system

> Language is a system of signs that express ideas, and is therefore comparable to a system of writing, the alphabet of deaf-mutes, symbolic rites, polite formulas, military signals, etc. But it is the most important of all these systems.
>
> (Saussure 1998:77)

The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure is regarded (with C. S. Peirce) as one of the two pioneers of twentieth-century linguistic theory. His *Course in General Linguistics* (1910-11) begins by defining language ("the most important of all these systems") as a sign-system for the purpose of human communication. *Langue* ("language"), in Saussure's terms, refers to the social system of language, "the shared system which we (unconsciously) draw upon as speakers" (Selden 1989:52), while *parole* ("word") represents the individual utterance in the form of speech or writing.[43] The linguistic sign is made up of

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[42] The author will discuss some elements of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language as applicable to Soundpainting in section 2.1.6.
[43] "Saussure made what is now a famous distinction between language and speech.

"signifier" (a phonetic sound) and a "signified" (the concept to which it refers). The phonetic sound and its concept, for Saussure, exist in a close relationship, something akin to the two sides of a piece of paper.

> Saussure postulated the existence of this general science of signs, or Semiology, of which linguistics forms only one part. Semiology therefore aims to take in any system of signs, whatever their substance and limits; images, gestures, musical sounds, objects, and the complex associations of all these, which form the content of ritual, convention or public entertainment: these constitute, if not *languages*, at least *systems of signification*.[44]
>
> (Hodge 2003, emphases in original)

Hodge here alerts the reader to the fact that Saussure's use of the term "sign" includes not only signs in the obvious visual sense of traffic signs, for instance, but also musical sounds as such. Moreover, and importantly, semiology is also concerned with the relations between signs in whatever signification can, and indeed does, take place; this idea of the sign as bound up in its context will become vital to the author's discussion of sociosemiotics (as discussed in section 4.1.3). Saussure further establishes two important principles: firstly, that the connection between signifier (sound-image) and signified (concept) is arbitrary, and secondly, that the signifier is linear and capable of analysis as part of a synchronic or diachronic study of language.[45]

The first principle accounts for the different names in various languages that point to the signified "dog." Dogs are assigned different signifiers depending

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Language refers to the system of rules and conventions which is independent of, and pre-exists, individual users; **Speech** refers to its use in particular instances. Applying the notion to semiotic systems in general rather than simply to language, the distinction is one between *code* and *message*, *structure* and *event* or *system* and *usage* (in specific texts or contexts). According to the Saussurean distinction, in a semiotic system such as cinema, any specific film is the *speech* of that underlying system of cinema *language*." (Hodge 2003, emphases in original)

[44] Whether musical systems, as such, can be construed as languages is still a topic of debate, to which the author returns in section 4.1.

[45] An important consequence of Saussure's thinking is that if a potential signifier does not bring about or trigger a signified or concept, then it does not operate as a sign.

on the language (system) in use, for example, "chien" in French or "ntja" in isiZulu. Signs are defined, moreover, as much by what they are not as what they are, that is to say, a dog is not a cat or a rabbit. The arbitrary nature of signs, however, does not imply that the speaker is at liberty to choose any signifier at will, because “the individual does not have the power to change a sign in any way once it has become established in the linguistic community" (Saussure 1998:79).[46]

The arbitrariness of the sign opens up a continuum of interpretive possibilities, ranging from the individual and idiosyncratic to the communal or collective. The potential conflicts implicit in such a range of possible interpretations are dramatized in tensions between the individual and the community, or, in Saussurean terms, between *parole* and *langue*.

Saussure’s second principle is represented graphically as the intersection of a vertical (synchronic) “axis of simultaneities” (AB), standing for “the relations of coexisting things from which the intervention of time is excluded,” with a horizontal (diachronic) “axis of successions” (CD), “on which only one thing can be considered at a time but upon which are located all the things on the first axis and all their changes” (Saussure 1998:81). Thus CD represents a particular moment or time-slice against the background AB of the historical evolution of a linguistic system. Saussure goes on to compare the functioning of language with a game of chess, where the state of the chessboard at any given moment represents a synchronic state governed by the diachronic rules of the game (1998:82):

> First, a state of the set of chessmen corresponds closely to a state of language. The respective value of the pieces depends on their position

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[46] Saussure's assertion has clear implications for theorizing about matters artistic in the twentieth century. Modernist movements like dadaism, futurism, and surrealism may be said to have interrogated the individual's "right of access to the signifier," in terms of the new art languages that were being developed. In the context of free improvisation and Soundpainting, evidence is found of a move toward the "democratization" of the signifier.

> on the chessboard just as each linguistic term derives its value from its opposition to all the other terms.
>
> In the second place, the system is always momentary; it varies from one position to the next. It is also true that values depend above all else on an unchangeable convention, the set of rules that exists before a game begins and persists after each move. Rules that are agreed upon once and for all exist in language too; they are the constant principles of semiology.

Extending Saussure's analogy to music, a similar situation obtains in the difference between a chord (a simultaneous vertical occurrence of more than one note) and a sustained arpeggio of the same chord (which the listener perceives as discrete elements forming a chord over time.) This kind of low-level structural analysis of musical events is seen in the work of Heinrich Schenker.

To summarize, the essential points sustaining Saussure's theory of the sign as applied to language are as follows:

- Language is one of many sign-systems used by human beings for communication purposes.
- *Langue* denotes language as a signifying system with a set of rules, with *parole* as the individual (and thereby idiosyncratic) utterances that provide instances of the system.
- A sign for Saussure consists of two components: the signifier (sound-image) and the signified (concept to which the signifier refers).
- Language can be studied "synchronically" at a particular historical moment and "diachronically" as it develops through time.
- Saussure also distinguishes between paradigms (signs that can be substituted for one another) and syntagms (those that form sequences of signs by association).

As stated by Williams (2001:23): "Taken all together, these claims convey language as a web in which meanings and functions are generated by networked relations." This was to prove a powerful new way of understanding language (as being much more fluid and arbitrary than had hitherto been imagined) and paved the way for the significant movements in critical theory that followed.

2.1.2 Peirce's typology of signs

The American philosopher,[47] mathematician, logician, and polymath[48] Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) proposed a general theory of signs, in which the trichotomy of icon, index, and symbol has a prominent place. However, in general, Peirce's conception of semiotics is a more complex one than that of Saussure, as it rests on the philosophical foundation of the categories of "firstness," "secondness," and "thirdness," which underpin Peirce's entire theory.

The category of "firstness," in Peirce's view, suggests immediacy (as in a quality, colour, or timbre), while "secondness" contains a more metaphorical component (often linked to categories like space, time, and causality) and "thirdness" indicates an element of convention. Cumming (2000:72-104) discusses the application of these central elements of Peirce's thought to musicking from the viewpoint of a WEAM performer. Although Bouissac (2003) has dismissed the distinction between Saussure's dichotomy and Peirce's trichotomy as "sterile and pointless," in so doing, he minimizes the importance of this crucial conceptual difference between the two theories of the sign.

For Samuels, the *signifiant* (signifier) and *signifié* (signified), as theorized by Saussure, find their counterparts in Peirce's terms, "representamen" and "object," respectively. However, Peirce introduces a third idea missing from Saussure's view of language in the form of the concept of the "interpretant,"

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[47] As Buchler states (1955:ix): "Peirce was both natural scientist and close student of the history of philosophy—a rare combination. But the significance of this is dwarfed by the further fact that that he could critically utilize his historical study toward the achievement of imaginative depth, and his experimental science toward the development of a powerful logic. The striking originality of his thought thus grows from a broad and solid foundation, and it is the product not only of his native intellectual genius but of his moral conviction that philosophy must build as well as repair."

[48] Defined as "a person of wide-ranging knowledge or learning." (Oxford American Dictionary)

which is defined as "the component of the sign which serves to unite the two halves of the Saussurean opposition." According to Samuels (1999:3), Peirce was famously alert to a logical consequence of this third component:

> Peirce's recognition that an interpretant may come to function as a representamen in a new sign, requiring an interpretant in its own right. The concept of the 'interpretant' is crucial in this model, for it names the element in the process of creating meaning which is omitted by Saussure. Peirce insists that meaning is created by the receiver of the message, rather than being self-evident; we 'make sense' of a text.

The consequences of this view for Peirce were the establishment of a potentially infinite chain of signifiers, giving rise to his notion of "unclosed semiosis." The similarities between this notion and the semiotic concept of ***slippage*** seem evident, in that both interrogate assumptions with regard to the finality of meaning in a given text.

Cumming (2000:48), while emphasizing the pragmatic nature of Peirce's philosophy, similarly lays stress on the contingent nature of the structures of meaning that are generated in human behaviour:

> In the pragmatic philosophy developed by Peirce, meanings are relational structures that emerge in active behavior, as an individual responds to some aspect of the environment. Neither pure relational patterns nor purely sensuous data are possible, as both are mixed at every level and evident in functional differences of behavior.

In their discussion of the main trends in musical semiotics as summarized in Monelle (1992), Van Baest and Van Driel (1995:3) state the case as follows:

> Within this range of approaches, a Peirce-based form of musical semiotics can be found as well. Although Monelle uses different elements of Peirce's semiotics, his main interest goes out to the relation between a sign and its object with its well known trichotomy *icon-index-symbol*. Because Monelle's study can be considered as a kind of state of the art, it can be concluded that only a small part of Peirce's philosophy has found its way into the field of musical semiotics: it seems that only the trichotomy icon-index-symbol has found its place here.

2.1.2.1 Icon

Tagg (1999:4) defines the Peircean icon as follows: “Icons are signs bearing physical resemblance to what they represent.” He goes on to divide icons into two types, the first type (as in photographs or painting in the orthodox, "representational" sense) bearing a direct (or “striking”) resemblance to what it represents, whereas, in the second type of icon, the resemblance (as in maps and certain types of diagram) is indirect or structural.

Tagg concludes his discussion by including the symbolic language of musical notation in the category of Peircean icons: “The representation of rising and falling pitch, of legato slurs and staccato dots in musical notation can also be qualified as iconic.”[49] Cumming (2000:86) defines the icon (in the context of its ground of signification[50]) as bearing "a putative likeness to some object (either 'naturally' or by convention)," but for her the problem turns around the definition of "likeness," for which Eco finds no less than five possibilities. She concludes by stating (2000:87): "If this multiplicity is problematic in a general discussion of the icon, it is even more intractable when the signifying thing is an element in a piece of instrumental music."

2.1.2.2 Index

The relationship of the index to what it represents is somewhat less direct. The index contains the added philosophical concepts of space, time, and/or causality, as when dark clouds suggest the possibility of rain. Tagg (1999:4)

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[49] The author finds this definition of Tagg's somewhat problematic, as discussed in the following section. Peirce's definition of the legisign in the sense of a "conventional representation" (Cumming 2000:83) seems more appropriate in this context, suggesting as it does the necessary element of agreement. If Tagg's definition is correct, then symbolic languages in general (such as those of mathematics or physics) could also be qualified as iconic, which would exclude the strongly conventional element which operates within them.

[50] In other words, in the connection between the Sign (Representamen) and its Object.

stresses the importance of the Peircean indexical sign for music semiotics, in saying: "Indeed, all musical sign types can be viewed as indexical in this Peircean sense. Verbal language's metonymies and synecdoches are indexical and therefore useful concepts in music semiotics."

There seems to be a concealed problem in Tagg's logic here on two counts: firstly, he begins by classifying certain elements of musical notation as iconic and, as a result of this procedure, views all musical sign types (in which are surely included such notational elements as legato and staccato) as indexical. Then he compares "all musical sign types" with figures of speech (***metonymy*** and ***synecdoche***) on the basis of their common indexical nature and brings those procedures into the semiotic analysis of music as "useful concepts." It seems to this writer that while using procedures derived from language may well be a valid analytical strategy, Tagg's use of the word "therefore" assumes a similarity between music and language that is by no means proven at this juncture in this notoriously difficult debate.

While Tagg's definition of index is in general agreement with other writers such as Cumming and Monelle, a problem reveals itself when Tagg employs linguistic concepts to describe musical notation on the basis of their common indexical character. Without the benefit of musical notation, Tagg would perforce have to be a great deal more circumspect in this regard and decide which elements of *the sound of a musical performance* might exhibit similarities to language. It seems to the author that the way to do this is to use Cumming's idea of timbral iconicity[51] in a fairly restricted manner so as to avoid the potential pitfalls of a direct comparison between music and language.

2.1.2.3 Symbol

The symbol for Peirce is the third category of sign, in which the relationship of

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[51] Section 3.4.1 contains a more extensive discussion of this topic.

signifier to signified is arbitrary or conventional. In this category are found the words of ordinary language, such as "jazz," "scenario," "blue," "Lincoln Center," "doctoral thesis," and so on. As Wishart suggests (1996:259), there is no necessary connection between such linguistic signs and the properties to which they refer:

> For a language utterance to convey its meaning, the linguistic signs need not reflect in any way the properties of the object to which they refer. There is nothing in common between the word 'red' and the property of redness.

From this exposition what are the implications of this science of the sign for music analysis? Broadly speaking, the semiotic breakthrough in both Saussure and Peirce may be characterized as their attempt "to analyse language as a sign system that constructs meaning, rather than simply reflecting it," as defined by Williams (2001:22). When applied to music, semiotic approaches in the later part of the twentieth century tend to range widely in their subject matter as well as in their degree of scientific rigour.

Dunsby and Whittall stress the potential relativity of semiology as an analytical method in stating (1988:231):

> In discussing Schenker or Schoenberg, pitch-class-set analysis or post-tonal voice-leading, there is an inescapable stage at which we have taken on the responsibility of considering their claims to be true, to be valid, or to be more convincing than any alternative. Semiotics offers something beyond this, a programme for assessing relativities.

2.1.3 Structuralism (revealing deep codes)

Alistair Williams (2001:22) defines structuralism as follows:

> Structuralism might be described as a particular historical branch of semiotics, mainly associated with a French intellectual movement. Beyond this definition, structuralism marks a wider movement of thought in the humanities and social sciences, characterized by the application of scientific rigour to areas that were accustomed to less stringent methodology.

As part of this quest for scientific rigour in the human sciences, the structuralist agenda also sought to purge any suspicion of subjectivity from the matter under investigation. Claude Lévi-Strauss, widely considered as the founder of structural anthropology, shows little interest in the human element in searching for the universal structures underlying some instances of myth when he describes the subject (as quoted in Williams 2001:22) as: “That unbearably spoilt child, who has occupied the philosophical scene for too long now, and prevented serious research through demanding exclusive attention.”

Lévi-Strauss applies structuralist methods to anthropology in his discussion of some indigenous myths of the Americas (*Introduction to a Science of Mythology*). His discussion of the myth of the Sun and the Moon (Williams, q.v.) depends on the assumption of underlying binary oppositions,[52] which articulate and support the common worldwide thematic structures of myth. In examining the *langue* (that is, the system) within which the individual cases (as *parole*) serve as examples, Lévi-Strauss’s structural anthropology takes on a deliberately anti-human and ahistorical stance to get at the "universal truth" existing below the surface.

Attempting to remove the subject from the investigation as a deliberate strategy, however, it might be suggested, is a flawed move, not only from a humanistic, but also a scientific, standpoint. Here the author has in mind Werner Heisenberg’s famous precept of the uncertainty principle in quantum physics. The uncertainty principle basically implies that the observer has an influence on the experiment as a side effect of the very act of observation, and therefore it is impossible in science to get at the results uncontaminated by the scientific process itself.

It is important to note that Heisenberg’s principle was derived from his

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[52] Similarly, for Samuels (1995:3): "Saussure's basic armoury of concepts proceeds in binary oppositions." Samuels (*ibid.*) finds such oppositions underpinning such Saussurean concepts as synchronic and diachronic analysis, *langue* and *parole*, and the distinction between paradigms and syntagms.

observations of subatomic particles under laboratory conditions, but it does seem to suggest that the completely objective observer does not exist even in the most rigorously controlled conditions. The famous "thought experiment" of Schrödinger's unfortunate cat (which exists until the point of actual physical observation in a strange limbo between life and death) is another example of quantum physics acknowledging its own limitations.[53]

Through his application of structuralist methods, Lévi-Strauss arrives at the concept of binary oppositions as a deep structure underlying various myths. For instance, Lévi-Strauss distinguishes between the raw and the cooked, *langue* and *parole*, synchronic and diachronic, the sun and the moon, nature and culture, and various other binaries[54] to account for the way in which myths from different areas of the world intersect thematically: in other words, to explain why myths seem to have common thematic concerns wherever in the world they originate from.

Lévi-Strauss expresses the problem succinctly when he raises this question (1998:102): “If the content of a myth is contingent, how are we going to explain the fact that myths throughout the world are so similar?” He describes this situation (that is, an individual myth narrative as *parole* as opposed to a universal structure as *langue*) in terms of a “basic antinomy” and a “contradiction,” which is resolved by appeal to a third level, one where myth exists as absolute truth.

Williams (2001:27) maintains that this is evidence of the “arrogance” of structuralism in believing that “it could somehow transcend its own

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[53] Gribbin (1991) has an entertaining account of this (and other) such paradoxical outcomes of quantum physics.

[54] "Since ours is a culture that compartmentalizes virtually everything, I feel it is important never to lose sight of our own built-in assumptions. When considering play, we need to free ourselves from the artificial and entirely arbitrary distinction between 'serious business' and 'play.' In the context of my work, this distinction is a relatively recent one, and is certainly not a part of our biological makeup—for, as I will state, play *is* serious business, provided that you know how to look at it" (Hall 1992:224, emphasis in original).

methodology and access fundamental principles," and goes on to say (2001:28): "The problem is that a methodology willing to bracket certain experiences in favour of underlying principles starts to look like an ideology that will only countenance particular types of organization." This bracketing is, however, not a side-effect but an inevitable consequence of the structuralist agenda operating here: Lévi-Strauss is trying to get rid of "the unbearably spoilt child" (the subject) so as to arrive at a rational and disinterested position enabling him to grasp the fundamental principles, the underlying structures of myth. What Lévi-Strauss's formalist procedure illustrates here, in short, is an undue privileging of *langue* over *parole*, which leads some critics to protest that this approach dehistoricizes music by isolating it from its social context.

In the context of Soundpainting, and indeed much spontaneously created music, it is apparent that this method of analysis is problematic for the following reasons:

- The fundamental attitude of much of this music is the negation of "structure as imposed from outside"
- The structural analysis of music is steeped in the ideology of the musical system under discussion as well as that of the analyst, and suggests a spurious recourse to objectivity
- Music of this kind is created on the spot and consequently is not fixed through the symbolic language in the form of a score.

One of the procedural problems raised by the application of structuralist methods to musical analysis is highlighted by Sawyer, who suggests (2003:16):

> There has always been a small minority of musicologists who study music in cultures that have no notational system, and these musicologists always had difficulty applying analytic methods originally developed to study notated European music. The paper-oriented focus of musicology largely forced these ethnomusicologists to transcribe the performances into (European) musical notation before they could examine them.[55]

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[55] Sawyer concludes by noting (2003:16): "This has the unintended effect of removing many of the uniquely performative elements of world music traditions—emergence and improvisation, the contingency from moment and moment, the interactional synchrony among performers—elements that cannot be fully understood

Similarly, in defining the characteristic structures that form the field of interest for sociological studies of human activity, Sawyer views structures as obstacles to the creative drive, by suggesting (2001):

> Our drive to be creative is often opposed by fixed structures—our job, our neighborhood, our social class or education level, the conventions of how things have always been done. Sociologists and anthropologists known as *structuralists* study these fixed structures. By focusing on the structure of our lives, we end up neglecting the creativity and freedom that we are all capable of. Structure is static and stable; improvisations are free-flowing and open-ended.

So saying, Sawyer distinguishes between the stability of structure and the contingent nature of improvisation, be it in the form of unscripted everyday conversation or the free play of musical ideas in improvised jazz. The structuralist approach, Sawyer claims, excludes the improvised elements that are a part of everyday life by emphasizing the role of language over speech. The author returns to these problems in chapter 3, in which notions of music as work and music as event (and the ideological implications of such a distinction) are examined.

2.1.3.1 Roland Barthes and structuralism

Barthes's early application of structuralist thinking is most evident in a famous analysis of soap powder. While a "mythology of the detergent" may be regarded as somewhat frivolous by comparison with Lévi-Strauss's more sober analysis of myth, it nonetheless bears out Barthes's willingness to extend the rigour of the structuralist method to such apparently trivial areas of everyday life as fashion, food, and detergents.

For Barthes (1957:37-8): "What matters is the art of having disguised the abrasive function of the detergent under the delicious image of a substance at once deep and airy which can govern the molecular order of the material

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without a consideration of group creativity."

without damaging it."

Barthes reveals a preoccupation with antinomies ("abrasive function" as opposed to "delicious image") already seen in the work of Lévi-Strauss, but here the antinomies conspire to create a "euphoria" disguising the negative actions of Omo and Persil, as in their abrasiveness and ultimately their contribution to water pollution in the less ecologically-conscious 1950s.

Barthes concludes this discussion by describing this euphoria in terms which uncannily foreshadow the current debate around the issue of globalization (1957:38): "A euphoria, incidentally, which must not make us forget that there is one plane on which *Omo* and *Persil* are one and the same: the plane of the Anglo-Dutch trust *Unilever*." What Barthes lays bare in this exposure of the everyday and the trivial may not be so frivolous after all; the "deep structure" behind the "delicious image" is that of one of the many faceless corporations of the cold war era.[56]

As Selden (1989:78) puts it:

> Bourgeois ideology, Barthes' *bête noire*, promotes the sinful view that reading is natural and language transparent; it insists on regarding the signifier as the sober partner of the signified, thus in authoritarian manner repressing all discourse into a meaning. Avant-garde writers allow the unconscious of language to rise to the surface: they allow the signifiers to generate meaning at will and to undermine the censorship of the signified and its repressive insistence on one meaning.

Barthes's structuralist methodology exposes the ideological foundations of this view of the neutrality of language and thereby calls into question a univocal (and therefore unambiguous) theory of meaning. In the service of his abhorred bourgeois ideology, the "meaning" of a given text is construed as

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[56] Facelessness is consistently dramatized in the imagery of the CIA in *The X-Files*, as well as in the film *A Beautiful Mind*, in which the Nobel prize-winning scientist John Nash (who suffers from paranoid schizophrenia) is "forced" to participate in an imaginary cold war "operation," in accordance with the instructions of a similarly anonymous CIA operative.

somehow residing in the text itself, legitimated in literature, for instance, by the author's presence as an authentic voice.[57]

Barthes's structuralist analysis theorizes the hidden operations of a dubious authority in the objects of popular culture (beefsteak, washing powder, and photographic images), which exemplify, as he claims, (1957:11): “The decorative display of *what-goes-without-saying*, the ideological abuse which, in my view, is hidden there." Starting from the premise that myth (and especially contemporary "myth" as prevalent, for instance, in the advertising and fashion industries) is a language, Barthes is able to reveal how the operations of bourgeois ideology depend on the “sober partnership” of signifier and signified, a partnership which brooks no ambiguity and reduces all possibility of divergent (or even conflicting) rhetorical positions within a given set of discourses to a “meaning,” in Selden’s terms.

2.1.3.2 The structure of serialism

The deep code underlying much twentieth-century WEAM composition is, of course, the serial method. As pioneered by Arnold Schoenberg and his pupils Alban Berg and Anton Webern, serialism has an explicit ideology, which seeks to liberate composition from the hegemony of tonality, wherein the dominant-tonic chordal relationship acts as both master and underlying organizational principle. As Young claims (2002:72-3):

> In Schoenberg's serialist compositions, and those of his Second Viennese School associates Alban Berg and Anton Webern, music unhooked itself from the emotionalism and intuitive structures that had brought it to its opulent and overripe state in late Romanticism. Schoenberg hastened the move to atonality—meaning the lack of any defined key—as speedily as his contemporaries Picasso and Braque accelerated the destruction of Renaissance perspective on the canvas.

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[57] One of the primary issues taken up in poststructuralism (and deconstruction as a later offshoot) is the systematic interrogation of the wider implications of the notion of authorial "presence" as a servant of ideology.

While one may question Young's explicit linkage of serialist atonality to Cubism's re-evaluation of previous concepts of perspective as belonging to two different areas of artistic endeavour, the uniting factor is a common engagement with the agenda of modernism. However, there is a key difference between the structuralist agenda (as promoted by Lévi-Strauss and his associates) and that of the serialist movement. While structuralist anthropology sought to discover a universal set of principles underlying myths, the serialist composers created an alternative set of compositional rules as a point of departure. In other words, serialism operates as an *a priori* method of organizing sound, while structuralism looks at phenomena as indicating some underlying organization.

Young (2002:72-3) describes Schoenberg's approach to composition as follows:

> Schoenberg converted music into pure data: groups of 12 notes were used as amelodic cells[58] throughout any given composition. Capable of being inverted, intermixed or run into palindromes, their relationship to each other was as abstracted, isolated notes, not linked to a previously chosen dominant key. Fixed keys give a sense of progress in a composition by pegging music to a tonic resolution. Schoenberg tried to inscribe a new, secret, inaudible system as the modus operandi in his music, but at some point he lost his nerve in the shadow of several years of classical tradition: "One uses the series and then composes as before," he once wrote.

Although this procedure might be seen as a move towards a kind of "musical democracy," in which no single note is "privileged" over another, as had been the case with the tonal system that preceded serialism, this is a mistaken conclusion. What is evident in serialism is the adoption of a rigorous and

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[58] The intention in determining the order of notes within a cell was to avoid any hidden tonal suggestions. In practice, Alban Berg's music often does contain quasi-tonal implications, which are used for specific expressionistic purposes. As Jarman states (1979:226-227): "Highly artificial techniques, rigorous formal symmetries, number symbolism, ciphers, cryptograms, and various other conceits are so peculiarly Bergian and are so constant and important a feature of Berg's mature music as to suggest that such procedures not only acted as a stimulant to his creative imagination but had a further, and perhaps a deeper and more personal, significance for him."

highly formalized system of composition as a move towards the creation of a new musical language, one which broke with the sentimentality of late Romantic music, thereby extolling the virtues of abstraction and complexity in search of a less decadent and indulgently expressive means of expression. In this light, serialism may be seen as a closed linguistic system; once the composer has decided on the order of the notes within the series, the implications of the system are that the composition virtually "writes itself," because the strict formal requirements of the serial procedure only allow for a limited range of transformational possibilities.

Initially, serial composition was limited to operations relating to pitch. The next logical step was the adoption of multi-serialism (also known as integral serialism) in which other parameters like duration and dynamics also were serialized. This approach to composition was adopted by the next generation of serial composers, such as Karlheinz Stockhausen and especially Pierre Boulez. Peyser's discussion of structuralism compares the analytical procedures of Lévi-Strauss and Piaget with Boulez's approach to composition (1999:245-246):

> Claude Lévi-Strauss has built a creed on the way a myth changes as it moves from one culture to another; he deemphasizes the meaning of the content of the myth. Jean Piaget concentrates on the way a person conceptualizes the world; he never really deals with what the person wants to do with that world.
>
> Lévi-Strauss, Piaget, and their colleagues imply that structures are ultimately logico-algebraic[59] in nature—whether they involve myths,

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[59] Logic is variously defined as: "Reasoning conducted or assessed according to strict principles of validity, a particular system or codification of the principles of proof and inference, the systematic use of symbolic and mathematical techniques to determine the forms of valid deductive argument, the quality of being justifiable by reason," and as the "logic of) the course of action or line of reasoning suggested or made necessary by, as in the fragment: if the logic of capital is allowed to determine events."
Logic is also defined in a more technological sense as: "a system or set of principles underlying the arrangements of elements in a computer or electronic device so as to perform a specified task."
Algebra is seen as "the part of mathematics in which letters and other general symbols are used to represent numbers and quantities in formulae and equations"

> behavior, or interval relationships. Thus the structuralist is orientated towards mathematics and away from the interpretation of life. The most complex of such formulas underlie *Trope* (the second formant of his *Third Piano Sonata*) and every other composition of Boulez's post-1952 career. Still, Boulez derives no satisfaction when someone else discovers the mechanisms at work.

A logico-algebraic view of structure unites the endeavours of these theorists; for Lévi-Strauss (in the new science of structural anthropology), Piaget (working in educational psychology), and Boulez (using the tools of integral serialism), this is a world-view based on the transformation and manipulation of abstract symbolic languages, which may be seen as uniting these different structuralist approaches. In this view, structure is interpreted as inherent in the symbolic languages of logic, algebra and music, and, as Peyser notes (1999:245), this reveals a tendency towards abstraction and a consequent distancing from the human beings who use these languages.

2.1.3.3 Schenkerian analysis and after

One of the earliest cases of what might be termed a proto-structuralist approach to music analysis is found in the work of the German analyst Heinrich Schenker, who used graphic methods to reveal the underlying structures within tonal music.[60] In applying Schenker's methods, Forte and Gilbert's *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis*, as discussed in Williams (2001:25), looks for "an equivalent to the fundamental structure in post-tonal music":

> The aim of pitch-class set analysis, therefore, is to produce a list of intersecting sets, in the hope that some will emerge as especially significant because they contain the largest number of intersections. With its firm belief that surface phenomena are governed by underlying patterns, set theory is resolutely structuralist, and has been widely criticized for performing clinical autopsies on living organisms.

(Oxford American Dictionary).

[60] Dunsby and Whittall (1988:23-61) provide an extended discussion of Schenker's pioneering work in this field.

Extending Schenker's work in graphic analysis of tonal music, the strategy of pitch-class set analysis is to determine the underlying rules of organization in post-tonal music; this methodology considers musical statements as ***generative*** processes subject to quasi-linguistic interpretation. Another type of formalist-semiotic musical analysis as discussed by Williams and Samuels is the method of paradigmatic analysis[61] used by Ruwet and Nattiez. Williams focuses his attention on Nattiez's lengthy and detailed examination (1982) of Varèse's *Density 21.5*.

This analytical method depends on the application of the concept of segmentation[62] to musical scores, once again to attempt to arrive at the underlying deep structure. Originating in the study of phonetics, this method assumes a similarity between language and music at the microscopic level as part of its strategy, which aims to arrive at an objective analysis of a given work. Herein lies the problem, because, although this method has been applied to early and non-Western musics, Williams is critical of Nattiez's "beleaguered belief" in the neutral level (that is, one uninfluenced by compositional technique or reception history).[63]

> The method represented by the neutral level is important: Nattiez is a relativist in the sense that he does not believe in any final, decidable meaning for the musical message. He rejects the idea that the last word can ever be had on the analysis of the work. But instead of accepting this as evidence for the endless deferral of meaning as represented by Derrida's term ***différance***, and concentrating on the vested interests

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[61] Samuels defines paradigms and syntagms as follows (1995:3): "Paradigms are groups of signs which may theoretically substitute for one another, whereas syntagms are allowable ('grammatical') sequences of signs."

[62] Segmentation is described as "the smallest distinct part of a spoken utterance, in particular the vowels and consonants as opposed to stress and intonation" (Oxford American Dictionary).

[63] This forms the crux of the debate between formalists and semioticians. The neutral level is discussed in Samuels (1995:8): "Nattiez's theory rests on the communicative chain composer —> piece —> listener. Analysis, he contends, must situate itself in relation to these three stages of musical production. This produces a threefold project, which he terms the 'tripartition,' and which was invented by the theorist Jean Molino.The three components are: 'poeitic' analysis, of the relationship of the composer to the work; 'neutral level' analysis, of structures immanent to the work; and 'esthesic' analysis of the relations of the work to the listener."

> present in any analytical presupposition, Nattiez constantly tries to reclaim the right to make normative judgements.

Samuels's discussion (1995:10) highlights an objection that Williams has also raised with regard to "vested interests." The problem is that one cannot (even temporarily) detach analytical methodologies of music from the discourses from which they originate. As Williams puts it (2001:28): “With its commitment to structural principles, analysis is nevertheless often unwilling to examine the formations of subjectivity that propel its own endeavours.”

The immediate objection to this line of thinking might proceed along the lines of stating that this is surely true for all analytical methods, in other words, that all such methods are to some extent "contaminated" by the analyst's theoretical position. Williams criticizes the way in which the structuralist project has assumed that a "God's-eye-view" (encompassing the notions of rigour and objectivity) is possible. This leads to a situation where the variety of circumstances in which musicking takes place is circumscribed so as to privilege the underlying patterns or codes that the analyst is attempting to reveal. This tactic of "bracketing,"[64] for Williams, is a flawed one when it fails to acknowledge the implications of its own "formations of subjectivity." In a sense, the assumption of objectivity on the analyst's part cannot but suppress not only the analyst's own subjectivity but also that of the performers creating the music, whose contribution to the realization of the performance is regarded as incidental.

As Samuels (1995:10) concludes: "In fact, all analysis is esthesic: the immanent structures of the work, and the compositional strategies that created it, can only be reconstructed after the event, according to an analytical model; hence the 'dirtiness' of the neutral level." Accordingly, all analysis then depends on the relationship of the work to the listener, which confirms some of the objections raised by Williams and others to the

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[64] The Oxford American Dictionary defines bracketing as "to put (a belief or matter) aside temporarily."

structuralist project, which, as has been demonstrated, seeks objectivity by extending a pseudo-scientific emphasis on rigour to all manner of social discourses (for Lévi-Strauss, myth; for Barthes, anything and everything in mass culture).

On this basis, Williams is critical of Lévi-Strauss because of the deliberately ahistorical standpoint of structural anthropology. The ahistoricism "built in" to the structuralist project for Williams (2001:28) leads to Lévi-Strauss's idea of fugue[65] as "a static form unaffected by varying historical contexts." Detaching fugue from its history is for Williams a tactical error which leads to an overly synchronic view of its manifestations, while a more dynamic conception of fugue might consider it as a texture rather than as a universal formal structure, which view accounts rather better for its historical development over time.

With regard to integral serialism, Boulez extended the principles of serialism by applying its methods not only to organizing the tone row, but also to such elements as duration, dynamics, and large-scale organization. Small highlights a methodological problem in this approach as follows (1998:165):

> But even at the high noon of such rational control, by means of total serial organization, its high priest, Pierre Boulez [1964], found himself writing: 'Despairingly one tries to dominate one's material by an arduous, sustained, vigilant effort, and despairingly chance persists, and slips in through a hundred unstoppable loopholes.'

In the light of the above discussion on structuralism, Boulez's frustration with the difficulty of eliminating chance from the compositional process may well be seen as a consequence of his need to "dominate" the material. Boulez's frustrations are confirmed by Young's comments (2.1.3.2) about Schoenberg's

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[65] Defined as: "A contrapuntal composition in which a short melody or phrase (the subject) is introduced by one part and successively taken up by others and developed by interweaving the parts" (Oxford American Dictionary). Bach's *Wohltemperierte Klavier*, Books 1 and 2 (also known as the '48'), is a well-known example.

"loss of nerve" with regard to serialism. These difficulties may be seen as symptomatic of a desire to control and channel the random, by suppressing the chaotic element within creativity, and begins to sound rather uncomfortably (for this author at least) like fascism.

In music of the twentieth century the need for control is also evident in some composers' attitudes towards performers. As described by Small (1998:5-6):

> Composers, especially in the twentieth century, have often railed against the 'liberties' taken by performers who dare to interpose themselves, their personalities and their ideas between composer and listener. Igor Stravinsky was especially vehement in this regard, condemning 'interpretation' in terms that seem as much moral as purely aesthetic and demanding from the performer a rigidly objective approach called by him 'execution,' which he characterized as the 'strict putting into effect of an explicit will that contains nothing beyond what it specifically commands.' The eagerness with which many composers took up electronic composition from the 1950s onward was motivated at least in part by the prospect of dispensing altogether with the services of those troublesome fellows.

This statement is not meant to imply that Stravinsky was necessarily a structuralist, but in many ways his demands of performers to behave like obedient automata typifies the attitude of modernist composers to music and performers. The minimalist composer Steve Reich, while clearly not a modernist, displays a similar attitude (although he does not invoke Stravinsky's concepts of will and command) in stating (in Nyman 1999:154-5):

> This music is not the expression of the momentary state of mind of the performers while playing. Rather the momentary state of mind of the performers while playing is largely determined by the ongoing composed slowly changing music. By voluntarily giving up the freedom to do whatever momentarily comes to mind we are, as a result, free of all that momentarily comes to mind.

2.1.3.4 New Criticism

Structuralist assumptions similarly animate the theoretical approach to literary texts known as New Criticism. Groden and Kreiswirth's definition (1997b) of New Criticism (as evident in the work of some Anglo-American writers and critics of literature) contains a number of points deemed by the author as

significant to this study for the following reasons:

It is seen as a method that insists on the self-contained and autonomous nature of the literary work, from the interpretation of which the writer's history, biography, and other factors are excluded,[66] to avoid what is perceived as the trap of the "intentional fallacy." Similarly, the proponents of New Criticism seek to avoid the "affective fallacy," wherein the subjective response of the reader to the work is taken into account.[67] It is possible to see in this exhibition of formalist tendencies a parallel process in early twentieth-century music, as in the case of Stravinsky, who, in addition to his agenda of "eliminating the performer from performance," as Small notes (2.1.3.3), likewise insisted on the autonomy of the musical work.[68]

Despite the wide variety of theoretical viewpoints of many of its practitioners (including F. R. Leavis, William Empson, Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks, among others), there seems to be a common agenda operating with respect to the privileged situation of the musical as well as the literary text, as described by Groden and Kreiswirth (1997b):

> By careful attention to language, the text is presumed to be a unique and privileged source of meaning and value, sharply distinguished from other texts or other uses of language (particularly scientific language). Accordingly, the meaning of the poem is not conveyed by any prose paraphrase and is valued as the source of an experience (for the reader) available in no other way.

It is not difficult to see parallel workings in some more traditional musicological analyses, which for Nicholas Cook (2001) and other critics, such as Kevin Korsyn (2003), have led contemporary musicology into an epistemological impasse. In the field of jazz studies, for example, John Gennari's evaluation of

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[66] This, in Nattiez's tripartition project in music semiotics, would be termed the *poeitic* element.
[67] Reader-response theory (also known as reception theory), by contrast, is concerned with the reader's relationship to the text (Sim and van Loon 2004:84-5).
[68] The implications of the concept of the autonomous musical work are considered in section 3.2.

Gunther Schuller's *The **Swing** Era* (1989), while acknowledging its value as "the field's authoritative work," highlights some methodological problems in its somewhat formalist approach as follows:

> Schuller seems to be advocating an approach on the lines of literary New Criticism, which would approach individual works of art as self-contained, self-defining objects to be elucidated as autonomous aesthetic works rather than understood as documents created in specific socio-historical contexts. If the tenets of the New Criticism have proved excessively confining for most literary critics, its narrow injunctions are of especially dubious value for critics of jazz, whose texts are in a constant state of revision, and whose historical significance to African-American social identity is simply too compelling to disregard.

Hedges (1997) reiterates this view of "The text as an *autotelic* artefact, something complete within itself, written for its own sake, unified in its form and not dependent on its relation to the author's life or intent, history, or anything else." In the field of music, McClary (2000) has seen in the operations of the tonic-dominant system of Western art music the workings of a *telos* and a consequent hegemony.

New Criticism may be seen as complementary to the formalist concerns of modernism and is viewed by Groden and Kreiswirth (1997b) as exhibiting in its later stages "some resemblances to Structuralism." New Criticism shares a central concern of structuralism with regard to its emphasis on oppositions and tensions, as highlighted by Arnason when he writes (2004, emphases in original): "The reader must discover *tensions* in the work. These will be the results of *thematic oppositions,* though they may also occur as *oppositions* in imagery: light versus dark, beautiful versus ugly, graceful versus clumsy."

These thematic oppositions are not dissimilar to the binary oppositions (as found in Saussure's conception of language and further elucidated by Lévi-Strauss in his discussion of myth). In its concerns with oppositions and its aim of eliminating readers' responses to the text, New Criticism may be seen as sharing common ground with structuralism.

Daniel Green (2003) exposes some of the assumptions of New Criticism, one

of his most telling points (for purposes of this study) being: "That it makes the Western tradition out to be more unified than it is by ignoring diversity and contradictory forces within it, and more monadic than it is by ignoring the exchange between non-western and western cultures." When musicology (of whatever persuasion[69]) assumes an interpretation of the history of music as unified and continuous, it may be seen as exhibiting a state of credulity to what Lyotard (1984) has called "metanarratives."[70]

Green continues his critique of New Criticism by pointing out its deliberate rejection of the idea "that artistic standards of value are variable and posterity is fickle." This argument militates against the modernist notion of art and science in service to humanity's unfettered progress toward the light of rationality, and the educational value of difficult "high" art. In this view, Adorno's exaltation of modernist music, especially serialism (and his dismissal of jazz and popular music as surplus to requirements of the struggle) also may be seen as subscribing to a Marxist metanarrative of progress. Suggesting that artistic standards are variable calls into question the ontological status and value of works of art and therefore threatens interpretations of music history that rest on unity, coherence, continuity, and progress.[71]

New Criticism's quest for objectivity, for Green, privileges form over the

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[69] Jazz scholarship is sometimes no less prone to the adoption of what Harris (1998) describes as its "canon-model."

[70] For Appignanesi *et al.* (2004:103): "Metanarratives are the supposedly universal, absolute or ultimate truths that are used to legitimize various projects, political or scientific. Examples are: the emancipation of humanity through that of the workers (Marx); the creation of wealth (Adam Smith); the dominance of the unconscious mind (Freud), and so on. Lyotard prescribed this scepticism in 1979, ten years before the Berlin Wall came tumbling down—and almost overnight the world witnessed the total collapse of a Socialist Grand Narrative."

[71] Green (2003) amplifies this point (as regards the fickleness of posterity) as follows: "Particular pieces of art are viewed as important because they do important cultural work, represent values that segments of the culture (say editors and English professors) believe are of vital import, or help us understand our history". In other words, the cultural value placed on pieces of art is as much a part of an ideological hegemony as is the "Grand Narrative" of tonality for McClary.

contingencies of circumstance, and in so doing, denies "that context is just as important as form to understanding a work of art." Green's concerns in this regard are significant for this study in sounding a warning bell to the bracketing being carried out by the New Critical endeavour, which, in aiming for a neutral reading of the text, perforce must ignore the contingent social circumstances in which such texts are produced.

> Thus it seems almost unavoidable that the house of fiction with its many windows would encourage a diversity of perspectives beyond the purely New Critical and that academic criticism would thereby become increasingly fragmented, leaving aesthetic formalism at best as one thing among the myriad others one could do with literary texts, at worst as an evidently limited thing to do with them considering the grander ambitions that motivate the sorts of things being done by the more culturally engaged critics.[72]

Leppert finds much in common between New Criticism and its musicological equivalent in stating (1998:292):

> One notable result of this combination[73] is what now constitutes mainline music theory: nothing if not rigorous, profoundly similar to literary New Criticism, where the only questions asked—indeed, the only questions that can be asked, given the "methodology"—involve the notes in relation to the notes. And whereas literary New Criticism has been on life-support in English Departments for well over a decade, slowly fading with faculty retirements, the analogue in musicology and music theory is anything but threatened. It continues to overshadow and marginalize all other research.

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[72] Green concludes by observing: "That both fiction and drama have a more recent past as 'popular' entertainment rather than high art only made this fragmentation more pronounced, as it is only a small step from the consideration of a novel or a play in its own generic or historical context to the analysis of other popular forms—movies, television, pop songs—using similar methods and from these to the implicit judgment that these forms can provide us with 'knowledge' at least as valuable as that to be found through reading what have come to be called works of literature."

[73] Leppert (*ibid.*) is referring to "a deadly combination of 19th-century hard-line aesthetics and 20th-century humanistic pseudoscience borrowed from the social sciences, which in turn borrowed, in lamentably nonscientific fashion, from the 'hard sciences'."

2.1.4 Poststructuralism and the play of the text

Rivkin and Ryan describe the underlying rationale behind the move from structuralism to poststructuralism as follows (1998:334):

> Structuralists saw signs as windows to a trans-empirical world of crystalline order, of identities of form that maintained themselves over time and outside history, of codes of meaning that seemed exempt from the differences entailed by the contingencies of living examples; Poststructuralism claims all such orders are strategies of power and social control, ways of ignoring reality rather than understanding it. It was time, they argued, to burn down the signs and with the signs, all the orders of meaning and or reality that signs help maintain.

Poststructuralism's interrogation of the structuralist project harks back to Barthes's earlier reading (1957) of the mythology of detergents. Barthes found evidence therein of the hidden conspiratorial operations of mass media and the ideology of the marketplace. Guy Debord (2005, 2006) describes this conspiracy as part of what he terms "the spectacle."[74]

What Rivkin and Ryan are suggesting is that the move into poststructuralism was already implicit in structuralism itself, but what emerges in poststructuralism is a new concept of the text. The term "text" is somewhat deceptive, because it does not necessarily suggest the generally accepted definition of something printed, existing somewhere as a tangible object in black and white, like a newspaper photograph or a musical score. As Hodge (2003, emphases in original) defines it:

> A Text[75] is an assemblage of signs (such as words, images, sounds

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[74] For Debord (2006, §24): "By means of the spectacle the ruling order discourses endlessly upon itself in an uninterrupted monologue of self-praise. The spectacle is the self-portrait of power in the age of power's totalitarian rule over the conditions of existence. The fetishistic appearance of pure objectivity in spectacular relationships conceals their true character as relationships between human beings and between classes; a second Nature thus seems to impose inescapable laws upon our environment."

[75] Both Hodge and Barthes himself seem to favour capitalizing the term, so as to distinguish it from its more conventional usage.

> and/or gestures) constructed (and interpreted) with reference to the conventions associated with a genre and in a particular medium of communication. Text usually refers to a message, which has been recorded in some way (e.g., writing, audio- and video-recording) so that it is *physically independent of its sender or receiver*.

What is important to note from this definition is Hodge's emphasis on the physical independence of the Text; this implies that poststructuralism does not support the musicological idea of "the work" as existing independently from the composer in some kind of extra-historical space. Williams (2001:30) characterizes the poststructuralist text as follows: “For poststructuralism, a text is not an object with clearly defined boundaries that fix meaning, but an ensemble of discourses.” The notion of discourse for Foucault and others, such as Homi Bhabha and Edward Said, is intimately bound up with issues of legitimation and control, so that academic and scientific discourses, where the emphasis is placed on objectivity and neutrality, call for careful reading to expose these underpinnings.

For Barthes (1997:273):

> In fact, *reading* in the sense of *consuming* is not *playing* with the text. Here 'playing' must be understood in all its ***polysemy***.[76] The text itself *plays* (like a door on its hinges, like a device in which there is some 'play'); and the reader himself plays twice over; playing the Text as one plays a game, he searches for a practice that will re-produce the Text; but, to keep that practice from being reduced to a passive, inner mimesis (the Text being precisely what resists such a reduction), he also *plays* the Text in the musical sense of the term.

Poststructuralism interrogates the notion of objective meaning in a text (by querying the right of the author to claim absolute authority over it) by suggesting that, once released into the market, texts are susceptible to misinterpretation equally well, and that there is not a single authorial (authoritative) voice to which the reader can turn to for guidance. The reader is equally responsible for constructing the meaning of the encounter.

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[76] This concept has important ramifications for the deconstructive project, as discussed in section 2.1.5.

2.1.4.1 The death of the author

> In terms of literary criticism, however, structuralism's basic goal was to apply the scientific methods of linguistics to the study of literary texts. This scientific analysis placed a primary emphasis on the language of a creative work as interpreted by the reader, while simultaneously reducing the importance of authorial intent as a subject of critical study. This attitude was expressed most famously in Roland Barthes's essay "The Death of the Author," in which he states that the "image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centered on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, and his passions." The actual physical author was not presumed to be dead, but instead the institutional concept of authorship that had long dominated criticism at the expense of linguistic and semiotic analysis.
>
> (Honeycutt 1994)

Perhaps Barthes's most radical conclusion from his interrogation of the structuralist method is this notion of "The death of the author." In this 1977 essay, Barthes suggests that the traditional idea of the author as the sole agent of legitimacy is the product of yet another mythology.[77] This view radically calls into question the reassuring notions of authorial intentionality and presence and allows the reader the freedom to draw whatever conclusions are available from the text from a unique, idiosyncratic vantage point. It might be argued that this viewpoint has some unsettling implications for a musicology which is motivated by the belief that musical works possess an existence of their own, whose existence depends on the composer's authority. As Selden (1989:79) concludes:

> The death of the author is already inherent in structuralism, which treats individual utterances (*paroles*) as the products of impersonal systems (*langues*). What is new in Barthes is the idea that readers are free to open and close the text's signifying process without respect for the signified. They are free to take their pleasure of the text, to follow at will the defiles of the signifier as it slips and slides evading the grasp of the signified.

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[77] Herein lies the crux of the debate around the composer or conductor as author of the text or the event.

2.1.4.2 Readerly and writerly texts

Barthes in *S/Z* (1974) distinguishes between two types of text ('readerly' and 'writerly') on the basis of the extent to which the reader is allowed to negotiate meaning. In the case of a readerly text, there is little room for manoeuvre on the reader's part, as the boundaries of the text are relatively fixed. For Sim and van Loon (2001:74):

> By implication, readerly texts are authoritarian.[78] In the rebellious climate of the 1960s, when the concept of the 'death of the author' was developed, this was a grave charge to make. Critical theory since that date has had a distinctly anti-authoritarian, and often counter-cultural, edge to it.

Barthes characterizes as writerly those texts in which there is evidence of experimentalism at work, and finds an early precursor of this tendency in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67). Landow's definition of hypertext (1992) extends Barthes's distinction into the realm of modern-day computer technology:

> Hypertext[79] blurs the boundaries between reader and writer and therefore instantiates another quality of Barthes's ideal text. From the vantage point of the current changes in information technology, Barthes' distinction between readerly and writerly texts appears to be essentially a distinction between text based on print technology and electronic hypertext, for hypertext fulfils: "The goal of literary work (of literature as work) [which] is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text."[80]

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[78] Sim and van Loon (2001:74) also suggest that most 19th century realist novels are likewise "readerly." An important motivating principle of this genre is the dramatization of moral principles as part of its educational agenda.

[79] The Oxford American Dictionary defines hypertext as: "A software system that links topics on the screen to related information and graphics, which are typically accessed by a point-and-click method," while the Encarta World English Dictionary suggests: "A system of storing images, text, and other computer files that allows direct links to related texts, images, sound, and other data."

[80] Barthes continues (1974:4): "Our literature is characterized by the pitiless divorce which the literary institution maintains between the producer of the text and its user, between its owner and its consumer, between its author and its reader. This reader is thereby plunged into a kind of idleness—he is intransitive; he is, in short, serious: instead of functioning himself, instead of gaining access to the magic of the signifier, to the pleasure of writing, he is left with no more than the poor freedom either to

Landow (1992) goes on to describe the organizational structure of hypertext as follows:

> Both an author's tool and a reader's medium, a hypertext document system allows authors or groups of authors to link information together, create paths through a corpus of related material, annotate existing texts, and create notes that point readers to either bibliographic data or the body of the referenced text. Readers can browse through linked, cross-referenced, annotated texts in an orderly but nonsequential manner.

The reader's journey through this new medium does not have to follow the same kind of linear path as that of a classic text, in which the author directs the flow of the narrative. As Foucault (1998b:423) states: "The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network."[81]

As Landow argues, the implications of Barthean poststructuralism suggest a new type of collaborative process at play in the interaction between author and reader (1992):

> Barthes' concept of the 'writerly text' signals the return of the subject,[82] if only as a shadowy participant in the web of language, which the author traverses *in absentia*. This concept also sounds a death knell for the notion of objective 'meaning' within a given text, because if there is no author (as bearer of legitimating authority), then the construction of

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accept or reject the text: reading is nothing more than a referendum. Opposite the writerly text, then, is its countervalue, its negative, reactive value: what can be read, but not written: the readerly. We call any readerly text a classic text."

[81] For Heaton and Groves, comparing Wittgenstein's "rhizomatic" approach to philosophy with its more traditional manifestations (2005:128): "Most traditional philosophy is like a tree. It seeks the roots from which its object is constructed. It wants to find the founding principles of things, and so account for the different and irregular in terms of the same or regular, to bring the unruly and under one rule. A rhizome (bulbs and tubers), on the other hand, is more like a network, a multiplicity, which has diverse forms ramifying in all directions."

[82] The return of the subject forms a central idea in the author's later discussion of identity formation in jazz improvisation, as discussed in chapter 3.

> 'meaning' as a stable narrative element becomes the reader's responsibility, and hence open to idiosyncratic 'readings.'

Eco's notion of the open work (1977:132-39) similarly exhibits poststructuralist and anti-formalist tendencies in suggesting that the subject has a part to play in the interpretation of the Text. In contradistinction to the New Criticism's insistence on the possibility of an objective stance vis-à-vis the literary work, Eco (summarized in Kessler and Puhl 2004:2-3) insists on the *openness* of the work in question:

> Eco, quoting Henri Pousseur, defines the 'open' work as one that 'produces in the interpreter acts of conscious freedom, putting him at the center of a net of inexhaustible relations among which he inserts his own form.' Eco's study, which examines Joyce, Alexander Calder, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Pousseur, and other contemporary and near-contemporary artists, opposes this concept to the traditional closed work, which allows the reader or viewer far less choice in interpretation. The categories are ideal—no work can be completely open or closed—but they function well in making distinctions between different kinds of art.

For Groden and Kreiswirth (1997a), Eco's idea of the open work has political consequences, in that this concept suggests a new way for the reader to engage with the world:

> What is more important, adopting the proper attitude toward an open work has political and social ramifications: the open work denies conventional views of the world, replacing them with a sense of its discontinuity, disorder, and dissonance. Eco considers the alienation attendant on this realization as beneficial, since from this feeling of crisis, one may derive a new way of seeing, feeling, and understanding a social order in which traditional relationships have been shattered.

2.1.4.3 Undercoding and overcoding

Brackett (2000:8), drawing on the work of Middleton (1990:173) and Eco (1976:129-39), defines undercoding and overcoding as follows:

> In an undercoded piece, "aspects of a piece are received within a general sense of 'understanding.' Pieces in this category may create their own individual codes." Examples of undercoded pieces would be avant-garde art music, and "free" jazz. On the other hand, in an overcoded piece, "every detail is covered by an explicit network of codes and subcodes. A piece in this category may be so tightly bound to socialized conventions

> as to be 'about' its code." Examples of overcoded pieces would be muzak and advertising jingles.

Brackett's classification of avant-garde music and free jazz as "undercoded" is significant in that undercoding allows for the presence of the individual to re-invent (if not break) the general rules of engagement that have heretofore operated. Whether as composer or performer, this slippage within Brackett's *general sense of understanding* allows the individual breathing space or room to manoeuvre within the network itself, and thereby establish a tenuously documentable presence.

In similar fashion, Hall (1992:229) distinguishes different messages on the basis of their context, which he defines as "the information that surrounds an event; it is inextricably bound up with the meaning of that event." Hall continues by defining two types of communication or message as follows:

> A high context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is already known to the recipient, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message or music. A low context (LC) communication is just the opposite: the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code. People who have grown up together can and do communicate more economically (HC) than lawyers drafting a contract, a mathematician programming a computer, politicians formulating legislation, or administrators writing regulations (all LC).

With respect to Soundpainting, Hall's distinction is a useful one. One might suggest, with regard to the degree of context involved, that the gestures in Soundpainting operate on two fundamental levels. For the performers, these gestures are HC, in the sense that they have learned their "meaning" (and how to respond to them) in the course of the workshops. For the audience, however, such gestures may initially make no sense until they are able to decipher them as the performance progresses, and the gestures and the musical events so generated begin to seem familiar.[83]

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[83] The author is concerned in this instance with the way the gestures operate, not the content or style of the music itself.

Hofstadter (1999:162-164) imagines a scenario in which a piece such as Cage's *Imaginary Landscape no.4* is sent to outer space as a communication from humankind to the rest of the galaxy.[84] As Hofstadter suggests (1999:164):

> It would be extraordinarily unlikely—if not downright impossible—for an alien civilization to understand the nature of the artifact. They would probably be very puzzled by the contradiction between the frame message ("I am a message; decode me"), and the chaos of the inner structure. There are few "chunks" to seize onto in this Cage piece, few patterns which could guide a decipherer. On the other hand, there seems to be, in a Bach piece, much to seize onto—patterns, patterns of patterns, and so on. We have no way of knowing whether such patterns are universally appealing. We do not know enough about the nature of intelligence, emotions, or music to say whether the inner logic of a piece by Bach is so universally compelling that its meaning could span galaxies.

By comparing these two pieces (one whose compositional procedures are random, and one which exhibits a strong sense of structure), Hofstadter so differentiates between the musical outcomes of such procedures. He is careful to avoid suggesting that the patterns evident in Bach's music are universal, or that the meaning of the piece is a product of what he terms its "inner logic," thereby leaving questions about "the nature of intelligence, emotions, or music" unanswered. Hofstadter's discussion seems relevant to this discussion in the sense that he maintains an open attitude toward music's communicative capability, so raising doubts about its ontological status (and meaning) that are in keeping with the poststructuralists' skepticism towards any form of final legitimating authority.

For Sawyer, one of the great strengths of the poststructuralist project lies in its focus on contingency and improvisation (2001, emphasis in original):

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[84] Hofstadter (1999:163) characterizes this piece as "A classic of *aleatoric*, or *chance*, music—music whose structure is chosen by various random processes, rather than by an attempt to convey a personal emotion. In this case, twenty-four performers attach themselves to the twenty-four knobs on twelve radios. For the duration of the piece they twiddle their knobs in aleatoric ways so that each radio randomly gets louder and softer, switching stations all the while. The total sound produced is the music." Emphases in original.

> Of course, everyday discourse is much more improvised than scripted theater. Our daily conversations are not exact imitations of any script, and our daily lives do not exactly follow the structure of anybody's social theory. Researchers who explore these issues are often called *post-structuralists*, since they are concerned with those aspects of social life that can't be explained by fixed structures: individual creativity, variation across performances, and change over time.

The ramifications of poststructuralism (readerly and writerly texts, the death of the author, and undercoding and overcoding) are vital for this study of an improvised form of musicking known as Soundpainting. As suggested by Sawyer (2001), poststructuralists examine the relationship between fixed structures and the way in which people improvise with, and sometimes against, them:

> Post-structuralists focus on the balance between structure and improvisation. Improvisation was a central concept for two influential French social theorists; Pierre Bourdieu focused on 'regulated improvisation' (which he also called *habitus*), and Michel de Certeau's central concepts were improvisation, strategy, and contingency.

2.1.5 On deconstruction

Barthes, discussing Saussure's concept of the dichotomic relation between spoken and written language, observes the way in which Saussure departed from the historical/evolutionary methods previously employed in linguistics (1964):

> The (dichotomic) concept of language/speech is central in Saussure and was certainly a great novelty in relation to earlier linguistics which sought to find the causes of historical changes in the evolution of pronunciation, spontaneous associations and the working of analogy, and was therefore a linguistics of the individual act. In working out this famous dichotomy, Saussure started from the multiform and heterogeneous 'nature of language, which appears at first sight as an unclassifiable reality' the unity of which cannot be brought to light, since it partakes at the same time of the physical, the physiological, the mental, the individual and the social.[85]

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[85] Barthes concludes (*ibid.*): "Now this disorder disappears if, from this

Saussure's structural linguistics broke with the past in this important regard, but in highlighting the distinction between written and spoken forms of language maintained the concept of binary oppositions. Structuralism, by foregrounding the antinomial or oppositional nature of this relationship,[86] was merely perpetuating one of the central axioms of logic, wherein the terms A and -A cannot exist co-terminously. Logic, by definition, depends on the non-identity of these terms, whereby A is (according to the rules of the game) the opposite of not-A. Structuralism's dependence on this dichotomic relationship formed the starting point for the deconstruction project.

As theorized by Derrida (1930-2004) and De Man (1919-1983), deconstruction is a branch of continental philosophy, which starts by interrogating the nature of the binary oppositions at the root of structuralism. Derrida's neologism *différance* is used both to expose the hidden strategies that animate Western philosophical thought and to highlight deconstruction's philosophical insight as to how words both differ from and defer to each other. In his punning use of the term, Derrida suggests that words are both different from each other, which seems not only true but necessarily so, but further in his double sense of the term 'defer' that they acknowledge authority and make way for what Peirce terms unclosed semiosis. As Armstrong (2004:1-2) observes:

> Deconstruction departs from an attack on the idea that the relationship between the two aspects of the sign, the 'signifier' (a recognisable trace or mark) and its 'signified' (a concept), can be anything more substantial than a socially instituted, habitually reinforced, and (as the process of language change demonstrates) unstable association. Ideologies rely on certain signifiers to denote unique, stable, unquestionable, and precise

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heterogeneous whole, is extracted a purely social object, the systematised set of conventions necessary to communication, indifferent to the material of the signals which compose it, and which is a language (*langue*); as opposed to which speech (*parole*) covers the purely individual part of language (phonation, application of the rules and contingent combinations of signs)."

[86] Binary oppositions are exemplified by such ordinary language terms as *langue*/*parole*, nature/nurture, raw/cooked, good/bad, black/white, masculine/feminine, left/right, up/down, and so on.

> signified concepts. Derrida is not known for bluntness, but his philosophy is certainly a refutation that a signifier could ever have a single, objective, self-interpreting meaning.

From a position of extreme scepticism towards the tyranny of Saussurean *langue*, deconstruction argues that there is a deeply ingrained tendency in Western philosophy towards privileging a particular signifier over another as part of a strategic attempt to stabilize "meaning," and thereby disguise the effects of linguistic slippage that Derrida exposes. The process of reasoning behind Derrida's controversial viewpoint is described in Rivkin and Ryan (1998:339-340) as follows:

> What justifies the distinction between inside and outside, intelligible and physical, speech and writing? Doesn't there have to be a prior act of expulsion, setting in opposition, and differentiation in order for the supposed ground and absolute foundation of truth in the voice of the mind thinking the presence of truth to itself to come into being?

McClary (1987:60) views deconstruction as a "political act," which exposes the ideological assumptions behind the music of the Enlightenment:

> What I am suggesting here is deconstruction as a political act. It is not coincidental that most deconstructive enterprises have centered on texts of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, for, as we have seen, these are the texts (and the musical repertoires) that most powerfully articulated the social values of the emergent bourgeoisie under the guise of universal rationality, objectivity, truth. Indeed, so powerful and successful were these articulations—with their hidden ideological underpinnings—that they still shape the ways in which we understand the world and our place in it as individuals.

What she exposes here are bourgeois dependencies on such ideas as the rational and the objective as "natural laws," which even today shape human thinking about the world. This can also be seen as a type of blind faith in progress and a reliance on science to provide the answers to the abiding philosophical questions of humankind.

The problem with the binaries, for Derrida, seems to be that they are opposite but not equal: that is to say, one binary is often privileged over the other. One of the most pervasive binaries in Western philosophy is known as Cartesian dualism. As proposed by Descartes and criticized by numerous philosophers

(Small 1998:51):

> One of Bateson's fundamental intuitions is a denial of what is called Cartesian dualism, the idea that the world is made up of two different and even incompatible kinds of substance: matter, which is divisible, has mass, dimensions, and a location in space; and mind, which is indivisible, has no mass or dimensions and is located everywhere and nowhere. This mode of thought is very old in Western thinking and in fact, in the concept of an immortal soul that is distinct from the body and survives its death, is part of our society's religious orthodoxy.

Implicit in the way in which Derrida looks at language is the distinction (from linguistics) between the constative (the intended meaning of a statement) and the performative (the effect of that statement). The performative suggests that the unpredictable variety of the contexts in which language may be used makes its outcome also indeterminable. In *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900*, Kramer (2002) argues that meaning may be obtained from music through the analysis of its performative strategies as compared with other art forms, defining these strategies as “hermeneutic windows.”

Deconstruction, by interrogating the disguised operation of a central axiom of conventional philosophy, foregrounds the contingent nature, as well as the complexity, of what Ake terms "issues of meaning and identity" (2002:81):

> Issues of meaning and identity always involve more than simple binary opposites of black/white or masculine/feminine. They consist, instead, of extremely complex and fluid relationships among cultural values, understandings, and practices.

By highlighting deconstruction's interrogation of the privileging of these binary opposites, Ake suggests its exposure of strategies that are taken for granted. For McClary (2000), deconstruction lays bare the conventions and hegemonies of tonality, the operations of which Heble views as negative and restricting (2000:33):

> The laws of tonality—conducive to an emotive approach to music—like the laws of language, prevent the artist from exploring a broader range of potential musical options and opportunities. Deviations from the rigid rules of tonality were originally seen as grammatical errors and solecisms.

What Heble highlights here is the potential tension between the needs of the individual musician (in terms of self-expression, telling a story, and so on) and the demands of the community, who, to a large extent, put these laws in place. This community has the power to determine the extent to which the laws of such languages hold sway and therefore acts as a braking factor in limiting the unbridled expression of the individual, who thus treads an uneasy path of compromise between expression and acceptability. The case of Ornette Coleman, as a key figure in this struggle, dramatizes this tension in the free jazz era of the late 1950s and early 1960s. As Certeau (1988:138) states:

> In the vast sea of a progressively disseminated language, a world without closure or anchorage (it becomes doubtful, eventually improbable, that a Unique subject will appropriate it and make it speak), every particular discourse attests to the absence of the position which the cosmos formerly assigned to the individual, and thus to the necessity of carving out a position by one's own way of treating a particular area of language. In other words, it is because he loses his position that the individual comes into being as a *subject*.

For Monson, the poststructuralist usage of the word "discourse" has vivid ramifications for ethnomusicology (1996:206):

> A considerable confusion regarding the idea of discourse has emerged in the debate about postmodernism and music in recent years. Perhaps the most useful aspect of Foucauldian notions of discourse and Derridean ideas about writing has been their implications for rethinking the concept of culture—for moving from a totalizing, coherent homogeneous idea to one that takes heterogeneity and the crosscutting of cultural identities with the contradictions (discourses) of race, gender, and economic stratification. Perhaps the most damaging, from the point of view of ethnomusicology, is the poststructural deprecation of the ”speaking subject,” vernacular knowledge, and the phenomenal world in relation to its philosophical project.

For Monson, the poststructuralist position has the clear advantage of necessitating a re-evaluation of a commonly held view of culture as "a totalizing, coherent homogeneous idea," a view similarly challenged by Korsyn (section 1.5.2) with regard to "society." However, Monson views the deconstructionist problematization of the "speaking subject" in less positive

terms. From her position as a jazz critic and performer and in view of jazz's emphasis on the contribution of the individual performer to its discourses, this is a somewhat inevitable conclusion.

2.1.6 Wittgenstein on language

The theories of Ludwig Wittgenstein, widely regarded as one of the most important philosophers of the twentieth century, have recently begun to be applied to thinking about music. In suggesting that academic discourse about music is a kind of Wittgensteinian language-game, Kevin Korsyn seeks a way out of the impasses that up to now have fostered division in musical scholarship (2003:187):

> Whether or not music is considered a language, there can be no doubt that musical research is not only transmitted through language, but is also embodied in the sort of socially situated forms of life that Wittgenstein called language-games. By asking how these games work, and how they are connected to a variety of cultural practices, we can foster communication among them while avoiding certain impasses that we have seen in the field.

Although an exhaustive survey of Wittgenstein's thought is beyond the scope of this study, there are three concepts of his regarding language which are of significance: meaning as use, language-games, and grammar.

2.1.6.1 Meaning as use

Shawver comments on the importance of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* as follows (n.d.):

> Generally considered one of the most important philosophical works of the twentieth century, *Philosophical Investigations* is unique in its approach to philosophy. Most philosophical texts read as histories of philosophy, summaries of philosophizing which has already occurred, a completed report on thought. Wittgenstein's book treats philosophy as a lab science, instructing the reader to undergo various thought experiments and do the actual work of philosophy. Rather than relying on the thinking of others, it insists that the readers do their own thinking.

Wittgenstein was concerned with a new approach to philosophy, concerned with how to "use" philosophy; he was not particularly interested in metaphysical controversies, which he viewed as situated in problems of language. In Wittgenstein's view, when these linguistic problems are cleared up, their attendant philosophical problems disappear. In this light, Wittgenstein displayed a pragmatic turn in suggesting that meaning is a function of how language is used in practical situations (PI §340):

> One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to *look at* its use and learn from that. But the difficulty is to remove the prejudice which stands in the way of doing this. It is not a *stupid* prejudice.

To the author, this is an exceedingly valuable insight for the purposes of this study, because it acts as a counterpoise to the assumptions that lead some musicologists to treat music as an object rather than as an activity. This allows for a somewhat different focus wherein the frame of reference is the way in which musicians use signs, as opposed to the content of the signs themselves. Such a viewpoint can include all categories of musical sign, be they elements of the symbolic language of musical notation or the more elusive and fleeting aural signs of improvised music. Simply put, the focus then shifts from what these musical signs mean to the manner in which they are used.

Garver (1996:150) characterizes this key move in Wittgenstein's thinking as one in which is emphasized the importance of context over analysis:

> Studying uses of language makes *context* prominent, whereas the study of forms lends itself naturally to *analysis*. There are no such things as the 'structural components' of a use of language or of a language-game, whereas morphological or syntactic analysis proceeds in terms of precisely such components. Contextual settings and possibilities of discourse continuation define or differentiate uses of language in ways that are not analytic at all—certainly not in the familiar sense in which analysis requires the identification of elements and their arrangement.

Biletzki and Matar (2005) view Wittgenstein's emphasis on the use of language as a challenge to the more traditional approach where meaning is regarded as representation:

> "For a *large* class of cases—though not for all—in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (PI §43). This basic statement is what underlies the change of perspective most typical of the later phase of Wittgenstein's thought: a change from a conception of meaning as representation to a view which looks to use as the hinge of the investigation.

This change of perspective, the author suggests, is by no means unique to Wittgenstein, as critical theory in general during the course of the twentieth century mounted waves of attacks on this traditional concept of meaning as representation. Heble (2000:72) sees evidence of this tendency in the music of the Art Ensemble of Chicago:

> Rather than following standard chord progressions and traditional solo structures, large portions of the ensemble's repertoire are devoted to impromptu explorations of a semiotic freedom. These freely improvised passages bespeak a reliance on a kind of formalist aesthetic: jazz as a system of signs with no necessary relationship to anything outside itself. Notes are played not so much for their worth as semantic signifiers, but rather for their sound value.

This "formalist aesthetic" of which Heble speaks is not formalism in its traditional sense of music for music's sake, however. One of the key elements or motivating factors of this organization's approach is, after all, a highly politicized and polemical re-thinking of music's place in American society.

2.1.6.2 Language-games

In an important discussion of Wittgenstein's concept of the language-game in *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard (1984:10) puts his point thus:

> Wittgenstein, taking up the study of language again from scratch, focuses his attention on the effects of different modes of discourse; he calls the various types of utterances he identifies along the way (a few of which I have listed) *language-games.* What he means by this term is that each of the various categories of utterance can be defined in terms of rules specifying their properties and the uses to which they can be put—in exactly the same way as the game of chess is defined by a set of rules determining the properties of each of the pieces, in other words, the proper way to move them.

If one is permitted to view musical performance in terms of “various types of utterance,” in Lyotard’s terms, it seems possible to classify musicking itself as a language-game, one whose connotative content is largely indeterminate. For example, Inuit throat-songs imply a complex set of cultural and historical connotations for the community which practises them, connotations largely lost on the average Westerner who might perhaps find them as amusing or odd as Tibetan music, but certainly foreign. This reinforces perhaps the sociocultural nature of the New Musicology’s attempt to consider music as a communal and socially directed activity.

The author is suggesting moreover that Wittgenstein’s categories of utterance for speech are typified in the symbolic language of music notation by such devices as dynamics, phrase marks, accents, and so on: in short, those devices that mimic the action of breathing and emphasis within human speech. Within music styles that do not encompass notation as a mediation device, phrasing may be conceived of quite differently but still as a form of conversation, in which individuality and uniqueness of parlance are highly valued. This metaphorical conception of music as speech is extensively discussed in Monson (1996:73-96).

Wittgenstein, in his definition of the language-game, places a strong emphasis on verbal language as an activity and lists a wide variety of examples of such activities (PI §23, emphases in original):

> Here the term "language-*game*" is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a life-form. Review the multiplicity of language-games in the following examples, and in others:
> Giving orders, and obeying them—
> Describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements—
> Constructing an object from a description (a drawing)—
> Reporting an event—
> Speculating about the event—
> Forming and testing a hypothesis—
> Presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams—
> Making up a story; and reading it—
> Play-acting—
> Singing catches—
> Guessing riddles—

> Making a joke; telling it—
> Solving a problem in practical arithmetic—
> Translating from one language into another—
> Requesting, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying.

Lyotard (1979) makes three important observations with regard to language-games, in which utterances are subject to a system of rules beyond the control of the individual players:

> It is useful to make the following three observations about language-games. The first is that their rules do not carry within themselves their own legitimation, but are the object of a contract, explicit, or not, between players (which is not to say that the players invent the rules). The second is that if there are no rules, there is no game, that even an infinitesimal modification of one rule alters the nature of the game, that a "move" or utterance that does not satisfy the rules does not belong to the game they define. The third remark is suggested by what has just been said: every utterance should be thought of as a "move" in a game.

For Bowman, in discussing Margolis's work, the language-game is a useful concept in catering for the unpredictable character of musical meaning (1998:239):

> On Margolis's view, musical meanings are contingent, culturally relative, and culturally emergent in ways that make them unlikely candidates for study from the systematic purview of semiotic science. Pointing to Wittgenstein's conception of language-games as extensively improvisational, fluid, and unpredictable affairs, Margolis believes meanings are contingent and consensual phenomena. They are deeply embedded in the various and ever-evolving social practices that give rise to them. In short, the rigorous aspirations and rule-governed nature of semiotics is ill suited to the ambiguity, the multiplicity of potential meanings, the indefinite variability, and the diversity of musical phenomena and practices.

Wittgenstein's idea of the language-game, in allowing for a wide range of fluid, contingent, and negotiable meanings within musicking, is a powerful concept for the analysis of improvised music in general, and Soundpainting in particular, in that it emphasizes the contingency of musical meaning. As Bowman describes it, this concept is highly relevant to this study, in that it accommodates the diversity of musical practices within various systems of rules, which may or may not be "formalized" through musical notation.

2.1.6.3 Grammar

> Wittgenstein adopts the term ‘grammar’ in his quest to describe the workings of this public, socially governed language, using it in a somewhat idiosyncratic manner. Grammar, usually taken to consist of the rules of correct syntactic and semantic usage, becomes, in Wittgenstein's hands, the wider—and more elusive—network of rules which determine what linguistic move is allowed as making sense, and what isn't.
>
> (Biletzki and Matar 2005)

In the light of the above statement, Wittgenstein's adoption of the term "grammar" suggests the possibility of likewise conceiving of music as a "public, socially governed language." This raises in turn a question with regard to who exactly might be considered to be the custodians of this musical language: the author suggests that this role is taken up by the loose community of musicians, listeners, and marketers of jazz, whose viewpoint tends to be somewhat conservative.

The conservatism of this community is evident in conventional approaches to jazz pedagogy, which mostly takes a no-nonsense approach to the validity of linguistic moves within the language-game of tonal jazz. The individual who takes on the community therefore also takes on the rules of the game and in language, "the formidable adversary of connotation," in Lyotard's terms.

In an imaginary dialogue between a sceptic and a musician,[87] Naomi Cumming (2000:265) suggests that while the boundaries of a musical community may be difficult to define in a final or narrowly circumscribed way, it is nonetheless possible to describe such a community:

> Sceptic: "If you do not define the boundaries of the community, how can you specify the criteria of judgment used by those within it?"
> Musician: "Vagueness in defining the boundaries of a community of language users never prevented a language from functioning before, so

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[87] For the sake of clarity, the author identifies whose position Cumming is representing here.

> long as the language is connected with a shared '***form of life***,' as the late Wittgenstein puts it. A community of those who compose, perform, critique, theorize, and write histories of Western classical music in the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries is closely defined for practical purposes."
> Sceptic: "You make a circle around an arbitrary field of play."
> Musician: "Yes. And by doing so I acknowledge a boundary, a limit to a 'world,' without denying that it may intersect with other worlds, which bring perspectives to what I have so enclosed."

Cumming's argument hinges on Wittgenstein's notion of the 'form of life,' which she defines as a variety of activities associated with her area of research, as in Western music composing, performing, and so on. Although Wittgenstein's term is the subject of a certain amount of controversy, Hacker's definition of Wittgenstein's term suggests that what he is referring to is the notion of culture *tout court*. On this basis, and although she is referring to WEAM, it does not seem unreasonable to theorize the existence of a similar community (or communities) within jazz, for whom aesthetic criteria of judgement are also at stake. As Hacker states (2005):

> Wittgenstein employed it to indicate the roots of language and of agreement in application of linguistic rules, in consensual, regular forms of behaviour. This includes natural, species-specific action and response, as well as concept-laden, acculturated activities. Speaking a language is part of a form of life (a culture) and to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life.

Is it therefore possible to view musical practices likewise as "forms of life?" It seems plausible to do this on the basis of musicking's grounding in "consensual and regular behaviour," in the sense that music tends (for the most part) to conform to a definite set of rules, which form its grammar. Although it is risky to generalize, as Wittgenstein warns, it seems clear enough that within the genre of tonal jazz, for instance, the acquisition of improvisational skills operates within the framework of a system of tension and resolution. This system of axioms operates within a framework of generally agreed-upon conventions as to what note-choices are deemed as "correct" or "incorrect."

To what extent these rules are defined as "linguistic" is the province of

musical semiotics, but, although Cumming is referring to a community of practitioners within WEAM, it does not seem unreasonable to theorize the existence of a similar community (or communities) within jazz, for whom aesthetic criteria with regard to jazz's common practice are also at issue. A renewed focus on the role of the community's role in patrolling the limits of the grammar of African American music forms the basis of recent studies by such writers as McClary (2000), Heble (2000), Fischlin and Heble (2004), and Lewis (2000, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c).

Returning to Wittgenstein, in keeping with his move away from syntactic analysis to usage, he maintains that the task of philosophy with respect to the determination of meaning is not to be completed through a process of detached observation, but by means of an active engagement with what is actually taking place. For Biletzki and Matar (2005), this is a move away from generalized speculation to the careful consideration of specific cases:

> Rather, when investigating meaning, the philosopher must 'look and see' the variety of uses to which the word is put. So different is this new perspective that Wittgenstein repeats: 'Don't think but look!' (PI §66); and such looking is done *vis a vis* particular cases, not thoughtful generalizations. In giving the meaning of a word, any explanatory generalization should be replaced by a description of use.

What this line of thinking seems to require is a greater degree of caution with regard to abstract generalizations about music and a greater emphasis on the various contexts in which musicking takes place. In this sense, Soundpainting can be construed as a particular type of language-game, as can be the practices of WEAM and the various forms of musical life that employ improvisation.

The behavioural rituals and performance conventions of the "form of life" known as WEAM (with its entrances, exits, faithful adherence to the intentions of the score, as well as the very notion of the “work” as autonomous object)

support this conception.[88] The question then arises: Are there similar rules for the production and consumption of improvised music? Or even more simply put, does improvised music similarly exist as a language-game with a somewhat different grammar? As suggested in section 1.7.3, this certainly appears to hold true for tonal jazz, in which the logic of the ***changes*** dictates the improviser's choice of notes.

Conceiving of improvised musicking as a Wittgensteinian language-game (with its idiosyncratic grammar) opens the way to an analytical approach in which is acknowledged the contingent and fluid nature of such musical practices. Viewing musical meaning in this light is a means of avoiding the reifying tendencies of some traditional musicology, which thereby seeks to conceal, or at least suppress, the hegemonic implications of tonality and its discourses, as theorized by McClary, Heble, and others. According to these writers, musical meaning is conceived of as eminently negotiable and culturally "constructed," rather than inhering in "the music itself."

The pragmatic emphasis in Wittgenstein's philosophy of language allows the author to situate the negotiation of subjectivity in the context of musicking as activity, in other words, as process rather than product. The work concept of traditional musicology suggests that music exists as an absolute entity, beyond time and space, and thereby diminishes its nature as a part of the social fabric of humankind. Viewing musical styles as an assortment of language-games with various (and variable) rules of engagement acts as a counterweight to totalizing generalizations about the relative value of different genres.

As applicable to Soundpainting, the author suggests that these concepts of

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[88] The author wishes to stress the understanding here that music, while it does not have the same direct connotativity (force of meaning) as spoken or written language, nonetheless may be seen as obeying a similar set of rules of operation to languages in general, which rules amount to music's *langue*.

Wittgenstein may be very useful tools for the analysis of spontaneously created music, in so far as they expose both the conventional and the contingent underpinnings of such processes. In the following chapter, the author will make an extended comparison between the work concept (and its part in WEAM musicology's strategy of canon formation) and the rather more flexible view of musicking as process. Such a view also attempts to take cognizance of musicking as an embodied activity, thereby acknowledging the contribution of performers to the spontaneous and collective process of creation.

Chapter 3 : Music as work and event

3.1 Introduction: Spoken and written language

The author, building on the work of Wishart, Bateson, and Wittgenstein, compares the operations of language in its written form and its functioning as speech. This distinction leads in turn to a view of spoken language as contextualized, in other words, as depending on kinesic and paralinguistic features to convey the full force of its meaning. The author asserts that there may exist a theoretical or model parallel between the conception of music as work (with its roots in written language) and the notion of music as event (illustrating a form of speech in action). As Wishart claims (1996:13, emphasis in original):

> For Plato, the *idea* of the object, which took on a new historical permanence in its notation in the written word, came to have more 'reality' than the object-as-experienced. The commonplace tables and chairs which we experience in the course of our everyday life were mere pale reflections of the ideal table and chair existing in some Platonic heaven. (This heaven in fact was to be found between the covers of books). This radically new stance reflects a permanent tendency of scribe-dominated cultures towards the reification of ideas and the undervaluing of immediate non-verbal experience, which has special relevance to the history of music.

Wishart builds an argument about the dominance of writing in Western culture, wherein he emphasizes the tendency of scribes to privilege the "combinatorial process" of written language over experience *per se*. Wishart himself is alert to the implications of this stance for musical study, in which ideas become reified and immediate non-verbal experience is marginalized. Wishart continues (*ibid.*):

> Even for the average literate individual it might at first sight appear that what we can think is commensurate with what we can say, and hence to appear verbally confused or elliptical is easily interpreted as a failure of clear thought, rather than a difficulty of formulation of a perfectly clear non-verbal idea. For example, the idea of a good 'break' in improvised musical performance is clearly understood by

> any practitioner but has never been reduced to a verbal description.

Wishart is suggesting here that to describe in words the "break"[89] in the practice of improvised music is an exercise in demonstrating the potential epistemological gap between a non-verbal activity and its description in verbal terms. What Wishart implies is that improvisers understand instinctively how to "make the right noises" in this regard, and any attempt to codify such procedures in terms of verbal or written language falls short of the reality of the activity as practised by musicians. It might be suggested, as Bateson has done, that this gap between activity and description lies in the nature of language itself (2000:373-374):

> Verbal language is almost (but not quite) purely digital. The word 'big' is not bigger than the word 'little'; and in general there is nothing in the pattern (*i.e.*, in the system of interrelated magnitudes) in the word 'table' which would correspond to the system of interrelated magnitudes in the object denoted. On the other hand, in kinesic and paralinguistic communication, the magnitude of the gesture, the loudness of the voice, the length of the pause, the tension of the muscle, and so forth—these magnitudes correspond (directly or inversely) to magnitudes in the relationship that is the subject of discourse.

Bateson considers non-verbal communication as analogic, in which kinesic and paralinguistic factors such as the size of the gesture, where the voice is pitched, and so on, determine more about the relationship in question than a verbal description can adequately convey. Returning to Wishart's example from improvisation, it is clear that, in the practice of this type of music, playing a convincing break is not something that can be learnt from reading about it: musicians tend to acquire this knowledge from listening to other practitioners of the improviser's art.

In Wishart's terms, the difference between the digital nature of verbal

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[89] The break in jazz refers to the point in the score at which the ensemble stops so as to allow the soloist a space in which to make an unaccompanied solo statement. Dizzy Gillespie's piece, *A Night in Tunisia*, is a good example of this practice.

communication and its analogic counterpart lies in the nature of the meaning that these different types of communication aim to convey (1996:13ff.):

> I am going to propose that words never 'mean' anything at all. Only people 'mean' and words merely contribute towards signifying people's meanings. For the scribe meaning appears to result as the product of a combinatorial process; broadly speaking, various words with more or less clearly defined reference or function are strung together in a linear combination to form sentences, paragraphs, etc., which have a resultant clearly defined meaning.

Wishart (*ibid.*) goes on to highlight the difference between the linearity of such combinatorial procedures that yield the units (sentences, paragraphs, and so on) of written language and what he terms the synthetic process of individual speech acts:

> For the individual speaker, however, meaning is a synthetic activity. He or she *means*. Not merely the combination of words but a choice from an infinitude of possible inflections, tones of voice and accents for their delivery, together with possibilities of movement, gesture and even song, enter into the synthesis of the speech-act which attempts to convey what he or she means. In this way a speech act may uniquely convey quantities of information about the state of mind of the speaker and his relationship to what is said (for example irony and so on) which would be entirely lost if merely the words used were transcribed, but is certainly not lost on the person spoken to.[90]

Written language, in its emphasis on linear sequence, lends itself to contemplation as a carrier of reified meaning, in the same way as an "authoritative" edition of a score contains meaning for orthodox musicology. Wishart's conception of meaning as a synthetic activity suggests, however, that spoken language is capable of conveying a far wider range of nuance than the written word. Wishart's emphasis on the importance of the mode and context of the speech act suggests an affinity with the later Wittgenstein's notion of the language-game as being tied to

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[90] Wishart concludes by saying (*ibid.*): "It is clear that not meaning, but signification, resides in the words and that the mode and context of use of these significations all contribute towards the speaker's meaning."

its context (PI §546, emphases in original):

> In this way I should like to say the words "Oh, *let* him come!" are charged with my desire. And words can be wrung from us,—like a cry. Words can be *hard* to say: such, for example, as are used to effect a renunciation, or to confess a weakness. (Words are also deeds).

Significantly for this study, Wishart includes musical activity as a means of adding value to a given speech act. It seems reasonable to conclude from the above discussion that there exists the possibility of distinguishing between two areas of musical attention: one, wherein the emphasis is on the study of music as object, and the other, where music is considered essentially as an activity. The study of music as object (the province of orthodox musicology) focuses its attention on the product, whereas, in considering the process of musicking for itself, emphasis is placed on the ways in which musical activity is used to articulate meaning. This emphasis on the processual character of musicking has important implications for communication, as Iyer suggests (2004:393-394):

> In the 1990s a wave of important scholarship on African American music addressed some of the ways in which meaning is generated in the course of jazz improvisation. Much of this work focuses on the crucial role of interactivity and group interplay in the dialogical construction of multiplicities of meaning. Here one draws on a notion of communication as process, as a collective activity that harmonizes individuals rather than a telegraphic model of communication as mere transmission of literal, verbal meanings.

Iyer makes a vital point, recalling Bakhtin's theory of language in its employment of the concept of dialogism. Iyer's argument rests on a conception of communication as a collective and collaborative process, rather than what he terms "a telegraphic model," which presupposes a more rigid and unidirectional view of meaning and communication.[91]

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[91] The author discusses the nature of communication in improvised music in further detail in section 5.3.

3.1.1 Results and procedures

In an interview (Prasad 2002), Eberhard Weber emphasizes the importance of the finished product over the process of creation:

> I'm only interested in results, not in procedures to get somewhere.[92] In the good old days, when one had the chance to go to jazz clubs and there were jam sessions, some would go onstage, including myself. We would play some free improvisation or ***modal*** improvisation for a half-hour or so and it was really dynamic, wonderful and perfect for that moment. Then I would put the bass down and leave the stage. The musicians would look at me and say "What's going on? Why are you leaving?" I said "Because we just had a nice half-hour and it was perfect. If we continue, it's only going to be repetition." So, again, I'm not interested in playing, but having results. That's the big difference between me and other musicians.

Weber's focus on results, in his opinion, illustrates a "big difference" between himself and other musicians. His viewpoint is an atypical one for an improvising musician, opposed (as it appears to be) to so much of the radicalism of the free jazz aesthetic. These sentiments were echoed in a conversation with the author (Munich, 1980) in which Weber discussed his move from experimentation as a player in the 1960s German free jazz scene[93] to the kind of organized (formal) compositional structures evident in his first solo recording *The Colours of Chloë* (1974).

Weber made two significant statements regarding this move towards organization in this conversation. He felt that, in many respects, playing free jazz was a kind of hit or miss endeavour, which entailed a certain amount of “groping around in the dark to find something,” and, as a result, that the artistic rewards therefrom were uncertain. In fact he spoke of a five per cent return on his investment of time and energy. Secondly, he suggested that playing this kind of music took a lot of practice and getting

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[92] Emphasis added. Weber's position (if it is to be taken at face value) is basically diametrically opposed to Soundpainting and free music.
[93] Weber worked mainly with Wolfgang Dauner and Volker Kriegel in this period.

to know the musical personalities of his fellow performers.[94]

This attitude of apparent dissatisfaction[95] with the random or repetitive elements of spontaneously created music led Weber into the managerial vector of composer/leader rather than accompanist, the more traditionally accepted role of the bass-player. Bass-players who also compose and lead bands, as Weber does, are relatively rare (Charles Mingus and Jaco Pastorius being the most immediate exceptions to this rule). As stated above, Weber's focus on results is an atypical one for an improvising musician; for many improvisers, the interest appears to lie in the moment-to-moment processes as they unfold, rather than the eventual outcome as determined by the composer.

3.1.2 Intractable questions

In beginning his analysis of Mahler's *Sixth Symphony*, Samuels (1999:1) notes how:

> Musical works seem by turns to be anomalous amongst the arts because of their lack of linguistic articulation and referential content, or to hold the key to understanding the intractable questions of deconstructive intertextuality.

It is natural perhaps for musical analysts in some quarters to have directed their attention to the study of scores as the authoritative means through which composers make their musical intentions manifest. For example, Bowen (2001:429) states:

> Musicology inherited both the aesthetic of music as work and the German symphonic repertoire to which it is best suited. Musicology has traditionally had difficulty with the 'music as event' genres (like

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[94] This point to some extent highlights the paradox that some freely improvised music requires hard work to sound apparently "spontaneous."
[95] Apparent, because at least four Weber recordings as leader (*The following morning*, *Later that evening*, *Orchestra*, and *Pendulum*) feature passages of music that are obviously improvised, either collectively or solo.

jazz), and ethnomusicology has absorbed most of these genres.[96]

To a certain extent this statement points to an underlying ideology of late modernism, which separates "serious" art (with its focus on musical works) from its less "reputable" counterpart in the fields of jazz and popular musics, for instance.[97] What Bowen is proposing (*ibid.*), however, is a useful distinction between music as work ("with the score as its inviolable sacred text"[98]) and music as event ("with the score as merely its blueprint"). The author suggests that in tonal jazz practice, for example in the field of small group improvisation, the score is mostly used in Bowen's second sense, as a blueprint, with relatively wide latitude for interpretation. In many cases of the "music as event" genre, the author suggests, the score is of secondary importance, if present at all.[99]

Developments in critical theory through the course of the twentieth century have called into question the possibility of a final and objective reading of a musical score.[100] Derrida and the poststructuralists insist on the reader's role in the establishment of meaning in a text, implying thereby that the cherished procedures of orthodox musicology are open to any number of

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[96] Bowen continues (2001:429, n15) by suggesting: "I would also venture that musicology has projected the concept of music as work backwards in time to genres and periods where it is largely inappropriate. Corelli, one imagines, would care more about the performing conditions, the unique style of the performer, the response of the audience, the sound of the instrument, and the overall impact of the performance than the critical edition on which it is based. For performer-composers like Corelli and Rossini, the integrity of the performance was more important than the integrity of the work."

[97] This line of thinking is especially evident in the writing of Adorno.

[98] The religious imagery suggests to what extent this mythology is taken as unspoken musicological dogma.

[99] People in these less formal styles of music will often rehearse and play the music by ear. Charles Mingus, for example, would sketch out ideas at the piano for his musicians to learn, and would seldom rely on a wriitten score to convey his musical ideas. As Collier mentions (1981:443): "It became his practice to bring to rehearsal only sketches of the final product. He would play on the piano what he wanted each player to do and would discuss with him the emotional effects he wanted him to achieve."

[100] The author has suggested (sections 2.1.4 and 2.1.5) that a defining characteristic of both poststructuralism and the deconstruction project is a problematization of accepted notions with regard to the inviolability of the Text.

reasonable (and sometimes not so reasonable) interpretations. The crypto-scientific nature of these procedures (as typified by the apparently objective contemplation of the reified object of the musical score) is also interrogated by the philosophical procedures of critical theory, which call into question such hallowed concepts as objectivity, disinterestedness, and the full and final settlement of meaning as manifest in the score. As Bowen has suggested (2001:429), these "traditional" assumptions regarding fixed meaning are seen to operate in the historical study of the music of the German symphonic repertoire, which by definition, excludes non-Western musical practice.

Wishart (1996:261) is alert to the implications of what might be termed the "poetics of detachment" in stating:

> The problem of detachment has particular significance in Western society. As an aspect of a professional pursuit, particularly the pursuit of science, it has proved highly socially fruitful. A detachment from the social sphere is normally (except in the case of politicians and military personnel) regarded as a form of mental illness. Mental detachment in science is useful because it enables us to develop instruments which may then be useful to the social body. Social detachment in the research which precedes an artistic work may also be useful in that it enables us to look at our materials in new ways. Social detachment in the artistic work itself, however, makes it intrinsically meaningless except as a solipsistic activity for the artist or an interesting intellectual game for analysts. There is a certain psychopathology in the scientific method when it is applied to other beings such as in the pseudo-science of behaviourism and in the pseudo-art of the notational formalists.

The repertoire-bound tendencies of formalist musicology focus on the symbolic language of musical notation, which is but one element among many complex contemporary musical practices. A musicology which aims to include the infinite variety of musicking as practised today faces a major crisis of confidence, as expressed in Cook and Everist (2001:v): “The history of musicology and music theory in our generation is one of loss of confidence; we no longer know what we know.”

The question arises as to whether there is a way out of this crisis for

contemporary musicology. If so, the way is perhaps being pointed out by such writers as Small, who views the event of a symphony concert as a kind of ritual whose primary purpose is to make statements about relationships. For Small, the ritualistic elements of such an event extend beyond the boundaries of the score, and comprise extra-musical factors, which create the circumstances for the making of such statements.

The move into ***social semiotics*** (especially in ethnomusicology and jazz studies[101]) acts as a counterweight to a problematic tendency within formalist musicology, namely, its privileging text over context. In this regard, studies by Monson, Berliner, Chris Smith, Reason, Singer, *et al.,* focus their attention on the *gestalt* of the musical event, thereby bringing the human element back into musicological discourse.

3.2 Music as work: The semiotics of notation

> The concept of a work of art, where this embraces, say, a work of music, a work of literature, or a painting, has not always been understood in the way it is today, and it stands in more than one relation to the different practices in which it functions. The relations between each art and its associated work-concept are not easily made subject to generalization, since in each case they are deeply historicized and are comprehended only by reference to the individual histories of the different arts.

Goehr's argument (1992:79-80) springs from her central idea of the work-concept, and further suggests that the differences of this concept in various artistic fields of endeavour are to some extent contingent, by virtue of being rooted in their individual histories. While alert to the possible dangers of over-generalization implicit in the notion of a universal, all-embracing work-concept, Goehr (1992:83) confirms Bowen's viewpoint regarding the repertoire-based rationale, which justifies the possibility of such an idea:

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[101] Social semiotics (in musical studies) seeks to situate musical events within the social framework in which they take place.

> Theories of musical works have been formulated on the basis of examples drawn from the classical repertoire of the early nineteenth century. Beethoven is the composer, and his Fifth Symphony the work, most frequently referred to. Some theorists deliberately confine themselves to examples from this repertoire. We are not told why.
>
> But it is revealing that examples drawn from early music, avant-garde music, often from folk, jazz, and popular music, but rarely if ever from the music of the nineteenth-century classical repertoire, are appealed to especially when one theorist challenges a definition offered by another theorist.

Goehr's "theorizing about theorizing" confirms the existence of an apparent conflict of interest between musicology with its work-concept and ethnomusicology, which draws from the practices of "folk, jazz, and popular music" to justify the different conclusions it reaches. The nature of the conflict that Goehr describes is an example of what Korsyn terms the Tower of Babel, in which musicologists literally are unable to talk sense to one another, because their methodologies and fields of interest have become so deeply divided that any form of meaningful dialogue is effectively precluded from taking place (2003:6):

> When music becomes the object of academic disciplines as it is today, discourse can become a site of struggle among the factions and interest groups that compete for the cultural authority to speak about music. The expert critical and technical languages that these groups invent can foster a social bond among those who share them, but they can also alienate and exclude outsiders. This danger seems increasingly evident to many in the field.

It is not only in the field of academic discourse, however, that such alienation and exclusion take place. Ake suggests that, in the early days of ***bebop***, not only the everyday discourse of verbal language (musicians' slang) but such exclusionary devices as tempo, harmonic complexity, and the nature of melody itself, were employed as tactical moves to draw lines between the closed circle of those beboppers "in the know" and their less hip counterparts (2002:66):

> Early boppers developed their own 'mystery' language as a means of distancing themselves from unhip outsiders (white *and* black). Stage

> demeanor was 'cooler,' less 'entertainer'-like, than that of many of their jazz predecessors. Meanwhile, jazz performances became increasingly virtuosic. Extremely fast tempos became commonplace, chord changes more complex, melodies longer, more intricate, and more angular than in the Swing era. As Lott[102] describes this early scene, 'At its hippest (and meanest), such a common language became a closed hermeneutic that had the undeniable effect of alienating the riff-raff and expressing a sense of felt isolation, all the while affirming a common purpose—even at the expense of other musicians.'

Bowen, whose range of musical activities includes conducting, composing, pedagogy, and playing jazz piano, to name but a few facets, suggests that works exist somewhat separately from both their associated performances and their scores. He classifies performances as events and scores as physical objects (which seems altogether reasonable) and contends that, despite being subject to the changing forces of creation and reception, works are relatively stable phenomena. As Bowen states (2001:425):

> Music is a sequence of sounds, each of which appears only in the present, and which, therefore, has no persistent physical existence. While the sound of a musical performance is fleeting, however, the musical work exists even when the performers are silent, and this continued existence is due to human memory.

The author contends that this persistence of the musical work is not simply due to human memory, but also a side effect of a strongly entrenched view that attempts to perpetuate a distinction between "high" and "low" forms of art. In such a view, popular music exists merely to promote and maintain class-interests through false consciousness and the hidden machinations of capitalism, whereas WEAM (especially in its "modern" manifestations) has the moral imperative of raising consciousness through its complexity and difficulty. Writers such as DeNora (2003) and Krims (2003) have criticized this viewpoint as exhibiting both elitism and a misplaced faith in high art's ability "to educate the masses."

While it is true that the sound of music is fleeting, as Bowen maintains,

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[102] The citation is from Gabbard, *Jazz among the Discourses* (1995a:243-55).

one of the obvious consequences of the work-concept is its diminution of the role of the performer(s) in the musicking process. Not only this, but the work-concept brackets out the crucial elements of ritual and convention that animate such musical performances, to which Small is alert (1998). As he suggests (1998:107):

> All over the world today, in art galleries, palaces and museums as well as in opera houses and concert halls, objects that were originally made for the rituals of the rich and powerful, and occasionally the poor and humble, are today exhibited out of their original context, their original social function forgotten or obscured. This applies as much to paintings and sculptures, to masses and concertos, as it does to crowns, robes, masks, crucifixes and other, to us, more obviously ritual objects, for paintings, sculptures, masses and concertos too were originally intended for use in the rituals of their time, for display at special events and ceremonies. It is only works created since the middle of the nineteenth century or perhaps a little earlier that appear not to possess a ritual function and to have become simply isolated, self-contained works <u>intended as the objects of disinterested contemplation</u> (emphasis added).

The significant point here perhaps is that scores (as physical objects) are not just objects in the real world in the same category of "things" like rocks, sheep, or hovercraft. Williams puts this well in saying (2001:36): “Notation is not a neutral device that transparently records ideas formulated independently of it; it is an intrinsic part of the message and impacts on the way in which musicians conceive and perceive music.” The notation of an intended performance, whether in the form of guitar tablature, medieval plainsong, or as in more contemporary examples like multi-serialism or the graphic score, has a bearing on the way musicians are supposed to deal with it.

At the risk of over-simplifying Williams's fairly complex argument, it might be suggested that it is grounded in a somewhat poststructuralist viewpoint, one that exposes the perils of ignoring the discursive component of musicking. Seen from a Foucauldian angle, notation has the added implication of excluding the less skilled "Other" from the performance practice of certain kinds of music. In reality, it seems fairly obvious that a musician who is unable to read music will not find employment in a

symphony orchestra. *Pace* Derrida's argument on the misplaced authenticity of phonocentrism and the claims to authority of the "speaking subject," WEAM's emphasis on such skills privileges the visual element of musicking, while other musical genres (such as jazz and improvised musics) tend to emphasize the aural component.

Nettl (1998:1) highlights the relatively lowly status accorded to improvisation in the history of musicology when he explains:

> In the history of musicology, improvisation—sometimes defined as the creation of music in the course of performance—has played a minor role. Musicologists have been concerned in the first instance with composition, and less with the process than with the completed piece of music as set down by its creator. Affected by the research traditions of visual art and literature, they have concentrated on the finished work, analyzed the interrelationships of its components, and looked at its history, but rarely have they been concerned with the varying orders of creativity that may have led to the final product.

The marginalization of improvisation in some musicological discourse, as Nettl suggests, is due to its focus on the finished product, not on the creative processes that take place during improvisation. However, the burgeoning interest in jazz studies as part of academic discourse may be seen as a counterweight to this tendency of orthodox musicology, and a number of scholars[103] have made contributions to the study of what Nettl terms "orders of creativity" within various fields of improvised music, especially as manifested in performance. Nettl here highlights a challenge for contemporary ethnomusicology: how to turn the spotlight on to issues such as process as opposed to product? Is it possible, or appropriate, to apply scientific analysis to moment-by-moment processes?

It seems evident that there is a difficulty here, because, in so treating the creative impulse behind improvisation, musicologists have tended to overlook that their focus on composition as the be-all and end-all of

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[103] See especially Berliner (1994), Lewis (1996), Monson (1996), and Sawyer (1999, 2003, 2006b).

musical activity runs contrary to a pervasive historical trend. What the author is suggesting here is that improvisation has only lately been excluded from WEAM performance practice, and that until recently improvisation was actually the dominant practice in much musicking in the West. What such musicological discourse is examining is actually a fairly brief period in Western music history, in which the fetishization of the score as an authoritative index of the composer's intentions reaches epidemic proportions.

Bowman (1998:386) suggests, in examining Shepherd's approach to musical analysis, that the roots of this emphasis may lie within the difference between two sensory experiences of music: one visual, the other auditory:

> In contrast to hearing and the corporeal, timbral experience that lies at music's heart, vision is a 'silent and inert sensory channel which allows us not only to distance ourselves from the phenomena of the world but also to interject ourselves into the world from a distance. It is the sensory channel which allows us, from a single point of view, to order discrete objects into their uniquely structured locations in space.'[104] Thus, visual experience, as phenomenologists have shown us, is an experience of distance and separation. Its contents are discrete and objective, permitting cool, contemplative scrutiny. And since vision's content lies at a comfortable distance from us, visual experience is an experience of self-containedness.

Bowman's argument has much to offer as a means of explaining this privileging of visual experience over its auditory counterpart. The anthropologist E. T. Hall (1992:224-225) has suggested that the activities of reading music and playing by ear in fact originate in two different areas of the human brain, the neocortex and limbic brain respectively.

In more general terms, Korsyn (2003:151) has noted “the tendency among ethnomusicologists to privilege live or improvised music over notated music.” It seems apparent that the roots of these two processes of

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[104] The enclosed quotation is from Shepherd's *Music as Social Text* (1991:156).

privileging lie in the respective areas of interest, the provinces of musicology and ethnomusicology respectively. In the ethnomusicological domain, there does exist an inclination to favour the live element of musicking over its notated counterpart in WEAM, and this has obvious bearing on this particular study of Soundpainting as an apparently spontaneous phenomenon.[105]

Williams, in his discussion of the orchestra and the role of the conductor with reference to a poststructuralist notion of texts, continues by suggesting that (2001:38): “Performance, therefore, is a special kind of active reading, whether it derives from a written text or a set of assimilated codes (an improvisation).” One might ask at this stage, while agreeing with his point regarding “active reading,” in what way is orchestral performance deriving from a text (a musical score) independent of a different set of codes, hallowed by instrumental or vocal pedagogy and the weight of tradition from which neither of these sets of codes can altogether free itself?

The answer seems to operate on three fronts: on the one hand, it is fairly obvious that the codes vary depending on the kind of music under discussion, while, on the other, orchestral music needs the figure of the conductor as guide and interpreter of the composer’s work. Thirdly, there is the inescapable presence of the different grammars of notated and non-notated performance.

The difficulty of comparing the text and context of a symphony concert to a jazz concert, a marching band in Ohio to a Kabuki orchestra, or Gamelan music to plainsong, has the potential to lead to the kind of critical impasse as stated by Cook and Everist (section 3.1.2). Another element of musicology's crisis of confidence is described by Bowen who proposes the

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[105] The extent to which improvisation can be conceived of as "spontaneous" is a matter of debate, to which the author returns in section 4.1.1.

following solution (2001:424):

> The awareness of musical works as neither stable nor fixed phenomena does not have to be paralysing: rather, the fact that musical works change through both the creation and reception of performances presents us with a fundamentally new field of study.

In tandem with the development of notation comes the exclusion of improvisation (or performer intrusion) into the “work.” Being represented in notational format, for Dahlhaus (1983) and Goehr (1992), is a necessary condition for the awarding of “work”-status to a composition. The more the symbolic language of music has developed in complexity of subtlety and nuance, the more its effect has been to exclude the non-specialist and increasingly to demand a higher level of technical ability on the performer's part: notation may be seen in this light (as does Williams) as a technology for controlling and empowering certain class-interests. In this light, the words of Dahlhaus (1983)[106] have relevance: he "tells us, flatly, that 'the subject matter of music is made up, primarily, of significant works of music that have outlived the culture of their age' and that 'the concept 'work' and not 'event' is the cornerstone of music history."

However, as much as notation has developed in precision as a vehicle for conveying the composer's ideas, it is in the area of timbre that the symbolic language of WEAM notation is at its weakest. This is in stark contrast to the improvising musician's "playing" (in the Barthean sense) with this musical element as a constructor of individuality, as mentioned by Berendt and Lewis (section 1.4.4). While the notion of the orchestral *Klangideal* suggests homogeneity and a conventionally acceptable sound to which all players must conform, in improvised music the focus on individuality of sound is an ideological construct which privileges the individual over the collective.

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[106] As cited by Small (1998:4).

As well as fixing the composer's intentions in a relatively final way, the score serves the purpose of establishing the composer's intellectual and financial rights and thereby legitimating the origination of the work. Goehr's mention of the borrowing of themes as well as whole movements from another composer in the period prior to the nineteenth century (as a fairly routine procedure) suggests that the notion of the necessity of ownership developed fairly quickly outside the relative security of patronage by the church or the court.

Once composers lost the security of patronage, the notion of individual ownership or authorship became paramount for economic reasons. Increasingly, scores and the associated mechanisms for engraving, printing, and distributing them became the stock in trade of the newly liberated composer. Here is seen the influence of technology on the production of music; the gradual decentralization of the composer's role to the point at which nowadays, by means of files exchanged via the Internet, there is no necessity for the collaborators to meet face to face except as mediated through digitized virtual identities.

The moves toward the notion of copyright as an individually-situated right under constitutional law further isolated the composer from the performer who was now viewed as the paint on the conductor's canvas, as an indentured servant: ultimately, as a malleable "something" to add form or colour under often problematic conditions of employment. As Spruce notes (2001:119-120): "The significance attached to the notation of art music resulted in the delineation and realignment of musical roles."

3.3 Music as event: The semiotics of performance

Small deconstructs[107] a powerful assumption of some contemporary

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[107] Small (1998:14) uses the term in the sense of deciphering "the signals that are everywhere being given and received, and to learn the meaning not just of

historical and musicological approaches which postulate the existence of a category of musical works wherein is found "the essence of music and whatever meanings it contains" (1998:4). His perception of this state of affairs as deeply-rooted in musicological analysis contains important implications for this study which, as already noted, is primarily concerned with specific aspects of music performance, and a set of attendant associated philosophical and musical problems which arise from this orientation toward performance.

Small's *Musicking* (1998) proceeds from a so-called "thick description" of a hypothetical symphony concert and is a salutary attempt to deconstruct (among other things) the complex web of relationships bound up in such an event. The term "thick description" is defined by Scott and Marshall (2005) as follows:

> Intensive, small-scale, dense descriptions of social life from observation, through which broader cultural interpretations and generalizations can be made. The term was introduced in the philosophical writings of Gilbert Ryle, and developed by Clifford Geertz in anthropology, especially in his celebrated study of the Balinese cockfight.

When described purely in physical terms, the action of winking may be construed as a surface event, a manifestation of a particular type of muscular reflex. For Geertz, this surface category of description is to some extent insufficient, as it separates the action from its social context. The strategy of "thick" description includes the underlying complex of social relationships, habits, and patterns of communication that allow a "constructed" meaning to be ascribed to this action, a meaning whose construction, in turn, is bound up in the circumstances in which the action takes place. The point is that "thick" description highlights the "contextuality" of such an action, whose content or meaning is dependent on the type of message embodied in such an admittedly prosaic and

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the musical works that are being played there but of the total event that is a symphony concert."

routine human action.

For Geertz, this view has implications for defining the scope and limits of "analysis," as follows (1983:9):

> Analysis, then, is sorting out the structures—what Ryle called established codes, a somewhat misleading expression, for it makes the enterprise sound too much like that of the cipher clerk when it is much more like that of the literary critic—and determining their social ground and import.

Geertz is at pains to state at the outset of his discussion (1983:5) that his view of culture is grounded in semiotics, when he states:

> Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.

Geertz's view implies that conclusions drawn by the observer that have to do with the nature of a cultural act or event are at best provisional, and have to remain so, as they, and their accompanying codes, are not given to humankind *a priori*, but depend on what he memorably calls "webs of significance." Implicit in this elegant phrase are the two notions of entanglement and construction, a kind of anthropological Gordian knot of assigned meanings, rather than something that exists as a set of "givens."

It is apparent that this interpretation of culture as something constructed and provisional has implications for such critics as Small and McClary, who seem to view it as an antidote to a common tendency towards reification in Western thought. In this light, Lévi-Strauss's quest for the underlying structures of the myths of humanity and his assertion that they are built on a set of binary oppositions is fated to be exactly that: a quest, with little hope of arriving at an ultimate conclusion.

Through the technique of "thick description," Small (1998) establishes links between such factors as architectural structures, dress codes, and so on

(the network of rituals of the performance space of the symphony concert) and class-interests, thereby deconstructing assumptions about culture and ideology, as in: "We are here not just because we like to be seen partaking in this ritual, but because partaking in this ritual makes us who we are." He also notes that this methodology can be applied to any form of similar musical gathering: what is at stake is not so much the type of music being performed, but the common ritualistic character that such gatherings share.

For Clifton (1983:206-207):

> The aim of ritual is to permit an experience of achievement or accomplishment. To this extent, it is far from purposeless: a composition is experienced as a personal acquisition. It is precisely the experience of acquisition which synthesizes the serious and the frivolous into a single experiential act whose function it is to grasp adequately and appropriately the opposite pole of that act: the phenomenal object. This synthesis is best expressed by ordinary language, in which we say that we 'play' a composition which is a work of art, or at least which is the result of someone's hard work.

The implications of these concepts for this study are of great import. Small's concept of "musicking" considers performance itself as an appropriate site for musical research, simply because, for him, the site of performance is where music actually takes place. Clifton views the ritual element in music as having a synthetic purpose, in which the opposites of subject and object are neutralized through "acquisition."

Re-siting music in performance calls into question the heretofore unrevealed assumption that underlies some contemporary musicological agendas: one that maintains an artificial binary opposition between work and event. This binary opposition has aesthetic implications as well. As Sundin suggests (2000:6):

> The word 'aesthetics' is seldom used alone. Usually it is employed to describe or 'catch' certain activities or situations in our lives, such as playing an instrument, listening to music, watching a dance and valuing it—all situations expressing a relationship between a subject and an object. Many, including myself, would refer to say that a

> relationship is between two subjects. The object becomes a subject when I am responding to what it is saying.

Small and Clifton both emphasize the primacy of art's ritualistic component, bringing to the forefront the idea that art is something that artists *do*, rather than an *object* that artists create for an audience (real or imagined) to contemplate. This view of art as activity has links for the author with the Wittgensteinian notion of philosophy as an exercise in thinking as opposed to a historically determined line of debates around issues.

3.3.1 What was performance?

The distinction between music as work and as event re-situates this discussion in the site of performance as activity. For the author, however, this is not an unproblematic move, because now the necessity very forcibly arises to define what exactly is meant by performance. In this light the title of this section deliberately echoes that of McClary's provocative question, in *Conventional Wisdom* (2001:63): What was tonality?

McClary argues, not uncontroversially, that common practice tonality is linked to the social formations within which it arose and therefore it reflects (or enacts) in musical form the dominant ideology of the Enlightenment. She focuses on tonality (2001:65ff) as "the convention that undergirds and guarantees all the others, discussing how it constructed musical analogs to such emergent ideals as rationality, individualism, progress, and centered subjectivity. Far from merely reflecting their times, these musical procedures participated actively in shaping habits of thought on which the modern era depended."

If what McClary says in this regard is true, then one should find evidence of a similar relationship in our own time, in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Despite the enormous advances in communication technology in the preceding century, fragmentation of the individual grows

apace. Poverty, disease, and the relentless destruction of humankind's environment seem insoluble problems.

The ideals of modernism, such as they were, have failed. For Adorno, tonality survives in popular music as an ironic reflection of the hidden machinations of the culture industry, fostering "false consciousness," as it goes on its merry way in service to an ideal of musical anaesthetization. Nostalgia begins to feed on itself and is regenerated only in the form of simulacra, pale shadows of a former vitality.

In Auslander's view, the dominance of television has given rise to a "televisual" society wherein the act of live performance exists in a somewhat adversarial relationship to the mass media (1999:23):

> Television's specific ability to position itself as theatre's replacement has its origins in the claims of immediacy made on behalf of television throughout its development, and in television's claims to replicate theatrical discourse. What is true of the relationship between television and theatre is true, by allegorical extension, of the general cultural relationship of the televisual and mediatized to the live: the ideology of liveness that the televisual (the cultural dominant) inherited from television (the medium) has enabled it to displace and replace live performance in a wide variety of cultural contexts.

Watching a televised performance, however, implies a different kind of participation (at a remove from what actually takes place), on the one hand, and on the other, contains within such an act, the potential for repeatability, which is not possible in the case of an actual performance. Within the realm of the televisual, in this view, something is subverted: the instantaneity of the live event. This potential is exploited to the full in sports telecasting, an important feature of which is the action replay, wherein is recapitulated a particular moment or chain of events leading more often than not to a change in the circumstances of the game: a move leads to a goal or is narrowly prevented therefrom.

Participation in a community takes place at a mediatized remove: through a lens, brightly. For Auslander (1999:24):

> Live performance now often incorporates mediatization such that the live event itself is a product of media technologies. The spectator sitting in the back row of a Rolling Stones or Bruce Springsteen concert or even a Bill Cosby stand-up comedy performance, is present at a live performance, but hardly participates in it as such since his/her main experience of the performance is to read it off a video monitor.

Philosophical debates in critical theory in the twentieth century, it is suggested, in the fields of poststructuralism, deconstruction, and postmodernism, have held up the philosophical notion of the individual subject to close scrutiny. In interrogating a perceived dissonance between the public and the private "self," critical theory has called into question the nature of agency itself, in both the social and musical realms. The crisis in Cartesianism leads to a scenario wherein it is possible, or even necessary, for Cumming to speak of "intersubjective intelligibility," a term echoed in Monson's idea of "intermusicality."

The concept of society as a unified identity maintained over historical time, as modelled on the idea (on a geopolitical level) of the "nation-state," is also thereby called into question. Korsyn (2001:65) links this view to a particular idea of history as somehow unchanging and eternal when he says:

> One assumption that historians rely on to engineer continuity in history is the idea of a stable, enduring background against which change takes place. This strategy neutralizes and domesticates change by positing a realm of stability as a balance to the world of historical contingency. Change becomes less disruptive, less threatening, because it is the only thing moving against an otherwise immobile historical background.

Some contemporary musicology, influenced by twentieth-century literary theory, seems to be moving rapidly away from this view of history as a continuum in which composers create music by annexing and discarding previous compositional procedures. The background against which artistic activity takes place is in fact far from stable or enduring, as it is subject to the same political and social upheavals that shape human circumstances.

Text and context are now seen as inextricably intertwined and the relationship between composer, performer, and listener comes alive against the discursive background of “mediation": in what context and in which format is the music delivered and what power relations are thereby called into play?

3.3.2 "Saying something"

Monson sets the scene for her pioneering study of communication in jazz improvisation by employing a metaphor of musical communication as conversation as follows (1996:1-2):

> When a musician successfully reaches a discerning audience, moves its members to applaud or shout praises, raises the energy to dramatic proportions, and leaves a sonorous memory that lingers long after, he or she has moved beyond technical competence, beyond the chord changes, and into the realm of 'saying something.' Since saying something—or 'sayin' something,' as it's usually pronounced—requires soloists who can play, accompanists who can respond, and audiences who can hear within the context of the richly textured aural legacy of jazz and African American music, this verbal aesthetic image underscores the collaborative and communicative quality of improvisation.

Many jazz musicians would concur with Monson's view. Jazz certainly seems to "say something," not only in apparently trivial instances of songs with narrative content and a singer (as in the case of some performances of the blues and other standard forms), but also in the realm of "pure" instrumental music. It is worth noting that the metaphor of jazz as conversation does not presuppose, for many of the rhythm section players that Monson interviewed, the presence of lyrics as a condition for its existence.

Small (1998:50-63), following Bateson, discusses the role of gestural paralanguage in biology, and this seems a useful concept for describing the visual and non-verbal supplements which are constructed in the course of live performance. These by-products of the communicative and collaborative process taking place in jazz improvisation (in the higher

orders) require an act of reconstruction on the listener's part when the music is divorced from its circumstances of live production and marketed as a recording from which these paralinguistic clues are missing. It would perhaps follow that the next best thing to being in the audience at a live performance is to watch a film or DVD of such an event. What this line of argument suggests is that there is a qualitative difference between being present at a performance and the activities of watching a filmed version of a performance (or listening to a CD thereof). Cumming brings out another implication of this state of affairs when she states (2000:21):

> Paying attention to a performer's physical activity is important also in counteracting the sense of sound as disembodied, a sense that can come from listening to "piped" music, or to CDs whose technically altered perfection has removed the sounds of a performer's breath or of the obtrusive scraping of a bow on the strings. It is obvious that musical sounds are not, in origin, an impersonal or accidental event, that they do not come to exist in the disembodied medium of a CD without the action of a performer's body, but technological intervention can induce a partial forgetfulness of this fact.

Cumming goes on to highlight the disparity between a CD recording of the violinist Midori and her sound in a live performance, which led one critic to comment: "On this evidence the Midori who sells all those CDs is a creation of the microphone and the Sony engineers." Cumming here also is pointing at something rather more than mere "technological intervention" on the part of the engineers, but that such intervention has a powerful effect on the shaping of an identity through sound. The reviewer (Potter 1996a:74), by saying "the Midori," is in a sense alerting his readers to the existence of a set of "possible Midoris," at least one of which is the live performer in the flesh exhibiting characteristics of sound that are altered in a fundamental way so as to allow for the shaping of the recorded version of "Midori."

Korsyn is likewise alert to the disparity between live performance and what is presented as a product of the very different circumstances of the recording studio environment, when he says (2003:70): "I expect we have all had stunned moments of comparing live performances to the packaged,

glossy versions available on records and noticing that musicians sweat, grunt, breathe, and sigh."

It is a part of the aesthetics of concert hall performance, as noted by Small, to allow for a more limited range of bodily expression, at least among the rank and file members of the orchestra. Although they may be engaging with material that is technically difficult and physically demanding to realize, the etiquette of service to the work, and thereby the intentions of the composer, constrains the demonstration of such physical demands. Unless one happens to be the soloist in a concerto, or the conductor, the rules of engagement of the concert hall militate against the unfettered expression of such difficulties in paralinguistic terms, that is, by sweating, grunting, and so on.

However, in keeping with the hierarchical nature of the orchestra, the conductor or the soloist has a wider range of possibilities for paralinguistic expression available, again within the constraints of the etiquette of concert hall performance. Part of the mythology of conducting is the aesthetic of what might be termed the "grand gesture" of showmanship, in which the conductor manifests the physical, embodied symptoms of his engagement with the composer's intentions. Such larger than life gestures are available and form an undeniable part of the allure of controversy surrounding some celebrity conductors, whose attraction for the audience lies precisely in the extravagance of their conducting style. These gestures point in some cases to the conductor's negotiation of difficulties, deploying increasingly grandiose movements in keeping with both the increased scale of the piece and the larger orchestral forces under his control.[108]

As Horowitz maintains, with regard to the conductor as authority figure (1987:268):

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[108] As is sometimes evidenced by the behaviour of Hollywood film stars, it is but a short step from fame to power.

> Adorno's understanding of the celebrity conductor as a twentieth-century fetish, functionally comparable to the monopoly lord or authoritarian dictator, is one version of this viewpoint. On a more prosaic level, music itself elevated the conductor's role. Both Wagner's enlarged orchestra and his Romantic ideal of the conductor-interpreter as orchestral nerve and brain center demanded more authoritative, authoritarian leadership.

That such leadership could also encompass excesses of personal behaviour is almost guaranteed by the operations of this *mythos*. For Antek, as cited in Horowitz (1987:181):

> Toscanini's rage, somehow, always achieved a musical purpose. Childish, petulant, unreasoning as it was, we somehow respected and admired his capacity to be so moved and aroused by his feeling for the work. It was as though Toscanini, through his temper, through the fear, sympathy and resentment he inspired in the men, had made us all feel how important the music was to him and to us.

In the marshalling and control of such large forces, the conductor's concerns must also be seen in the light of "saying something," in Monson's phrase. Antek excuses, or rationalizes, Toscanini's outbursts because they are seen ultimately as in service to the music he is tasked to realize.

3.4 Music and the body

The author suggests that the study of music in performance likewise benefits from such a contextualized approach as Small's, which takes account of the multivalent tactics of solving the problem of the individual's need for self-expression while also acknowledging the aesthetic norms of the community. Such an approach attempts to take cognizance of the multi-dimensional character of live performance, in which meaning is generated through a multiplicity of signifiers, not only aural/musical signs *per se*, but the elements of what Reason (2004:73) theorizes as the "vibe" of such performances:

> In such an environment, sources of meaning cannot be limited exclusively to sonic morphologies such as the order of notes,

> orchestration, timbre, and the like; meaning is also located in the ways in which improvisers situate their bodies, change their facial expressions, and use their voices to accompany notes, gestures, silences, or phrases.

Reason is describing precisely the paralinguistic elements that add value to such performances. In symphony concerts, by contrast, these elements tend to be suppressed, at least for the rank and file members of such organizations. Similarly, the audience's opportunity for participation in such ceremonies is circumscribed by the unstated boundaries of the conventions within which the symphony concert operates. By way of example, it is commonly understood in this situation that the audience applauds at the end of the complete work and not between movements, whereas in jazz the audience members may often signal their appreciation of an impressive phrase by clapping in the middle of the piece.

DeNora, in discussing music's role in a variety of everyday contexts (aerobics classes, neonatal units in hospitals, and the workplace in general), conceives of music as a "prosthetic" technology, which she defines as follows (2000:102ff):

> Prosthetic technologies are materials that extend what the body can do—for example, steam shovels, stilts, microscopes or amplification systems enhance and transform the capacities of arms, legs, eyes and voices. Through the creation and use of such technologies actors (bodies) are enabled and empowered, their capacities are enhanced. With such technologies, actors can do things that cannot be done independently; they are capacitated in and through their ability to appropriate what such technologies afford.

DeNora considers how music facilitates daily tasks in such disparate contexts as grass cutting in Ghana, weaving in the Hebrides, and sea shanties, some of which are typified by the organizing principle of solo and chorus.[109] This principle obviously also underpins and animates such

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[109] "*Blow the man down*, for example, is composed of alternating solo and chorus lines. During the solo line, the crew rested. They pulled or hauled as they sang the refrain, thus engaging in 'strength' moves while exhaling" (2000:105).

American musical practices as the work song, in which demanding physical tasks are accompanied by similar patterns of call and response. These patterns, as McClary argues (section 4.1.4.2), are a central principle in much popular music and jazz; for her, they represent the relationship between the individual and the community writ large.

Broadly speaking, DeNora is considering in this instance the ways in which music may be said to enhance everyday activity by linking physical responses to the varieties of music that accompany them. Her interests in this discussion may be seen as concerned with how people interact with music as consumers. However, from a slightly different viewpoint, extending the concept of prosthesis into musicking itself is a useful starting point for the theorization of how musicians negotiate acoustic (as well as social and political) space. It is suggested that in this instance musical instruments, conductors' batons, microphones, scores, and amplification systems are all susceptible to being viewed likewise as prostheses. This line of argument places the emphasis on the creation and production of music as opposed to its consumption.

Eco (1999:362) distinguishes between *substitutive* and *extensive* prostheses on the basis that the first category does "what the body used to do but for one accidental reason or another no longer does," examples of which include artificial limbs, walking sticks, eyeglasses, and hearing aids. His category of extensive prostheses, those "which extend the natural action of the body," include such devices as megaphones, stilts, and magnifying glasses. DeNora's theorizing of music as a prosthetic technology is based on construing music as falling into Eco's extensive category. He also conceives of a third category of *magnifying* prostheses such as levers, telescopes, and microscopes, those that "do something that our body had perhaps dreamed of doing but without ever succeeding" (1999:362).

Considering a musical instrument as prosthesic raises two related questions: into which of Eco's categories does it fall, and, perhaps more

importantly, for what activity of the body does a musical instrument function prosthetically?

To answer the first question, one might suggest that instruments are not substitutive, in that they do not at first glance obviously make up for something lost or missing, and, as tempting as it may be to construe musical instruments and their attendant technologies as magnifying (adolescent dreams of rock stardom and the high volume levels of most rock concerts notwithstanding), they are perhaps best seen (as DeNora's concept of music itself suggests) as extensive. In such a case, the instruments musicians use to create music are more than mere "tools of the trade," as the music they create implies (for DeNora) the positive quality of enhancing everyday life.

As for the second question, the most immediately obvious answer seems to be that instruments act as extensions of the activity of singing. If one were to think of an alternative history of musicking in which the technology for inventing musical instruments was missing, the only means available for creating music might then be the human voice.

3.4.1 The instrument as extension of the performer

> The vibraphone invites overplaying almost by its very nature. The trumpet, by comparison, is at the opposite extreme: The visceral feeling of producing the tone is part and parcel of playing it. Each note counts. Moreover, horn[110] playing inculcates a natural instinct for restrained phrasing, if only because of the player's need to catch a breath of air.

As Gioia (1998:103) suggests above, the expressive qualities of musical instruments are connected to their physical construction. In discussing the vibraphonist Cal Tjader's uncharacteristically horn-like phrasing and

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[110] In jazz, the term "horn" refers to blown instruments (trumpets, trombones, and saxophones) as opposed to its WEAM usage as a shorthand for the French horn.

introspective playing style, Gioia makes in the author's opinion a false move of hasty over-generalization. Unfortunately, for every exemplar of restraint (he makes reference to the trumpet styles of Miles Davis and Bix Beiderbecke), there are the counter-examples of such emblems of machismo bravura as Dizzy Gillespie, Maynard Ferguson, and Arturo Sandoval, and many others, whose technical ability sometimes comes to the fore to the detriment of purely melodic concerns.

The mythology (or urban legend) in some jazz circles around Miles's embracing of the cool aesthetic because "he didn't have the chops[111] to play bebop" is belied by his fluent bop-inflected solo on the 1953 recording of the pianist Bud Powell's composition *Tempus Fugit*. The piece is played around m.m. = 290 (hence the pun implicit in the title), and Miles negotiates the tempo without apparently raising a sweat or sounding rushed. Gioia continues (1998:103):

> Little wonder that some of jazz's most concise melodists, from Bix to Miles, have been trumpeters. The trumpet has an almost built-in barrier to merely facile playing; instead it, more than the percussion or even string instruments, invites a centered Zen-like concentration on the melody line.

Gioia's suggestion, that the instruments he mentions have characteristic properties affecting how they are played, falls into a formalist trap of ascribing inherent qualities to inanimate objects. After all, it is only once the performer breathes life into an instrument that it produces sound in the first place. There is nothing in the attributes of the vibraphone or the trumpet itself that allows for this generalization, and Gioia appears to be confusing the canon of accepted styles with the innate qualities of the instruments themselves.

Naomi Cumming, whose early demise should be considered as a major loss to the field of musicology, wrote *The Sonic Self* first and foremost

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[111] Jazz slang for technical facility and strength.

from a performer's viewpoint. In this masterpiece, she systematically applies Peirce's theory of the sign to her experience as a classical violinist while emphasizing the pragmatic nature of his philosophy (2000:29):

> In Peirce's terms, the material qualities of a sound are the sign vehicle, by which it comes to represent (to be a 'representamen,' or 'sign.') The vocal grain it achieves is its 'object,' what it stands for. A third element is, however, required to account for this counter-factual relationship. Without interpretation, no material sound produced by a non-human instrument can be heard as a voice. In the third logical position there is, then, an 'interpretant.' It acknowledges two things: the conventions that allow a violin's sound to be heard as vocal in some contexts, and the act of recognition in a particular moment of listening.

Cumming is here theorizing the operation of a metaphorical strategy, which allows humans to speak of the "voice" of a performer, who is in fact *not singing*. Although one might take exception to her theorizing of non-vocal instruments as non-human, this distinction exposes the metaphorical operations that allow for the transposition of vocal qualities to instruments that do not possess them, and how this metaphorisation is fuelled in general by convention. Although Cumming's discussion mostly revolves around the field of WEAM and the classical violin, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that such metaphorical constructions abound in other types of musical activities. The operation of such metaphors makes it possible, for instance, for Ake (2002:71) to describe the playing of Ornette Coleman as "speechlike":

> The horn players' inclination to "scoop" or bend notes, sharpen or flatten pitches, serves to accentuate the rhetorical quality of their phrasing. Indeed, Coleman and Cherry enact a remarkably speechlike instrumental style, comparable in this respect only to such great pre-bop players as Johnny Dunn, Sidney Bechet, and the great Ellington "growlers," Bubber Miley, Joe Nanton, and Cootie Williams.

Ake's connection between intonation and rhetoric is a vital one. Whether it is justifiable is obviously open to debate, a debate which hinges on the extent to which a purely musical concept like intonation (how in tune or not a note may be) can be used to describe a different type of performance, that is to say, rhetoric, which is a type of linguistic procedure whose

primary purpose is to persuade. Such a strategy, the author suggests, is possible because in this instance Coleman and Cherry's "playing" with the concept of pitch as a stable entity is as much performance as is the improvised speech of an impassioned philosopher in ancient Greek times. They are making a statement about who they are; they are, in Monson's terms, "saying something."

By making a metaphorical link between rhetoric and Coleman's sound, Ake is exposing another quiet protest, a questioning of the hegemony of equal temperament, which says things have to be so. The exaggerated violence of the reactions both for and against Coleman's music is an ironic tribute to, and acknowledgement of, his willingness to examine the roots of his own music.

A consequence of the discursive implications of the poststructuralist project is to realize that Coleman's detractors ("He's out of tune", "He doesn't know alto saxophone is a transposing instrument", and so on) are as much bound up in the unexamined ideology of their position[112] as are his supporters. The naysayers subscribe to the notion of the permanence of a hidden and historically contingent phase of music called tonality (for McClary, both underpinning and underpinned by the values of the Enlightenment). These values have been demonstrated by the history of the twentieth century to lead to the perfection and refinement of a staggering range of bestial practices that have seriously called into question these "pure" moral standards.[113]

Why this is important is because the tonal phase in music, aided and

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[112] This is where McClary's hegemony of tonality operates in jazz. Conservatories train jazz musicians to play in tune and to have disdain for those who don't. In Indian music, which has a vastly superior concept of intonation and its expressive capabilities, an explicit connection is made between intonation and affect, which Westerners mostly seem incapable of perceiving.

[113] Science, rationalism, and Fordism are a lethal combination, to which the victims of ethnic cleansing and collateral damage (and other such twentieth century euphemisms) bear mute witness.

abetted by the ideological operations of the work-concept, has become normative for other cultures and periods. Merely subscribing to a technocratic view of Coleman's music as "out of tune" robs it of its most vital component, its quality of human embodiment (and perhaps fallibility) and what it means to say in raising the question: "What if things were otherwise?" This debate may be fated to arrive at one of Lyotard's implacable ***differends***, wherein the terms of engagement are so removed from one another that negotiation is literally "out of the question," and declaring a truce in the ideological war on language is "ruled out."[114] As an African American musician growing up in a racially divided country, Coleman as a signify(er), a human sign,[115] may be understood as "playing with" intonation to bear witness to his understanding of the contradictions of such a position.

3.4.2 The erasure of the body

Korsyn's deconstructive strategy reveals one of the paradoxical aspects of humankind's recently acquired ability to record and store information, that in so doing it has the potential *to erase the body*. As he claims (2003:70):

> The relatively recent phenomenon of recorded music, which by now is the normative listening experience for most people, offers not only the possibility of idealizing music by denying its corporeal origins but also the opposite possibility of recognizing the physical and material aspects of music through this very absence.

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[114] It stands to reason that controlling (patrolling) of language is a very basic and persuasive exercise of power. *1984*'s propagandized world is censored by Big Brother via radio and television, a world in which Orwell's State-sanctioned *newspeak* (*doubleplusungood, thoughtcrime*, and so on) strip language of any communicative value.

[115] "There is no element whatever of man's consciousness which has not something corresponding to it in the word; and the reason is obvious. It is that the word or sign which man uses *is* the man himself. For, as the fact that every thought is a sign, taken in conjunction with the fact that life is a train of thought, proves that man is a sign: so, that every thought is an *external* sign, proves that man is an external sign. Thus my language is the sum total of myself: for the man is the thought" (Peirce 1955:249).

As much as the nature of the technology (whether analogue or digital) used to produce LP records and CDs allows for this convenience, at the same time it is inevitable that this privilege of being able to revisit a musical event at will has a price. The price is that recording information at the same time transforms it, according to the properties of the materials used to store the information. The consequence of the physical limitations of the hardware used inevitably will result in a qualitative difference between the sound of a live concert and a CD recording of the same event.

This is the most basic level on which embodiment is compressed, on the level of physical sound itself. The experience of being captivated (or captive) at an impossibly loud concert is substantially otherwise from being able to control the volume of the same recording played back on one's hi-fi system at home. A further level on which embodiment is suppressed by recordings is an apparently very obvious (and therefore trivial) one. Audio recordings alone contain no visual clues as to how the performance looks. Why this is significant is because this suppresses the entire paralinguistic network of gesture, movement, and facial expressions, in short, the sign language of performance.

Listening for the first time to a CD of Keith Jarrett playing jazz, for instance, one is immediately aware of his tendency to break into a strangulated hoarse singing at moments of great emotional intensity in the music. To put it mildly, it is at times rather intrusive at first listening, rather like eavesdropping on someone's transports of *jouissance*. This Barthean term for the pleasure of the text carries within it a strong erotic implication: what the author suggests here is that this disembodiment idea of Korsyn's bears with it as well the possibility of disengendering the music at the same time.

Watching a DVD of the same performance, one understands, in the restoration of visual cues, more of the meaning of the performance than an audio recording can be expected to supply. The interactive nature of this

format allows for random access (just like the CD does) but other possibilities become available, such as being able to slow the film down, play it faster, and so on. In the case of a Jarrett performance, the DVD restores the ecstatic elements to the context; Jarrett dances, plays the piano from angles (with his entire body thrust virtually under the keyboard at times) that would horrify the most liberal-minded of classical piano teachers, and uses that oddly distorted voice to breathe life and shape into the phrases he is executing, as if, instead of playing the piano, he is playing a strange piano/voice hybrid. In so doing, Jarrett here makes explicit the thought pattern that suggests that the concept of phrasing on any instrument is a matter of managing breath.

Obviously this is a requirement for singers and instrumentalists who use their breath directly to create and manage sound. When the instrument is not made to speak by breath directly, as in percussion instruments and strings, the performer has to create the space through imaginary breath. Simply put, a singer singing a continuous note will sooner or later run out of breath, whereas someone bowing a violin to produce a similar sustained tone is not subject to the same physical limit, and could in theory sustain the note for a comparably much long period of time.

What is missing from the DVD (although on the informational level a qualitatively richer experience for the consumer) is what Reason has theorized (section 3.4) as the prevalent "vibe" of a live performance, the different experience of being there and being part of the temporary community around the event.

3.4.3 Musicking, physicality, and the mind-body problem

The author has suggested that musicking may be seen as a form of engagement with a voice or an instrument, an engagement that takes place initially on the physical level. However, this is not a simple matter of common sense observation of what takes place during performance, but

as Geertz has argued (section 3.3), a matter of interpretation. The fundamental problem with the idea of musical works is the accompanying tendency to privilege the object of contemplation over the subject(s) that create such music, be they composers or performers.

Bowman, in discussing Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of perception, suggests that this may offer an alternative to the perennial mind-body problem of Western philosophy as follows (1998:260):

> Like empiricism, rationalism assumes the existence of a world objectively there, behind the screen of appearances it is reason's job to transcend. So both rationalism and empiricism assume the existence of a gap in need of bridging, a sharp division between consciousness and what it is conscious 'of.' But for Merleau-Ponty, there is no troublesome divide between apparent and real, between the phenomenon and the 'thing-in-itself,' between the perceived and the known. For Merleau-Ponty, things are as they appear.

As Merleau-Ponty states in his essay *Eye and Mind*:[116]

> Visible and mobile my body is a thing among things; it is caught in the fabric of the world and its cohesion is that of a thing. But because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself. Things are an annex or prolongation of itself; they are incrusted onto its flesh, they are part of its full definition. The world is made of the same stuff as the body.

What Merleau-Ponty is claiming is a fundamental antidote to the reifying tendencies of some orthodox musicology, which, in combination with the structuralist focus on pseudo-science, aims to erase the notion of subjectivity from the record-books of historical interpretation. Performers live in a real world in which they interact (and solve problems) on the most basic physical level, a level that a philosophical approach like structuralism tries very hard to suppress and marginalize. Merleau-Ponty's idea of the body-subject[117] is crucial to an inductive understanding of the performer's

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[116] Cited in Crowther (1993:4).
[117] As Bernasconi states (2005), for Merleau-Ponty: "The body is neither subject, nor object, but an ambiguous mode of existence that infects all knowledge."

world, in that it proceeds from the body outward into the world at large, rather than imposing philosophical (and often totalizing and essentializing) approaches from the outside inwards. As Bernasconi suggests (2005):

> Merleau-Ponty's constant target was the subject-object dualism of Cartesianism, which arguably still continued to dominate Sartre's existentialism. Drawing on Husserl's notion of a pre-predicative intentionality and on Heidegger's exposition of human existence as being-in-the-world, Merleau-Ponty developed a description of the world as the field of experience in which I find myself.

The Australian flute player Jim Denley (in Bailey 1992:108) proposes an explicit link between improvisation and physicality in stating:

> For the improvisor the physicality of producing sound (the hardware) is not a separate activity to the thoughts and ideas in music (software). In the act of creation there is a constant loop between the hierarchy of factors involved in the process. My lungs, lips, fingers, voice box and their working together with the potentials of sound are dialoguing with other levels which I might call mind and perception. The thoughts and decisions are sustained and modified by my physical potentials and vice versa but as soon as I try and define these separately I run into problems. It is a meaningless enterprise for it is the very entanglement of levels of perception, awareness and physicality that makes improvisation.

In much the same way as Sundin's comments on aesthetics suggest a relationship between subject and subject (section 3.3), Crowther (1993) bases much of his aesthetic theory on the notion of the intersubjective relationship between the work of art and its perceiver. In so doing, Crowther explicitly acknowledges his indebtedness to Merleau-Ponty's ideas.

Considering Merleau-Ponty’s relevance to Soundpainting, the notion of a research methodology that aims to deal with the problem of embodiment has to consider the advantages as well as the problems (philosophical and musical) of situating music in the performers’ bodies. An approach that encompasses the notion of embodiment is not self-evident or tautological; it represents a shift away from text-based musicology and its hegemony over some current issues in the field. To attempt to incorporate (no pun

intended) such concepts as:

- Musicians touch instruments
- Read a score (or not)
- Watch a conductor
- Hear (and listen to) each other
- Work in a given genre, environment (social factors).

into this dissertation seems fairly relevant. The activity of musicking tends, in this view, to encapsulate notions of embodiment, paralanguage, kinesics, and proxemics as pragmatic consequences of viewing musicking as process rather than product. These ideas may be seen as starting points for an analysis of improvised musicking, in which the work-concept is (for the most part) redundant, and which (because it is improvisational in character) may encompass a wide range of language-games in its negotiation of contingency and shared meaning.

Chapter 4 : Towards a language-based model for improvised music

4.1 Introduction: Music and/as language

> Marc Duby (MD): What you said was: 'An open language is dynamic.'
> Pauline Oliveros (PO): Yes, it's dynamic, and it changes, and it's inclusive of the vernacular, and of invention of new ways of saying things.
> MD: How do you see that applying to music?
> PO: Well, I mean we have codified systems, for example, like traditional jazz, with chords and bass line, and the language has a certain kind of rhythm, and if you're not doing that, you're not doing traditional jazz. It's a closed form. I mean, jazz has continued to evolve and change, but there are these traditionalists who have closed it off. I mean there are communities that treasure and value that particular expression of musical language, and so anything that comes in to change it, well, it's rejected. And that's a closed system.
>
> (Author's interview, Johannesburg, September 2005)

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the various ways in which jazz improvisation is metaphorically linked to spoken language, with a view to examining some of the conventions that underpin this practice. The author will also examine questions relating to the nature of improvisation in this field with regard to tensions arising between the individual jazz musician and the norms of other musicians with whom he or she is interacting, as well as the nature of this interaction in relation to the audience's reception of such musicking. Such issues throw into relief the nature of the Soundpainting event as a case of nearly free improvisation, and help to situate Soundpainting at a point on a continuum between organization and total freedom, one of the tenets of the 1960s free jazz movement.

Pauline Oliveros's view of "traditional" jazz, for example, makes explicit a comparison between this form of musicking and language on the basis of its rhythmic characteristics, thereby categorizing this type of music as a "closed system." Oliveros, contrasting this with open languages, which are

characterized by their dynamic nature and their incorporation of vernacular elements, suggests that such languages are vehicles for "new ways of saying things." Both Monson (1996) and Sawyer (2003) find this analogy at work in the comments of jazz musicians regarding successful interactions in the moment, and the metaphor of jazz improvisation as a form of conversation is a pervasive one in interviews conducted by these and other authors.

In similar fashion the American free jazz pianist Cecil Taylor states (Funkhouser 1995): "What I am doing is creating a language. A different American language." Taylor's view of language contains within it positive implications of ownership and responsibility, but also the suggestion that his creation of this new language is somehow different from the American languages that have come before. For Jost (1994:68), Cecil Taylor was to see little financial reward for this controversial position: "Musical maturation, the acquisition of a personal language, was marked by an utter lack of financial success. Most of the groups Taylor formed in the Fifties broke up without ever having had one engagement worth mentioning." In case there should be any doubt as to the courage of Taylor's convictions, Jost (*ibid.*) goes on to mention that: "Between jobs, Taylor had to take on all kinds of makeshift work as a cook, record salesman, dishwasher, and so on."

Van Heerden, on the other hand, views (from a somewhat postmodern point of view) the situation of jazz in society as irretrievably “decontextualised,” deriving its function more or less willy-nilly from its social context (1996:14): "Jazz, like every other cultural artefact, like every other language, has been cast adrift in a sea of decontextualisation, irrevocably removed from its source, functioning as background music one moment, propaganda in the next." Indeed, in today’s “information-saturated” era, the term “Jazz” lends its aura of exotic allure to such

diverse products as French men's colognes and Japanese motor cars.[118] Nonetheless, despite his rather pessimistic outlook on contemporary culture, Van Heerden still regards jazz itself as a language.

The Chicago bandleader Sun Ra, in a 1970 interview with Tam Fiofori, describes music as follows:

> Music is a universal language. The intergalactic music in its present phase of presentation will be correlative to the key synopsis of the past and to the uncharted multi-potential planes outside the bounds of the limited earth-eternity future. The intergalactic music is in hieroglyphic sound: an abstract analysis and synthesis of man's relationship to the universe, visible and invisible first man and second man.
>
> (Jost 1994:181)

This statement of Ra's is a case of taking the analogy between music and language too far and is not in keeping with the diversity of worldwide musical practices. It is all too easy to demolish Ra's argument simply on the grounds of the sheer variety of these musical styles and the cultural practices in which they are embedded. Rather than positing music as a universal language, one has to consider the less palatable prospect that there is a plethora of musical styles (and associated value-systems) competing for the attention of the consumer, which line of argument suggests a fragmentation of musical practice, and therefore a multiplicity of language-games in operation, not only within jazz, but in most genres of music. Ake (2002:7) confirms this sense of fragmentation in stating:

> Contemporary players, listeners, critics—even record companies and radio stations—often seem uneasy about the immense profusion and diffusion of jazz styles, attitudes, performance venues, and institutions.[119] But what I hope to demonstrate is that the questions now confronting today's various jazz communities echo many of the

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[118] As in Yves Saint Laurent and Honda, for example.

[119] Defining jazz styles in general, and specific jazz performances in particular, as instances of language-games seems a useful tactic in resolving this problem of "profusion and diffusion," as Ake elegantly puts it.

> same conflicts and tensions experienced throughout the music's history.

Two points arising from Ake's statement have bearing: firstly, he is talking about jazz styles specifically, not music in general, and secondly, he suggests that these conflicts and tensions are not necessarily symptomatic of the present day. He is arguing that these conflicts and tensions are part of the history of jazz itself, and, in a profound sense, have always been there.

One of the most useful features of the analogy between jazz and language, perhaps, is the notion that language is a powerful means of negotiating, and indeed affirming, identity. Jazz improvisation is viewed, in the context of this thesis, as a vehicle for the negotiation of identity in terms of the kind of musical and timbral play that is characteristic of the jazz idiom. Ake (2002:3) defines "identity" as referring "to the ways in which jazz musicians and audiences experience and understand themselves, their music, their communities, and the world at large," and it is in this sense that the various language-games within the jazz idiom are understood and defined, as vehicles for the negotiation of identity and agency, circumscribed by various canons, sets of rules, and implicit and explicit inter- and intra-musical relationships, in which the audience is allowed to indicate its approval or otherwise of such negotiations.

One of the key features of jazz is, of course, its emphasis on improvisation as a means of expression. This entails the acquisition of a highly specialized set of skills that have little to do with the popular conception that improvisation is a form of "spontaneous composition," that one "makes it up as one goes along," and so forth. The author suggests that, on the contrary, much jazz improvisation is the very opposite of "spontaneous," and that the acquisition and development of such skills is a lifelong process of hard work and intense preparation. Spontaneous musicking should be seen in this light as depending on a vast amount of "embedded" knowledge and skills, individually acquired and collectively

articulated in the context of the jazz combo performance.

For Wishart, language can be defined in terms of utterance (1996:240):

> In most normal cases, however, where human beings are heard to produce sounds, then we will tend to impute intention to the sonic event. We will hear it at some level as an utterance. In particular, whenever the human voice is used as a source of sound in whatever context, the concept of utterance will enter at some level into our apprehension of the event.

With regard to Wishart's statement, utterance may be seen as language in action in context, indicating a degree of similarity with the Wittgensteinian notion of the language-game. Wishart continues by further defining utterance in the following terms (*ibid.*):

> In general, sounds produced by individual creatures may be taken to indicate or express something about internal state, reactions to environmental events, responses to utterances by other creatures and so on, becoming more involved, convoluted and to some extent detached as we move up the cerebral hierarchy, finally reaching the etiolated heights of artistic manifestation. At whatever level, the sense of utterance, whether as indicator, signal, symbol, sign or semantic or semantic-syntactic stream, enters into our perception of the events.

What Wishart implies is that, as communication through utterance takes place at various levels throughout "the cerebral hierarchy," a language (such as birdsong, for instance) does not have to contain human-specific semantic content in order to communicate something.[120] To the author, Wishart's line of thinking has a further important implication: humankind has a bias towards meaning that tends to privilege verbal or written systems as possessing more authority than their "subsidiaries," as in kinesics and paralanguage.

As Bateson states (2000:418):

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[120] It seems reasonable to conclude that Wishart's notion of utterance might also include music, as he defines this idea in fairly wide terms.

> Both kinesics and paralanguage have been elaborated into complex forms of art, music, ballet, poetry and the like, and, even in everyday life, the intricacies of human kinesic communication, facial expression, vocal intonation far exceed anything that any other animal is known to produce. The logician's dream that man should communicate only by unambiguous digital signals has not come true and is not likely to.

The failure of the logician's dream of unambiguous communication indicates the possibility of manipulating information so as to mislead others. It is not accidental that information obtained from a polygraph[121] is not admissible as legal evidence in court, for it is possible for a highly duplicitous person to disguise their bodily reactions to the questioner so as to manipulate the truth-content of their verbal responses: in short, to get away with lying.

As Wittgenstein rather tersely puts it (PI §249):

> Are we perhaps over-hasty in our assumption that the smile of an unweaned infant is not a pretence?—And on what experience is our assumption based? (Lying is a language-game that needs to be learned like any other one.)

Defining lying as a language-game avoids the moral issue of the "inauthentic" behaviour of the liar, in which, according to the social context, he or she deceives through dissembling, which in a sense is a particularly negative way of considering the profession of acting, which likewise depends on the adoption of a stage *persona*, according to the requirements of the script. The notion of characterization is essential to the pursuit of acting, and is described by Pierce in a musical context as follows (1995:285):

> The term *characterization* is familiar in theater as an actor's detailed development and delineation of a role. Applied to music, it indicates the performer's discovery, full sensing, and then delivery in sound of the essence of a musical moment, as if it were a character in the

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[121] The polygraph (or "lie-detector") measures the increased bodily stress levels when someone who is under interrogation tells a lie, or makes a false statement.

> midst of a play's action. The physical, affective, and attitudinal bearing of that musical moment, when thus realized, is freed to act and to ramify. It then breathes life and color into tones and gives aptness to pacing. The music sounds spoken, the declamation vivid. It rings true.

Pierce's definition of characterization implies the difference between the onstage and offstage performer, in the sense that the onstage performer adopts the *persona* of a musician, a role that may or may not be "mediatized," depending on the proxemics of the given scenario. Improvising musicians may find themselves performing in any number of musical or social spaces, whether the jazz club, concert hall or stadium, and their utterances may be addressed to a group of sixty, six hundred or sixty thousand people at a time.

4.1.1 Defining improvisation

The focus of this section is firstly to define the term "improvisation" and to consider the kind of skills required to become a competent improviser. On the way, a model of the jazz language is suggested, with a view to examining the limits and possibilities of the analogy between jazz and language. As defined by Steve Lacy (1994:72):

> Improvisation (play) is an invented (found) made-up, discourse.
> A story, a picture, a dance, an action, a poem, a scene, a game, a structure, a set of gestures, an opinion, an oath, a prayer, an apology, a discovery.

The Encarta World English Dictionary contains the following two-part definition of the term “improvisation”:

> 1. something performed or done without any preparation or set text to follow
> 2. the skill or creative process of creating and performing something without any preparation or set text to follow.

In fairness to the compilers of the dictionary, they are not attempting to describe improvisation in anything but the broadest terms. Nevertheless, improvisers in music might take exception to this insufficiently technical

definition of their art. The problematic phrase in both definitions is “without any preparation,” by which the compilers perhaps hope to convey something of the spontaneous character of improvisation. The author suggests that “preparation” for most musicians takes place away from the performance arena in solitary practising, precisely to develop the “skill or creative process” which despite its ostensibly spontaneous appearance has actually taken a great deal of preparation.[122]

In this sense (that is, of a loose use of the term “preparation”) this initial definition fails in all but the most general terms adequately to describe what takes place during the improvisation process. The art of improvisation demands for practising musicians a great deal of time and energy spent listening to music, practising so as to master the idiosyncrasies of their chosen instrument, understanding and absorbing the stylistic and historical characteristics of their musical genre of choice, and, in short, preparing themselves for their careers as musicians. While the necessity of preparation obviously holds true for all kinds of music, the author suggests that what is fundamentally different for many musicians working in the field of improvised music is the emphasis on individual creativity, and, thereby, on individuality itself.[123]

Van Heerden (1996:14) puts this elegantly in stating: "By virtue of the emphasis placed on improvisation, jazz admits of individual contribution and self-expression that is sometimes at odds with the necessarily conservative norms of the community, including the community of musicians." So saying, he highlights a key tension in jazz as well as society, that between the individual’s need for self-expression and the demands of the community from which the individual originates.

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[122] It is assumed here that the compiler of this dictionary definition has in mind for the term “preparation” the more commonly used term “rehearsal.”
[123] As Hall states (1992:233): "Unlike the dictionary definitions of the term, I hold that improvising is the domain of the expert, rooted as it is in knowledge and experience. It is far removed from the 'spur-of-the-moment' implications associated with the word."

Given jazz musicians' privileging of the "voice of the subject," it might be instructive to consider the "sound" of Miles Davis as compared to that of Louis Armstrong (or Keith Jarrett to Bill Evans) as surface structures, which, despite poststructuralism's emphasis on intertextuality and the consequent swirling nature of the textual event, are to some extent defaced by the undoubted presence of the individual. Within this type of musical space, the speaking subject returns, if only as one voice among the many who lay claim to this contested territory.

The Encarta World English Dictionary defines "improvise" as follows:

> 1. to act or compose something, especially a sketch, play, song, or piece of music, without any preparation or set text to follow
> 2. to make a substitute for something out of the materials that happen to be available at the time.

The second part of this definition highlights a less typical usage of the term, akin to Lévi-Strauss's metaphor of ***bricolage***. Nachmanovitch's account (1990:89) of *bricolage* in his experience as a performer amplifies this second sense of the term "improvise" in this hypothetical state of affairs:

> Equipment breaks down, it is Sunday night, the stores are all closed, and the audience is arriving in an hour. You are forced to do a little *bricolage*, improvising some new and crazy contraption. Then you attain some of your best moments. Ordinary objects or trash suddenly become valuable working materials, and your perceptions of what you need and what you don't need radically shift.

The Oxford American Dictionary also includes this dual sense of spontaneity and *bricolage* in defining the term "improvise":

> 1. create and perform (music, drama, or verse) spontaneously or without preparation.
> 2. produce or make (something) from whatever is available.

The author returns to the concept of the "set text," in arguing that this set text for improvisers (playing standards, for example, as opposed to

improvising freely) may be type of a mental map of the territory, rather than a physical piece of manuscript paper (section 4.2.1.2). It will be argued that improvisers use this map as a navigational tool literally to know where they are relative to the contours of the harmonic progression, as played in the ***head*** of the piece in question. The author proposed this contour-based concept for improvisation in 1987, with special reference to the music of Thelonious Monk.

Coker (cited in Ostransky 1977:48) mentions five main factors that influence a jazz improvisation:

> Five factors are chiefly responsible for the outcome of the jazz player's improvisation: intuition, intellect, emotion, sense of pitch, and habit. His intuition is responsible for the bulk of his originality; his emotion determines the mood; his intellect helps him to plan the technical problems and, with intuition, to develop the melodic form; his sense of pitch transforms heard or imagined pitches into letter names or fingerings; his playing habits enable his fingers to quickly find certain established pitch patterns.

Discounting the gender bias evident in Coker's discussion of these factors, this is quite obviously written as a description of a jazz soloist, and a virtuoso at that. His list of requirements portrays an individualistic, crypto-romantic jazz virtuoso as somehow divorced from the musical conversations going on around him or her.[124] By separating the performer from the communal discursive framework in which live jazz operates (that of other musicians, rhythm section (Monson), the discourse of place (Ramanna), the audience (Davidson), Coker arrives at a portrait of the "ideal" jazz musician.[125]

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[124] In so individuating the musician, Coker suggests the monastic space of the practice room, rather than the communal ambience of the club or concert-hall.
[125] With regard to Coker's notion of "playing habits," the author recalls an experience from his stint with Bruce Cassidy's free improvisation group, *The Body Electric*. In the author's work with this group, he ceased playing bass at one point (to thwart patterns arising purely from muscle memory) and moved to keyboards, in an attempt to frustrate and hopefully overcome the ingrained and persistent habit of "thinking like" and "sounding like" a bassist. Dependency on "habits" can tend to be a two-edged sword when they become clichés, in this

The central dynamic at play in the contested space of musical performance may be seen as a dialectical continuum of relationships between the performer, his or her colleagues, the audience, and the "tradition," in which the performer's individuality is mediated with or without the sanction of the community. This continuum also encompasses (at any given moment in the course of performance) an underlying tension between competition and collaboration, by no means limited to the field of jazz improvisation.[126]

4.1.2 "Playing by ear"

The author has suggested (in chapter 2) that semiotic approaches to the analysis of music tend to operate more successfully in the realm of notated music, where the operations of the symbolic language are easily accessible through the text itself. This semiotic strategy, however, mediated as it is through the score, forms a less effective approach to the analysis of improvised music, whose instantaneous nature does not readily lend itself to symbolic analysis.[127]

The practice of acquiring musical skills by ear by means of personal contact, records, and radio, as an informal vehicle for learning[128] is highlighted by Oakley in his discussion of the Delta blues singer, Robert Johnson, as follows (1976:219, emphasis added):

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case.

[126] The WEAM *concerto* generally is modelled on this dialectic between individual soloist and orchestral group, as are the call and response patterns prevalent in many types of musicking (preacher to congregation, and so on).

[127] Despite the obvious value of transcription as a learning tool for improvisers, musicians outside the Western art music tradition tend to acquire their musical skills firstly by ear, and then later in the process develop the skills of musical literacy, as in reading and writing music as a means of negotiating the symbolic language of notation.

[128] This method is obviously a different type of learning from the student's engagement with written music as a means of language acquisition.

> Robert Johnson stands at the crossroads[129] of several musical traditions. Having learnt much of his music directly from Son House and Willie Brown—who were anxious for him with avuncular concern—he inherited strong elements of the Delta blues tradition. But at the same time, whether through personal contact or through records, he also shows traces of other musical influences as diverse as Leroy Carr and Scrapper Blackwell, Hambone Willie Newborn, Skip James, Kokomo Arnold, and his own great hero Lonnie Johnson. Having assimilated what he wanted—and he would also pick up any hillbilly tune, popular song, ballad, 'sweet music' from the radio—he transmuted it into his own personal expression.

Oakley stresses the value of personal contact in Johnson's formative years as well as the influence of records and radio in his quest to forge a personal sound. The prevalence of this informal method of learning music is borne out by Lucy Green, whose book *How Popular Musicians Learn* argues the existence of a wide gulf between aurally-based skills acquisition in the early stages of the development of such musicians and their later engagement (or not) with music's more "academic" elements (2001:60, emphases in original):

> Children not only copy the behaviour of adults and other children, but they also make copies of objects which they find in the environment. Here, the object in question is music, and its main form of existence for most people most of the time is in recordings and broadcasts in the home, school, college, at work, at social gatherings and in other public places such as shops. Live music is encountered much less. By far the overriding practice for the beginner popular musician, as is already well known, is to copy records by ear.

It seems reasonable to argue that one of the most distinctive elements of musicianship that the listener acquires in this way is the relatively direct nature of the individual's "sound," which is conveyed not only through their phrasing, note-choices, and so on, but crucially through a timbral fingerprint, on a level that conventional musical notation cannot translate.

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[129] The crossroads is a powerful symbol in Johnson-mythology, as in the place where he sold his soul to the devil to acquire his musical abilities. McClary (2000) relates this symbol to a perceived sense of anxiety in Johnson's work, in the sense that his vocal timbre represents the hidden fear of the crossroads, and its dangerous implications for a Negro caught there after the curfew.

Green emphasizes the individual and solitary character of this method of language acquisition in observing (2001:60-1):

> It seems an extraordinary fact that many thousands of young musicians across the world have adopted this approach to learning over a relatively short space of time—covering a maximum of eighty years since sound recording and reproduction technology began to be widespread—outside of any formal networks, usually at early stages of learning, in isolation from each other, without adult guidance and with very little explicit recognition of the ubiquity of the practice across the world. All this, despite the fact that it is a historically unique way of learning music, unknown to humankind prior to the invention of sound recording and reproduction technology.

Dunbar-Hall's review of Green's book summarizes the divide between popular and academic musical practice as follows (2004:1):

> To date, much theorizing about music education has been derived from Western canonic ideals, and these canonic ideals have been applied to all musics. In this way certain methods of teaching music in schools have become accepted as standard and acceptable; often these bear little relationship to how music is learnt, or played, in the world of day-to-day music activity.

He goes on to summarize the problematic place of notation for the popular musician in stating (*ibid.*):

> Notation is an ambiguous component of popular music practice: some use it, some do not, some want to understand it, some already do. To think in these terms (clearly derived from popular music practice) is to question an almost universal precept of music education systems, that students need to learn to read and write in music notation.

With these central notions in mind, namely, that there is a divide between the process of skills acquisition for popular musicians that academia is doing little to address, and, further, that academic institutions accept almost universally the necessity of music literacy as a teaching strategy for the training of musicians, it seems clear that imitation is a vital stage of the process in the day-to-day world of popular music-making. Clark Terry (in Steinel 1995:9) describes this process in the jazz field as: "Imitation, assimilation, and then innovation."

In jazz improvisation theory, the concept of the chord scale defines a set of relationships between vertical (harmonic) structures and horizontal (melodic) ones.[130] This concept allows the improviser the choice of playing inside the changes, where the available notes are made up of chord tones, using harmonic tensions (which may or may not be resolved), or playing outside (where the improviser makes use of chromatic approach notes which are neither chord tones nor harmonic tensions). These note choices range by definition from wholly consonant ("inside") to mildly dissonant (harmonic tensions) to highly dissonant, in the case of chromatic approach notes. A central element in the language of conventional (tonal) jazz, the chord scale method provides a way for jazz musicians to "make sense"[131] as improvisers by making the stylistically appropriate grammatical move in Wittgenstein's terms.

Jazz harmony (within the Tin Pan Alley, standards framework) is based on the classic hegemony of the dominant-tonic relationship. This implies that more traditionally oriented jazz musicians regard this framework as a "given" or axiomatic system, outside of which nothing makes sense. Tonal jazz, like WEAM, then uses the notion of the key-centre as its organizing principle, and likewise depends on an underlying metaphor of tension and resolution.[132] In this way, speakers within these systems of musical organization may each be said to make utterances according to the rules of an over-arching language-game, that of tonality itself.

Since the chord scale method operates in terms of the relationship between melodic and harmonic elements, it seems evident that once the

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[130] In Saussure's terms this can be defined as a synchronic and diachronic relationship, or as that between paradigms and syntagms. See also Jaffe (1996), Pease and Pullig (2001), and Sawyer (2003).
[131] The author uses this term in both senses of "finding meaning" and "making some sort of logical meaning."
[132] The ability to manipulate this network of rules with skill and fluency is very demanding on the musician's concentration and linguistic ability, and such skill is greatly admired by jazz musicians.

harmonic structure becomes indeterminate (through spontaneous manipulation or transformation), the usefulness of this method becomes open to question. Once the apparently "axiomatic" connection between the horizontal and vertical relationship of melody and harmony falls away, and with these the central pillar of tonality, a new communal and collective grammar may need to be negotiated and invented in the moment.

Nowhere in Coker's definition (section 4.1.1) does he allude to the necessity for communication or collaboration; his ideal jazz musician takes up a somewhat solitary position, detribalized by his own virtuosity perhaps. Incidentally, this kind of picture of the jazz soloist as a Romantic genius is bolstered by much of the record-cover iconography of the time, as in portraits of the heroic Coltrane, the brooding Miles, the eccentric Monk, the intellectual Paul Desmond, and so on.[133]

4.1.3 The social semiotics of improvisation

Reason, in describing the location of meaning in the context of improvised music, considers the moment of performance from a socioculturally sited vantage point when she states (2004:73):

> Unlike musics invested in providing the listener with a completed version of a musical score or text in performance, improvisation provides an opportunity to engage with an expansive musical environment during the performance, wherein the nature of the text is open and subject to the energy or “vibe” of the audience. In many cases, this vibe is powerful enough to affect and direct many of the parameters of an improvisation, such as how long to play a particular phrase or motif and whether to play loud or soft, fast or slow.

Herewith Reason introduces some important variables into the definition.

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[133] Such iconography also forms part of jazz's canon-formation, in which is emphasized the individual's contribution to the canon. Such imagery disregards the communal nature of jazz recording and performance, in which such individuals are supported in the realization of their musical vision by accompanists, known as "sidemen" in jazz parlance.

By contextualizing the performance space in which improvising takes place, her theorizing allows for synergy between performers and audience. By suggesting that the text in such performances is open, she further asserts that meaning is not only communicated in purely musical terms, but also by means of a set of paralinguistic clues through which such meaning is generated (*ibid.*):

> In such an environment, sources of meaning cannot be limited exclusively to sonic morphologies such as the order of notes, orchestration, timbre, and the like; meaning is also located in the ways in which improvisers situate their bodies, change their facial expressions, and use their voices to accompany notes, gestures, silences, or phrases.

Reason brings on board the vital embodied performance elements missing from audio recordings: postures, bodily attitudes, and facial expressions, in short, the embodied elements of the performance. The return of these elements to the discussion suggest that, despite the poststructuralists' questioning of the very notion of subjectivity, the circumstances of the performance and its context point to this fact, simply stated: musicking is above all an act situated in the body in the moment of performance, whether requiring the presence of an audience for its completion or not.[134]

In worst-case scenarios, inattentive or hostile audiences can also negatively affect any performance, a not uncommon occurrence in WEAM's chequered history.[135] The bitter in-fighting over the new artistic offerings of modernism suggests, in fact, the idea of the accepted language being forced to its limits, towards the ***aporia*** that Barthes and

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[134] Reason's thinking on this topic is echoed by Nicholas Cook's idea of performance as suggesting, in the same manner as prayer, the ritualistic presence of an imaginary audience for its fulfilment.

[135] The author has in mind the polarized audience reactions to the music of Debussy, Stravinsky and others, especially the Futurists, which ended in riots. and suggests that these composers were stretching the hitherto accepted boundaries of the language-game of the time.

Derrida speak of.[136]

After patronage and support from the establishment fell away as a support system for creative endeavour, the artist was free (in theory) to express musical ideas without overt submission to a centralized political or religious authority. The author is suggesting that, as occasioned by historical events like the Reformation and the French Revolution, the economic and moral power implicit in the *droit de Seigneur* gradually moved its locus from the monarchy and church to the state and eventually to the "temporary community" of the ordinary concertgoer.

Composers were now free to express their innermost feelings without the necessity for approval from the traditional wielders of power. The next step, that of questioning the very foundations of language (whether everyday speech or artistic expression), was a logical one, and, for critics such as Jameson and Lyotard, represents a central concern within the modernist project. The ideology of the old order itself was under siege, not only on the literary front, but also in film (Dali's *Le chien Andalou*), painting (where Braque and Picasso's works critically reframed the foundations of Renaissance perspective), ballet (Diaghilev's staging of *Le Sacre du Printemps*), poetry (Appolinaire and e.e. cummings) and music itself, where the Second Vienna School of Schoenberg and his pupils Berg and Webern called for a re-structuring of the hitherto axiomatic assumptions of tonality as a system of organisation.

4.1.4 Jazz and signification

Singer's 1997 essay *Velocity of Celebration: Jazz and Semiotics* examines jazz performance from a semiotic perspective, as his following three points

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[136] Derrida's aporetic points of arrival often seem to occur at the limits of language where these boundaries are finally revealed to as like illusory mirages to thirsty travellers, disappearing as they approach them.

regarding the connections between signification and jazz confirm:

> 1) There is a system of unstated, predetermined rules a jazz musician must comprehend and utilize to be a successful improviser, this system of use or competence is parallel to the system of internal coherence in speaking, 2) jazz performance involves an intimate relationship between artist and audience. Like speaking, there are verbal and visual clues the soloist gives the other musicians and which all the musicians give the listener, and 3) in jazz, the musician and the listener interpret their feelings from the music. These feelings are created as *ad-hoc* responses to an environment of jazz.

Singer's first point, regarding the connection between jazz and semiotics, emphasizes the system of rules which govern such performances, suggesting thereby affinities with Wittenstein's notion of language-games (section 2.1.6.2). As Hacker (2005b) claims, for Wittgenstein: "Language use is a form of human rule governed activity, integrated into human transactions and social behaviour, context-dependent and purpose relative. Analogies between games and language, playing games and speaking, justify it."

With respect to Singer's second point concerning the relationship between the performer(s) and the audience,[137] his "verbal and visual clues" may be construed as operating on the level of Batesonian paralanguage and kinesics. Between musicians in performance, as the author suggests, these clues may suggest turn-taking for soloists, changes in dynamics, opportunities for call and response (trading "fours" between the ensemble and the drummer), map (or "geography") indicators such as "head in" or "out"), sign, coda, and so on. Musicians in such performances, as these ideas indicate, respond to such signifiers in ways not fundamentally different from those of musicians in a string quartet or symphony orchestra.

Singer's idealized description of the relationship between artist(s) and

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[137] Reason elsewhere theorizes this interaction as the "vibe" (section 3.4).

audience fails to take into account what Hall has theorized as proxemic categories of distance, which complicate such relationships with regard to displays of power and authority. For Hall, there are four main indices of such displays based on their degree of relative distance, which are categorized as intimate, personal, social, and public. In keeping with the image of the all-powerful orchestra director, the conductor's role is classified as public, in which the degree of physical distance and separation from the orchestra tends to reinforce his position of authority.

Chris Smith suggests a quite different possibility with respect to Miles Davis's direction of his group during live performance. In this case the signs are left open to interpretation through being deliberately ambiguous (1998:262):

> Miles wanted a quality of attentive musical flexibility that would lift his players to the level of co-composing interpreters; that would encourage them to respond to the improvisational moment with his own alert flexibility. Communicating in an intentionally ambiguous and non-verbal fashion meant that Miles's players were forced to engage with him by interpreting what they thought such communication demanded.

Soundpainting, although it likewise operates in a relatively non-hierarchical fashion, does not allow for the "intentionally ambiguous." Thompson, unlike Miles Davis, insists on precision of gesture, and provision is made within the language for feedback from the ensemble in cases where the signs are ambiguous or nonsensical.[138] The semantic content of Thompson's signals is intended to be unambiguous as signifiers, although the results of the interpretation by the performers may be construed as appropriate (or "legal") within a fairly wide or narrow range of hermeneutic options, depending on the parameters of the signal that the Soundpainter is initiating.

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[138] The <performer doesn't understand> and <performer can't do this> gestures (Thompson 2006:45-46) provide opportunities for feedback from performer to Soundpainter.

These comments confirm, once more, in the light of Thompson's conception of Soundpainting as a language, its affinity with the rules of orthodox conducting, although conductors tend to have greater leeway in their paralinguistic style. A certain amount of ambiguity is allowed for in orthodox conducting as a component of the conductor's personal expression. The simple fact is that some conductors indicate the beat quite clearly, and others less so, and this becomes a situation for orchestral musicians to interpret as best they can.

Returning finally to Singer's argument, the author is compelled to question his use of the term "feeling." This is a somewhat problematic term in the context of an academic article, and Singer fails to define exactly how such emotions are conveyed. Is this act of interpretation the same for players and audience in some final or compelling way? His discussion begs the crucial question of how such feelings come to be construed as universal and how it can be determined whether they are the same for the musicians and the audience, or for individuals in either group.[139]

4.1.4.1 Signifyin(g) and rhetoric in improvised music

Lewis considers the tactic of signifyin(g) within the bebop era as firstly manifested in the beboppers “playing” with the repertoire as follows (1996:94):

> Often this material was appropriated from the popular show tunes of the day, linking this material with earlier jazz styles. The musicians often 'signified on' the tunes, replacing the melodic line with another, then naming the new piece[140] in an ironic signifying riff on Tin Pan Alley as well as upon the dominant culture that produced it.

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[139] Although emotion seems undoubtedly to be a component of music which has some relevance to the listener, current theoretical debates around this issue seem to grapple with the problems of defining and measuring the emotional content of a given piece of music.
[140] David Baker uses the term "contrafact" to refer to such compositions.

The concept of signifyin(g) originates with a literary study by H. L. Gates called “The Signifyin(g) Monkey” (1989), in which he argues the case for an interpretive strategy based on African folklore. Gates includes elements of mythology, discourse, and the notion of troping as a theory of reading that has obvious bearing on musical practices that originate from this tradition (1989:903):

> My theory of interpretation, arrived at from within the black cultural matrix, is a theory of formal revisionism, it is tropological, it is often characterized by pastiche, and, most crucially, it turns on repetition of formal structures and their differences. Signification is a theory of reading that arises from Afro-American culture; learning how to signify is often part of our adolescent education. That it has not been drawn upon before as a theory of criticism attests to its sheer familiarity in the idiom. I had to step outside my culture, to defamiliarize the concept by translating it into a new mode of discourse, before I could see its potential in critical theory.

For the bebop musicians, challenging this role of musician as entertainer meant, ultimately, developing strategies to challenge the stereotyping of black musicians as happy-go-lucky clowns. As DeVeaux states (1997:62):

> As black musicians traded on their musical culture for personal gain in the marketplace, they inevitably found themselves boxed in and belittled by pervasive racial stereotypes. The Sambo image was immune to direct assault, for to renounce the stereotype was to risk renouncing the black cultural identity it mocked. Besides, it was useful as a form of protection, a mask that could be worn to deflect white hostility.

Here DeVeaux highlights the protective camouflage of the Sambo image and its mask-like aspect. In American society at the time, to be black meant automatically to be part and parcel of a dispossessed underclass whose strivings for self-betterment ultimately were sanctioned and controlled by those in power. This in turn necessitated the adoption of signifyin(g) strategies, which played into the hands of the dominant ideology, while at the same time asserting blackness and individuality within the culture of the underclass itself.

4.1.4.2 Music as communal activity

In contrast to solo performance, which is relatively rare in improvised music, Soundpainting usually involves a group of indeterminate size, ranging from small to large, and incorporating performers from other disciplines as well. This suggests that there is a communal element operating in terms of musician-to-musician interaction, in addition to the relationship between the musicians and the audience. In different genres of music, this relationship is formalized to a greater or lesser degree, according to the rituals of the context. The author returns to these communal elements in chapter 5, and next considers some ways in which the relationship between the individual and the community is demonstrated in various styles of music.

4.1.4.3 Call and response

The reciprocal relationship between individual and group may take the form of musical utterances, which manifest themselves in the widespread practice of call and response, metaphorical dialogues between individual and community.[141] As McClary argues, the place of music in African-based societies differs from the Western tradition in being primarily defined as an activity, and, secondly, music is an expression of the entire community (2000:22-23):

> Music holds a place of privilege in most African and African-based cultures, and it differs in many crucial respects from the European tradition. First, music is defined as an activity—something that exists only in as much as the community is involved in making it happen. It is far more oriented toward performance than producing objects, and performances are understood as the means whereby the community enacts consolidation. Second, while some individuals specialize in virtuosic performance, all members of the society participate in the

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[141] A fairly typical example is the classic jazz standard *Basin St. Blues*.

> making of music: it is a communal expression—as the hymn[142] says, "free to all, a healing stream." Accordingly, many African and African American genres are characterized by the convention of call and response, in which soloists are legitimated by the sonic embrace of the group.

McClary's analysis emphasizes music's nature outside "the European tradition" as an activity, perceptively situating the practice of call and response within the community. According to the rules of the given language-game, the individual leads the ensemble by (as it were) opening the meeting to which the ensemble, or congregation, responds. This move is by no means unique to the jazz game, and forms a central strategy in African music, wherein the history of the tribe is often expressed through music. Murray, while noting the conventional element in such practices, compares their musical manifestations with the ritual of the church service in stating (1979:98):

> Nothing is likely to seem more spontaneous than call-and-response passages, especially in live performances, where they almost always seem to grow directly out of the excitement of the moment, as if the musicians were possessed by some secular equivalent of the Holy Ghost. But as is no less the practice in the Sunday Morning Service, the responses are not only stylized (and stylized in terms of a specific idiom, to boot), but are almost always led by those who have a special competence in such devices. After all, no matter how deeply moved a musician may be, whether by personal, social, or even aesthetic circumstances, he must always play notes that fulfil the requirements of the context, a feat which presupposes far more skill and taste than raw emotion.

The practice of call and response is a central dynamic in jazz and other types of improvised musicking, especially the blues, both of which genres having clear connections to what Lewis (2004b) has termed the Afrological perspective. In addition to this practice (which both dramatizes and ritualizes the relationship between individual and group), the employment of alternative methods of sound production (as in the use of a wide range of variations of intonation and timbre for expressive purposes and the very

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[142] McClary is discussing a 1959 recording of the hymn *Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross* by the Swan Silvertones.

choice of instruments themselves) forms a crucial step in the direction of forging a musical identity. Some of these tactics are discussed in the following sections.

4.1.4.4 Intonation as an affective device

With reference to Ornette Coleman's composition *Lonely Woman*, Ake describes Coleman's "playing" with intonation in the following terms (2002:70-71):

> 'Perfect intonation,' in the sense of agreeing upon and maintaining a consistent location of a pitch center—a source of pride for 'professional' musicians—is not the goal here. Martin Williams (1993:240) described it this way: 'Intonation is a matter of context and expression to Coleman. 'You can play sharp in tune and you can play flat in tune,' he has said, 'and a D in a context representing sadness should not sound like a D in a passage of joy.'

Coleman's contextualized notion of intonation (that is, where it is used for affective purposes) can easily be misconstrued as simply out of tune, and lays him open to the kind of criticism as typified by James Lincoln Collier when he states (1981:462-463, emphases added):

> Any jazz musician can play out of tune at times, especially if he has been drinking heavily, and he may occasionally miss a chord change or fumble his way through a tune with which he is not familiar. But it is rare for a jazz musician of much experience to fail to hear that he is playing incorrect changes. The simple truth is that most professional jazz players can correctly identify the chord changes of a tune on first hearing, provided they are not too unusual, and improvise a <u>suitable solo</u> to them. The fact that <u>Coleman could not understand what he was doing wrong</u> tells us something about him.

In point of fact this passage tells us more about Collier's ideology of "right" and "wrong" than it does about Coleman's playing. From whose point of view, it has to be asked, is Coleman actually "playing incorrect changes," and what exactly are Collier's criteria for establishing this moral imperative? Collier's argument depends on the conventional underpinnings of tonal jazz, with its ideology of tension and resolution, consonance and dissonance, ultimately an ideology of right and wrong with respect to

"suitable" note choices. It is above all things a hegemony of the mistake, through which Collier aims a blow at Coleman's credibility as a musician.[143]

Collier goes on to suggest, all the while protesting that he is not using the term in a deprecating way, that Ornette Coleman "must be seen as a primitive artist." Comparing Coleman to the painter Le Douanier Rousseau, Collier defines this type of artist as follows (1981:463): "A primitive artist is one not trained in the standard tradition, who develops his method and manner independent of the main line," and concludes (*ibid.*, emphasis added):

> There seems, thus, to be an element of chance, or randomness in Coleman's improvising, and at a time when classical composers are deliberately introducing chance elements into their work, we can hardly fault Coleman for this practice, <u>even when it is not always intentional</u>.

Despite Collier's criticisms, which clearly emanate from a rigid interpretation of the jazz language-game, one might consider the possibility that Coleman is "playing" with intonation in Barthes's sense of exploring the polysemic potential of sound, a tactic not lost on composers of experimental music. In similar fashion, both free jazz and Soundpainting allow for free play with the ideologically sanctioned hegemonies of equal temperament and the *Klangideal* so as to open the way for individual and collective expression.

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[143] As Werner states with regard to "wrong" notes (1996:126-127): "There are not, and never have been, any wrong notes. If you live near the ocean, you may hear a seagull squawking in one key, a dog barking in another key, the roar of the ocean out of tune with the other two sounds, and birds singing in clashing rhythms with all of these, and you'll say, 'Beautiful!' But if human beings pick up instruments and do the same thing, the average listener won't be able to stand it! Why? Because his mind says, 'This is supposed to be music.' The very concept of music is superimposed by humans. Beneath this concept lies the greater reality of sound, and beneath that, the fabric of the entire universe, vibration."

4.1.4.5 Toy (and little) instruments

In retrospect, the violence[144] of the reactions against Coleman's early style might seem excessive, but the vehemence of this reaction once again highlights the conflict between the norms of the more conservative upholders of the jazz tradition and a given individual's right to self-expression. Collier (1981:465) goes on describe the well-documented controversy around Coleman's appearance at the Five Spot:

> The Five Spot gig threw the jazz world into turmoil. At first few musicians liked the music, or even pretended to understand it, and some were outspoken in their contempt for it. It did not help that Coleman was playing a plastic alto, and that Cherry was using a pocket trumpet, a half-sized instrument that plays normally. It looked as if they were playing on toys.

Sheer perversity aside, Coleman and Cherry's embracing of "toy" instruments is significant for Ake (2002:71) in so far as it suggests a conscious questioning on these musicians' part of what he has theorized as the "distinctly competition-based jazz aesthetic" of the time (2002:66):

> The unusual instruments that these musicians selected also bear consideration. Coleman relied on a white plastic alto saxophone, while Cherry chose to play a pocket trumpet, an instrument that looks, and often sounds, like a mutilated version of "the real thing." That neither player used the typically sought-after expensive "axes"[145] in their performances affected not only the sounds they produced but undoubtedly the reception of those sounds as well.

Ake goes on to suggest that the bebop era had fostered a particular construction of masculinity, as typified by its focus on virtuosity as an end in itself, its fast tempi, and the increasing complexity of its harmonic structures. The attitude of Coleman and Cherry towards the community, as

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[144] As Anderson asserts (2002:138-139): "While Coleman broke atttendance records at Manhattan nightclubs, disgusted black patrons in Chicago abandoned drinks at the bar in their haste to leave. Some even aimed imaginary rifles at Coleman in mock execution as they exited past the stage."
[145] Jazz slang for instruments.

read through the ironic self-deprecation of choosing such instruments, must be seen as ambiguous, proclaiming a stance of "difference" in an obvious and visual way. Heble finds similar evidence in the case of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, who call into question the ideology of genre-boundaries by playing a wide range of unorthodox instruments in a quite "self-conscious fashion" (2000:73):

> Familiar historical genres in music—ballads, marches, blues and gospel numbers, even rock, ska, and funk—are, throughout the ensemble's repertoire, reencoded, parodied, undermined by painfully long silences, and often disrupted by a self-consciousness that takes the form of sounds and noises from any of a number of 'little instruments' which have become the trademark of the new Chicago school: car horns, conch shells, whistles, sirens, street-corner noisemakers.

In conclusion, these tactics of choosing "inappropriate" instruments and the AEC's employment of "little instruments"[146] are ironic methods of interrogating all manner of ideologically grounded assumptions about musical practice, as well as establishing identity in a mildly subversive way. Apart from the element of *bricolage* that this type of ironic "play" suggests, Certeau characterizes such *tactics*[147] (within the context of the subversive practices of everyday life) as exhibiting an interrogation of power relations (1988:38):

> Lacking its own place, lacking a view of the whole, limited by the blindness (which may lead to perspicacity) resulting from combat at close quarters, limited by the possibilities of the moment, a tactic is determined by the *absence of power* just as a strategy is organized by the postulation of power.

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[146] As Ake claims (2000:73): "By subsuming familiar, historically laden sound sources within the context of a newly articulated musical idiom, the ensemble unsettles any assumptions we might have about ready access to the past."

[147] Certeau contracts the resistant element of the tactic with the hegemonic one of the *strategy* as follows: (1988:35-36, emphases in original): "I call a *strategy* the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a *place* that can be delimited as its *own* and serve as the base from which relationships with an *exteriority* composed of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects of research, etc.) can be managed."

When Thompson makes room for another Soundpainter and there are two of them directing two groups within the ensemble simultaneously, as occurred during the performances in Paris, an ironic commentary (or sub-text) on the conductor as wielder of power is being enacted. This is another case of a tactic, as described by Certeau, one in which the Soundpainter ironically acknowledges the ambiguous attractions of power and control.[148]

4.1.4.6 Timbral play and agency

In discussing Attali's view of musical production as a political force, Leyshon *et al.* suggest (1998:2):

> Music for Attali is a source of identification, a shared symbol of collectivity, and a means of generating and enforcing social conformity. The dynamics of musical production are inherently social and political, coercive and collaborative, concerned both with identity formation and the establishment and maintenance of social groupings.

With a view to answering Attali's question of how the dynamics of musical production are linked to identity formation, the author invokes the notion of "timbral iconicity," as theorized by Naomi Cumming. She defines this term as follows (2000:124):

> Timbral iconicity is so basic as to be scarcely avoidable. When listening to a performer, you do not hear his or her sounds as disembodied, but as humanly produced (with or without electronic modification), and as carrying a load of onset noise[149] and shaping which gives them their 'active' characteristics. Taking it for granted

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[148] Cross, discussing Xenakis's compositional methods, has noted how (2003:146): "*Duel* and *Stratégie* used game theory—each work employed two conductors who 'compete' with one another." Thompson (section 6.1.1) acknowledges Xenakis as an influence on the development of Soundpainting.
[149] Cumming (2000:119) defines "onset noise" as the impure frequencies occuring at onset and in the continuing surface friction during the production of a sound.

> that the instrument has a limited range of potential sounds, it is in the particular performer's choices within that range that interpretive interest may be found.

Cumming's definition includes the notions of embodiment and individuality, as revealed in the act of concentrated listening. Similarly, in the jazz and popular music context, listening reveals identity, negotiated through a complex set of timbral characteristics through which the given musician makes himself or herself known, which form that musician's aural "fingerprint" or "signature." The range of timbral possibilities that are construed as acceptable is to some extent dependent on the grammar of the musical style in question.[150] As Wishart notes (1996:258):

> The use of the voice in modern Western popular music presents an interesting case. Whereas in the classical tradition the singer strives towards the perfection of a particular kind of voice which is a social convention and is felt to be transferable from one work or one expressive context to another (liturgical, concert, etc.), popular music projects the idiosyncratic features of the individual singer's voice.[151] The audience is assumed to be more interested in music as a personal utterance rather than as a socially conventionalized utterance.

Wishart continues by defining such personal utterances in the context of what he refers to as "totemic song-structures," as follows (1996:259):

> Often such personalised utterances will be expressed through widely-known popular and often totemic song-structures.[152] This is taken to an extreme in the case of blues, where an almost claustrophobically rigid structure of music and text is used as a vehicle for sophisticated gestural expression. This is akin to the highly articulate gestural articulation of 'stock phrases' in vernacular speech where the linguistic content can be the least significant communicative element.

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[150] For instance, WEAM's notion of the *Klangideal* (section 1.5.4) allows for a more limited range of options as to what is aesthetically acceptable than popular music and jazz.

[151] Simon Emmerson (the editor of Wishart's book) considers this idiosyncrasy, and the Barthean idea of the "grain of the voice," as closely related.

[152] Such totemic song-structures form a central component of the jazz vocabulary, where performers are expected to know standard forms (blues, 32-bar song form, and so on) by heart. The author further examines this vocabulary in section 4.1.2.

Although instrumental music in jazz by definition excludes the voice, Wishart's key ideas of idiosyncrasy and sophisticated gestural expression are negotiated in this style of music, the author suggests, in a wide range of tactics of timbral play, which serve to make one instrumentalist distinguishable from another. In an "iconic" sense, as reinforced by the visual iconography of jazz (section 4.1.2), such aural signatures are especially significant for canon-formation in jazz.

By manipulating sound itself as a means of self-expression, Miles Davis, for example, distinguishes himself from any of a number of comparable masters of the trumpet, and thereby stakes his claim to individuality. Such timbral play (and the related notion of the aural signature) forms a marker borne out informally by such conventions as the musical Blindfold Test.

The jazz magazine *Down Beat* ran for many years a series of Blindfold Tests, in which musicians were asked firstly to identify, and then to criticize, a given number of recordings by various artists. Radano (1993:149) sets the scene as follows:

> *Down Beat*'s reporting from the period suggests a general concern—if not a preoccupation—with the heightened erosion of mainstream common practice and the insistent survival of free jazz. Elder musicians such as Albert Nicholas, Lenny Tristano, Teddy Wilson, Zoot Sims, and Tommy Vig, were, for example, predictably unimpressed with free playing, voicing, in frequently nostalgic recollections, a preference for the music of the past. Still, their comments were encouraged and faithfully reported in 'The Blindfold Test' and elsewhere, as much, one suspects, to bolster magazine sales as to perpetuate a conservatively framed vision of the jazz tradition.

"To perpetuate a conservatively framed vision of the jazz tradition," in Radano's terms, is to subscribe to *DownBeat*'s editorial ideology of the time, which sets these participants' sense of nostalgia for the past in stark opposition to the forward-looking and exploratory character of the free jazz musicians. This media-generated antagonism is perpetuated to this day in the conflict between so-called progressive jazz musicians and one of the

self-appointed guardians of the tradition, in the figure of Wynton Marsalis (Nisenson 2000). Notwithstanding the ideological complexity of such issues, in the Blindfold Tests themselves, it remained possible for the interviewee in many cases correctly to identify individual musicians on the basis of their sound alone.

It is notable that the element of timbre within the dynamics of musical production can be rendered in graphic form as bands of frequencies by means of computer software.[153] A key problem for improvisation research is that spontaneously created music operates without reference to the conventional symbols of notation, in precisely the area where orthodox notation is at its least rigorous: with regard to the nuances of individual timbre.[154] What the student improviser focuses on in transcribing a jazz solo, for instance, tends to be the idiosyncratic note-choices of the musician in question, rather than the timbral "play" with which the musician is engaged. In this regard, McClary situates this playing with sound in the context of the African-American tactic of "signifyin(g)" (2000:24-25, emphasis added):

> Henry Louis Gates Jr. has theorized this practice[155] as “signifyin(g),” whereby the creative artist exhibits prowess and imagination and yet simultaneously reinscribes the cultural habits and structures that preserve both community and communication. “Signifyin(g)” takes on many shapes, from the troping of familiar songs or stories to <u>the use of a wide range of funky or “masked” sounds that incorporate elements of noise</u> (deliberately exploiting complex vocal sounds, playing guitar with a bottleneck, and so on).

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[153] Using similar techniques, forensic criminalists make use of voice-print analysis to identify the timbral characteristics of a particular speaker.
[154] This is not to suggest that nineteenth-century composers did not have a very profound understanding of orchestration or blend, but this is concerned with the combination of different timbres than the application of notation to individual ones. A precise symbolic language for capturing the more radical possibilities of tone colour did not appear on the scene until the twentieth century, and these notational devices are most suited for esoteric and specialist "extended techniques." See, for example, Coan's invention of specialized notational symbols in his 1995 transcriptions of Michael Brecker's saxophone solos.
[155] That is, the practice of allowing for individual improvisation against the background of cherished, historically sanctioned grammars.

McClary goes on to link this practice, in her discussion of the musical practices of the Swan Silvertones vocal group, with the lead singer's employment of falsetto as an affective device (section 4.1.4.2): "He sings not just for himself but for his listeners, who perceive him as one who testifies for all." This process of synecdoche (in which one stands for all) is "guaranteed" in two ways: the singer's signifyin(g) is accompanied by the "velvety, well-rehearsed voices" of the backup singers (the individual's expression thereby supported by the community) and the recording technology of the time, which allowed him and the backup singers to deliver the hymn at a fairly soft (intimate) dynamic level. Their ability so to deliver, for McClary, "could not occur without the mediation of miking[156] technologies."[157]

Walser draws a distinction between two conceptions of meaning embedded in the terms "signification" and "signifyin(g)" (or, as he puts it, signifyin') when he writes (1995:168):

> Signification is logical, rational, limited; from this perspective, meanings are denotative, fixed, exact, and exclusive. Signifyin', conversely, works through reference, gesture, and dialogue to suggest multiple meanings through association. If signification assumes that meanings can be absolute, permanent, and objectively specified, signifyin' respects contingency, improvisation, relativity—the social production and negotiation of meanings.[158]

In relation to Soundpainting, McClary's discussion of the Swan Silvertones dramatizes firstly the relation between individual and community, a central problematic in jazz studies. Similarly, in Thompson's language, the signals

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[156] As in placing microphones to achieve a desired sonority, or timbre.
[157] This is another case of the influence of technology in creating a particular sonic space.
[158] Walser concludes by saying (*ibid.*): "We might compare the way a dictionary prescribes meanings with the ways in which words constantly change meaning in actual usage by communities of language users. The difference is like that between ***semantics*** and rhetoric: signification assumes that meaning can be communicated abstractly and individually, apart from the circumstances of exchange; signifyin' celebrates performance and dialogic engagement."

allow for dialogue and interplay between the individual improviser and pre-arranged but fluid <groups>,[159] as the Soundpainting event unfolds. With respect to McClary's second point regarding the manipulation of timbre, Soundpainting signals such as <extended techniques> explicitly call for the deployment of a wide range of unorthodox timbral practices, which do not in themselves necessarily relate to her more politicized view of timbral play as a case of African-American "signifyin(g)" tactics.[160] Soundpainting, in terms of Walser's notions of relative fixity of meaning as exemplified in the difference between orthodox signification and subversive signifyin', can be seen as foregrounding signifyin' as an activity that, as Walser notes, "celebrates performance and dialogic engagement" (1995:168):

> In fact, the concept could be compared to literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas about dialogue in the novel, or to a variety of other twentieth-century philosophical interrogations of the nature of language and meaning, from Wittgenstein to the American pragmatists to the French poststructuralists.

4.1.4.7 The fourth wall

Ramanna's notion of "discourse of place" (1998, 2005) considers the important variable of the geographical situation of a performance as a potential influence on the musical results of the event. Further, his study closely examines the relationship of performers to audience as a variable in the success or failure of the musical event under discussion. In theatre, the fourth wall is construed as an imaginary line or barrier between the performers and the audience, enforcing thereby a fixed distance

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[159] The various <group> signals in Soundpainting (Thompson 2006:16-19) allows for the establishment of temporary sections within the ensemble. While in Soundpainting these signals may cater for the establishment of temporary sections, these differ (in their degree of "contingency") from sections within an orchestra, in which similar families of instruments are placed in close proximity, such as strings, woodwinds, and so on.

[160] In this regard Walser notes (*ibid.*): "As Gates himself insists, signifyin' is not exclusive to African American culture, though it is in that culture that signifyin' has been most fully articulated theoretically, not only by scholars but also in folklore and song lyrics."

contributing to the ritualistic element in such performances. In the concert-hall, this combination of ritual and proxemics plays a central role in the creation of a temporary community, whose manner of responding to the music are governed by the social conventions of the genre.[161]

In the context of music composition, Williams (2001:38) mentions Pauline Oliveros as a case of a post-Cage experimental music composer who ”attempts to break down the distinction between audience and performers and encourages participants to construct events from their own experiences.” In an interview with the author (Johannesburg 4 September 2005), Oliveros concurred with Williams's view, and mentioned examples of her compositions that interrogated not only the traditional relationship between performers and audience, but also the "appropriate" sites for such performances. In her view, the idea of the concert-hall as a neutral space for performance was somewhat naïve, as it overlooked the idea that such spaces contain within them a spatial enactment of power relations.

In the context of free improvisation, Prévost considers the audience as a variable in the equation as follows (1995:27):

> The effect of an audience's presence upon AMMmusic gives this situation a sharp focus. The musicians are aware of a further refinement in their perception of the materials and situation in which they must work. It feels a bit like a player playing with someone looking over his shoulder and enquiring of his every move. Yet ultimately he knows that he must get beyond this very personal response if he is to do justice to the work in hand.

As Sherwood notes in regard to Soundpainting (1999):

> Thompson's goals make him very much at home with today's new media blends—from visual installation and performance art to classical music's migration into jazz-like improvisations. He says his orchestra's rehearsals and performances are "in the moment," changing according to the dynamics of the audience and players.

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[161] See Davidson (1997) and Small (1998) for discussions of this topic.

Thompson's acknowledgement of the audience's potential to influence the direction of a Soundpainting event is borne out by his inclusion of a number of signs that allow for the performers to interact with the audience. A good example is the <heckle> signal, wherein the performers reverse the traditional roles of audience and performers by indicating disapproval of the audience's performance, rather than the other way round. In addition, as part of the ensemble's performance in Paris, Thompson interacted with the audience by turning towards them and signing some rudimentary gestures for them to interpret. These examples suggest a humorous inversion of the audience's traditional role as more or less passive consumers of the performance, and ironically interrogate some of the politics of concert-hall etiquette. These examples serve to indicate Thompson's agreement with the view that performance is a collective and collaborative effort, presupposing to some extent an understanding of the relationship between performers and audience as dynamic and contingent.

4.1.4.8 Improvisation and freedom

Improvisers within the jazz and free jazz fields are often seen as concerned with the somewhat problematic notions of freedom and self-expression. The author has suggested (earlier within this chapter) that such tactics as the particular instruments chosen by musicians (Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry), their attitude to the repertoire and its implicit role in canon-formation in jazz (Art Ensemble of Chicago), and the place of timbral play in identity politics, dramatize these issues.

As Monson suggests, the metaphor of improvisation as freedom was to find a particular resonance with musicians and the wider community in the context of the civil rights struggle of the 1960s (1998:149):

> Improvisation has often taken been as a metaphor for freedom both musical and social, especially in jazz. The image of improvisation as freedom became especially pronounced in the jazz world of the early 1960s when the free jazz of Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, Albert Ayler, and others catalyzed aesthetic and political debates within the jazz community and music industry.

While the aims of free jazz in this period are inseparable from the social context from which the music emerged (and are therefore irretrievably politicized), a rather different situation emerges with regard to the place of improvisation in the context of experimental music. In general, within such music there appears to be a distrust of notions of freedom, and composers are concerned with the elimination of "the speaking subject" on ideological grounds that are in contrast to the aims of self-expression so much an integral part of the jazz aesthetic.[162]

Stockhausen, for example, has shown a high degree of antipathy towards any music with a regular pulse (a characteristic of most traditional jazz and popular music), while Pierre Boulez (section 2.1.3.3) has exhibited the not altogether successful desire to purge random elements from his music. Jazz, and especially free jazz, tends to privilege the "random" as part of an aesthetic in which the notion of the individual (and individual utterances) plays a central role. In this regard, a key difference between such practices is the place accorded to composition within them. A commonly held view of composition is that the composer practices his or her craft in isolation to create works, which are characterized by their susceptibility to revision before they reach the outside world as finished products. This approach is different from that of improvisation in general, and free improvisation in particular, which by definition cannot be revised because it is spontaneously created, and as such exists only in the moment of performance.

On the basis of this distinction, Thompson's characterization of Soundpainting as live composition raises problems for those who subscribe to a more orthodox conception of composition. Thompson characterized the salient problems around these issues of definition in

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[162] For contributions to this debate, see Anderson (2002), Borgo (2002), and Monson (1996, 1998).

correspondence with the author as follows (3 April 2006):

> Also—on another note, and quite interesting to me, many composers have made a point of letting me know they don't think of Soundpainting as composing—because it can't be repeated, edited (the next day) and other ridiculous notions of what makes a composition. I have discussed and argued Soundpainting is live composition—a composing medium differing from what we think of as traditional composition. This has been an ongoing discussion with professors of composition whose conservatoires I have visited. These same composers argue improvisation is not composition—also something I strongly disagree with.

As Thompson himself comments, "If you know the system [of signals] well, you can respond immediately to something [that the performers improvise on stage]. And the performers know how I compose…. So they might have a sense of the signal before it comes."[163] Through Soundpainting's gestures is enacted a more elastic conception of composition as based in the moment, in which individual utterances are shaped by the Soundpainter's responses to the free expression and interchange of musical ideas.

Monson (1998:149) also poses a number of challenges facing the development of what she terms "an ethnomusicology of improvisation." These include what she describes (*ibid.*) as "interlocking contexts that include aesthetic modernism, spiritual transcendence, transnationalism, the civil rights movement, and African independence." Key and Rothe relate this problem to the historical developments that led to the emergence of the United States as a nation, and further note the complicating influence of the mass media (the Debordian spectacle) in this situation (2001:38):

> As a relative newcomer to nationhood, and as a nation based more on abstract principles than historical associations or ethnicity, the United States offers no ready marker of national identity. As a result, Americans from the earliest days of the republic have tried to define

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[163] Thompson interview with Topper Sherwood (1999).

> the American identity—and American artists' have been some of the most compelling in this dialogue. Yet the same factors that have made American musical culture the most vibrant in the world have placed its musicians in a double bind. The sounds that have come to be identified as 'American' have come from class and ethnic sources outside the mainstream of 'high culture.' Thus popular musicians struggle to be taken seriously, and serious composers struggle to reconcile the genres, techniques, and resources of a European-developed art with their native popular music. Since the beginning of the 20th century, urbanization and the mass media have both confused and enriched the issue.

4.2 Language acquisition in improvised music

Pauline Oliveros (2004:50) defines the act of improvisation as follows:

> In music, theater, dance, and the visual arts, improvisation includes acting from inner intelligence and/or impulse without premeditation from the whole field of available possibilities, as well as acting with vocabulary within more prescribed forms.

Oliveros here distinguishes between two kinds of improvising activity, one based on unscripted "inner intelligence and/or impulse," with the second kind situated in the more prescribed (or scripted) realm, incorporating the notions of vocabulary and prescription. This concept of vocabulary as an essential element of improvisation, for Oliveros, is related to the rules of the game under consideration, implying the not unsynonymous terms control and structure.

Some totemic structures within the tonal jazz language, such as the blues, "rhythm changes," and 32-bar song form, provide evidence of the existence of axiomatic systems or Wittgensteinian grammars, which determine the rules of that particular language system. According to Wittgenstein's concept, a grammar is normative, in so far as it lays out the conditions for a given language-game to be regarded as “meaningful.” In musicking, McClary's "temporary community" provides the conditions that support as well as sanction individualized utterances.

Starting from Oliveros's concept of prescribed forms suggests a degree of

negotiation of space within power relations at work in even the most apparently democratic and collaborative climate. These issues are explored in detail in Heffley (2005), with regard to democratic ideals and their influence on the development of free jazz in Europe.

Bailey's comments on vocabulary in musical practice are relevant to this discussion since they highlight the manner in which this vocabulary develops, over time and with the gradual formation of a sense of familiarity with "a common stock of material" (1992:106):

> The analogy with language, often used by improvising musicians in discussing their work, has a certain usefulness in illustrating the development of a common stock of material—a vocabulary—which takes place when a group of musicians improvise together regularly. With a successful improvising group the bulk of their material will be initially provided by the styles, techniques and habits of the musicians involved. This vocabulary will then be developed by the musicians individually, in work and research away from the group, and collectively, in performance.

Sloboda (1985), cited in Philpott (2001:32-46), identifies nine basic similarities between music and language as follows:

1. Both are particular to humans
2. Both contain the potential for infinite combinations of possibilities
3. Both can be learned by listening to models
4. Both use vocal and auditory sound processes as their natural medium
5. Both involve the use of notational systems
6. Both require necessary skills to be received and absorbed before they can be used
7. Both share some universality of form across cultures
8. Both can be examined in terms of phonetic, syntactic and semantic structures
9. Both contain an underlying structure over which various transformations can take place.[164]

Sloboda's comparison between music and language is also relevant to improvised musicking, in which the place of notation is to some extent contested, as the author's discussion of the informal methods of language

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[164] Philpott here compares the work of Chomsky with that of Heinrich Schenker.

employed by popular musicians has shown (section 4.1.2). The focus of this section is primarily on Sloboda's sixth point, concerning the reception and integration of the requisite skills for music and speech. The author's aim here is to consider the methods used to acquire improvisational facility and later to suggest that there may be parallel processes at work in the acquisition of music and language skills. It is suggested, therefore, that improvisers are not born, but made, in the sense that improvising demands the kind of thoroughgoing preparation that paradoxically allows it to appear spontaneous.

As Eric Clarke (1988:1) has stated: "Playing music is an activity that is comparable in cognitive complexity to speaking a language, and comparable in its demands on motor control to playing a sport like tennis." While not explicitly linking music to language on a semantic level at least, Clarke is suggesting here that musical activity requires a two-fold development on the performer's part, demanding both cognitive and motor skills for the performance to take place.

Clarke goes on to say (1988:1-2):

> Continuous reference to a large body of musical knowledge is required in music performance if the result is to be fluent and intelligent, making it difficult to maintain a definite distinction between the cognitive structures of abstract musical understanding and those embodied in a motor programme for musical performance.

What he is alluding to initially is the repertoire that musicians tap into—the store of shared linguistic elements encompassing such notions as genre, stylistic vocabulary, appropriate phrasing, and so on, which will obviously in turn depend on the tradition from which the music springs. This tradition in jazz (as suggested earlier by van Heerden) is inherently conservative because it is based in the value-system of the community, thereby creating the tension between the improviser's need for self-expression and the norms and values of the community.

Looking at these criteria, one wonders if Clarke's distinction between

cognitive and motor skills is not a somewhat artificial one (as he himself admits), in the sense that musicians acquire and develop these skills more or less in tandem, by which is meant that there is a symbiotic process taking place here. In practice it seems unlikely that a beginner musician will separate out these skills in a self-reflexive way by saying to themselves: “All right, enough practising my instrument for today. Now I’m going to focus on transcribing a solo.”

Although the act of transcription may take place away from the chosen instrument, it seems plausible that the musician will at least check the accuracy of the completed version on some instrument or other, thereby confirming the initial cognitive act in the realm of the kinesic as muscle memory. Moreover, many of the skills that the fledgling improviser works on develop both cognitive and motor skills (such as practising on their instrument of choice, memorization, and imagination).

Mark Gridley (1997:19-20) lists a set of skills necessary for jazz improvisation as follows:

- Near-effortless command of an instrument
- A good acquaintanceship with harmony
- A quick and keen ear for pitch and rhythm
- A good memory for sounds
- A repertoire of hundreds of tunes and chord progressions
- The ability to recognize chord progressions quickly.

Gridley continues by listing four skills to do with what is often termed musical literacy, namely:

- The ability to read music
- The ability to sight-read music
- The ability to make up an original tune and correctly notate it
- The ability to listen to someone else’s music and then correctly notate it.

Following the work of Berliner and Monson, the discussion is focused mainly on the acquisition of musical skills within the jazz idiom, some of which is instinctive (aurally-based) as in playing along with recordings or acquiring real-time knowledge on the bandstand in the course of

performance, while a large proportion of which (following the acceptance of improvisation studies into academe) is based on textual study (methods for studying improvisation).

The author's aim here is to highlight the instantaneous, heuristic, trial and error basis of the first approach, while emphasizing the more contemplative or reflective nature of the second: on the one hand, the art, and on the other, the science, of improvisation. It should also be stressed that these processes are not mutually exclusive but feed and reinforce each other on a continuous basis as improvisers develop their skills over time.

The parallels between the acquisition of language skills in everyday life and a similar process in music are neither tenuous nor accidental, and are borne out by the way in which some jazz musicians explicitly link musical practice with communication, and especially the metaphor of story-telling, pointing thus to the connection between a great improviser and the custodian of the history of the tribe. For instance, Danny Barker (in Shapiro and Hentoff 1966:243) explicitly links a performance by Bessie Smith to the evangelical tradition of the American South when he states:

> When you went to see Bessie and she came out, that was it. If you had any church background, like people who came from the South as I did, you would recognize a similarity between what she was doing and what those preachers and evangelists from there did, and how they moved people. The South had fabulous preachers and evangelists. Some would stand on corners and move the crowds from there. Bessie did the same thing on stage.

Oakley highlights an ambiguity in this image of the blues singer as preacher when he states (1976:50):

> Many black people would have been, and still would be, offended by the idea that the blues singer 'spoke' for them, in much the same way that others would reject the spokesmanship of the preacher. Nevertheless, there did exist what almost amounted to a blues community. Its significance was in the processes of communal creation and participation in a shared culture, and within that world most singers regarded themselves as entertainers. But the idea that

> blues were the expression of deeply felt emotions made the music more than simply entertainment.

McClary's discussion of Bessie Smith's performance of *Thinking Blues* highlights the importance of the process whereby the community and the performer make use of mutually intelligible codes in stating (2000:47): "She invokes and brings into being a temporary community that bears witness to and empathizes with her subjective expression, made intersubjective by her use of shared codes." Elsewhere, but also in the context of the blues, Oakley highlights the ambiguous nature of this community (1976:216-7):

> For large portions of the community the blues was still the devil's music, the music of immorality, licentiousness, eroticism, whisky-drinking, juke joints, low life, violence, a source of corruption and the harbinger of social corruption. And to many blacks salvation was to be found in ridding from the Race its stereotyped image of irresponsibility and unreliability.

Cook views the process of signification in ethnomusicology as a series of negotiations between performers and the audience in stating (2001:13):

> The contemporary performance studies paradigm that has developed primarily in the context of theater studies and ethnomusicology stresses the extent to which signification is constructed through the very act of performance, and generally through acts of negotiation between performers, or between them and the audience.

Cook's emphasis on the "negotiability" of signification is in line with Reason's concept of the degree of interaction between the performers and the audience as a variable in the success of the performance. In other words, a performance of live improvisation differs, by virtue of its spatio-temporal context, from a similar performance in a recording studio, where the technology allows for editing (replacing "mistakes," changing the sonic balance, and overdubbing extra parts) after the fact. In this situation, there is no live audience present to create a "vibe" of approval or otherwise, and the negotiation of signification is mediated through the technology of computer-based digital audio software.

In the different contexts of live performance and the recording studio, then, it is apparent that different performance territories or spaces provide different responses from the musicians: in the live situation, music is being performed (created) spontaneously without the possibility of review, while the space of the recording studio allows for editing after the fact with the aim of documenting a near-perfect performance.

4.2.1 The repertoire

Jazz is the only music in which the same note can be played night after night but differently each time.

Ornette Coleman (1964/2002)

As a working definition of the repertoire, one might suggest that this takes the form of the canonic history of significant musicians, as well as the body of work, the improviser engages with in the course of his or her development. In jazz, this is subject to some extent to the vicissitudes of fashion, as a result of which musicians fall in or out of favour, sometimes to be re-evaluated or re-discovered with the benefit of hindsight. This notion of the repertoire is closely connected to Oliveros's idea (section 4.2) of a prescribed vocabulary (in jazz, for example, "standards" and the blues), which form the core of the language.

The author here examines some elements of the jazz repertoire that call to mind Sloboda's earlier point (9) (section 4.2) regarding the underlying structures of music. The need to examine how form is constructed and negotiated in jazz's tonal realm becomes apparent in the light of the increasing "assaults on its foundations" mounted by the free and post-free players following the 1960s.

4.2.1.1 The blues

McClary, while acknowledging the difficulty of locating a "main stream"

within twentieth-century musical practice, sees the blues as the bedrock on which is built many widely different styles of music. She cites such musicians as Blind Willie Johnson, Ma Rainey, James P. Johnson, Duke Ellington, Hank Williams, Little Richard, Queen Ida, and Thelonious Monk, as well as such later disciples of the blues as Led Zeppelin, Janis Joplin, the Beach Boys, James Brown, and John Zorn. This partial list of artists encompasses a stylistic gamut from country music to soul, Zydeco to free jazz, rock 'n' roll to gospel, stride piano to heavy metal. For McClary (2000:33): "As much as these musics may differ from each other, they unite in engaging with the conventions of the blues."

As McClary further states, the blues is less an expression of feeling than an engagement with a set of conventions:

> Contrary to a popular belief that regards blues as some kind of unmediated expression of woe, the conventions underlying the blues secure it firmly within the realm of culture; a musician must have internalized its procedures in order to participate creatively within its ongoing conversation.[165]

Two primary conventions underlying the blues are its harmonic/metric structure and the opportunity for musicians to engage with it on a level of idiosyncratic timbre. The blues framework has crystallized over time into a twelve-bar format with a more or less fixed harmonic progression as underpinning. This takes the form of a three-line structure, each phrase consisting of four bars, starting on the tonic for the first phrase, moving to the subdominant area (generally followed by the tonic) in the second phrase, and moving to the dominant in the last phrase. McClary takes the example of *St Louis Blues* (composed by W. C. Handy and performed by Bessie Smith and Louis Armstrong) as "a schematic model for the blues procedure" (2000:39):

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[165] McClary's view of the blues as "ongoing conversation" confirms once again the possibility of interpreting music on a sociolinguistic basis.

Line 1:	I hate to see	the ev'ning sun go	down,
(Bars 1-4)	I	IV	I7
(V7/IV)			
Line 2:	I hate to see	the ev'ning sun go	down,
(Bars 5-8)	IV	IV	I
Line 3:	It makes me think I'm	on my last go	round.
(Bars 9-12)	V	IV (or V)	I (V7)

Figure 4.2.1.1: McClary's analysis of *St Louis Blues*.

Albert Murray explicitly links the polysemic nature of blues playing to theatricality and ritual in the following description (1978:87):

> Blues musicians play music not only in the theatrical sense that actors play or stage a performance, but also in the general sense of playing for recreation, as when participating in games of skill. They also play in the sense of gamboling, in the sense that is to say, of fooling around or kidding around with, toying with, or otherwise having fun with. Sometimes they also improvise and in the process they elaborate, extend, and refine. But what they do in all instances involves the technical skill, imagination, talent, and eventually the taste that adds up to artifice. And of course such is the overall nature of play, which is so often a form of reenactment to begin with, that sometimes it also amounts to ritual.

Jost's analysis of Ornette Coleman's blues composition *Tears Inside* (from the 1959 recording *Tomorrow is the Question!*) includes a transcription of three of Coleman's improvised ***choruses*** in conventional notation. Jost notes a number of significant points about the piece and Coleman's approach to the blues as follows:

> The harmonic development is reduced to the most rudimentary changes, and in this respect the piece is more like early forms of folk blues than bebop blues,[166] with their many substitute chords.

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[166] The difference for the two categories of blues rests in the greater harmonic complexity in bebop's re-inscription of the blues. The regular practice of harmonic

Jost finds evidence not only of an underlying thematicism in Coleman's improvisation on this piece, as well as an attempt to return to the simplified chordal structure of earlier formats of the blues. Coleman engages with a far more rigid version of the blues, which recalls Wishart's comments (section 4.1.4.5) with regard to the place of utterance within what he characterizes as "totemic" song-structures.

4.2.1.2 Standards: the language of the tribe

In discussing the making of the first *Standards* album with Gary Peacock and Jack deJohnette, Keith Jarrett (in Lange 1984:63) recalls: "*Standards* was, believe it or not, the opening to the classical thing, like a stop-off in American Songwriterville, trying to pay back some of my debt to the kind of music I felt Gary and Jack and I had as a kind of tribal language that we all grew up with."

Jarrett here pays homage to the standard, what van Heerden (1996:28) has defined as: "a commonly-used vehicle for improvisation, as opposed to an entirely original piece." Many such standards have their point of origin in Tin Pan Alley, the songwriting quarter of New York City, and first see the light of day as popular tunes or quite commonly as show tunes emanating from Broadway. It is also possible for original tunes (such as "Take Five") to acquire the status of standards, often by virtue of becoming jazz "hits," or for jazz musicians to annex popular hits and thereby accord to them the legitimation of this status.[167]

In a typical post-1940s jazz performance, the initial statement of the

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substitution in bebop led to a far more complex set of chord changes than was practised by practitioners of the folk blues, which tended to stay more closely with the original harmonic schema, as per McClary's model.

[167] See for instance Miles Davis' treatment of *Human Nature* by Michael Jackson as well as Cyndi Lauper's *Time after time* on the recording *Live Around the World*.

melodic theme of a standard jazz tune[168] is usually followed by a series of improvised “choruses”, in which each soloist is given the opportunity in turn to construct a musical statement based on the ground of the changes (the chord progression) of the piece in question. In the jazz vernacular, this is usually referred to as "running the changes." The solos are then rounded off by a final re-statement of the ***head***. The piece may or may not conclude with a coda section in the form of a last time ending or a repeat and fade section.

This conventional performance method, present mainly in traditional (or "mainstream") jazz, bebop, and much jazz since the 1950s, is in contrast to the earlier procedure in some New Orleans jazz (or “dixie”) where the soloist tends to re-state an embellished version of the theme as a solo while accompanied by the other front-line instruments in a type of freely embellished counterpoint to the melody.

The emphasis in much bebop and post-bop music is thus on the harmonic structure as the focus of improvisational activity, and not on the creation of an elaborated version of the melody. This focus on the harmonic implications of a jazz piece suggests that closure is "weaker" than in the case of WEAM, where the dynamic structure of exposition, development, and recapitulation is maintained by moving away from the tonic key as laid out in the exposition, journeying further away in the development, and returning to the original key in the recapitulation section. This telic approach (Heble 2000, McClary 2000) is one of the animating principles in sonata form, in which transformations are carried out in accordance with the presentation of a melodically identifiable subject (more generally, first and second subjects).

Jazz usually tends to exhibit a much simpler harmonic structure, which for the most part remains constant, and the focus here is on the way in which

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[168] Known among jazz musicians as the “head.”

the soloist engineers melodic transformations against a more or less stable chordal background. In the case of a jazz group who perform "standards" as a way of earning a living, the author suggests here that while the "music" may not be in evidence on the bandstand, they are working within the parameters of a mutually agreed-upon blueprint of how to get from point A to point B. This blueprint may take the form of a strategy of interpretation arrived at through intensive rehearsal and discussion of the music in question or the shared understanding (through aural familiarity with the piece they are playing) of the shape and flow of the music.

It is claimed (Ephland 1996:18) that the trio led by the American jazz pianist Keith Jarrett never rehearse and never discuss a programme (or "set list" in jazz parlance) in advance before they perform, and that Jarrett's piano introductions often are the only clue to the accompanists (usually Gary Peacock, double bass and Jack deJohnette, drums) as to which piece they are about to play.

> JE: But, when the three of you play a concert, don't you at least huddle just before you go out to agree on the first number?
> KJ: We actually don't even do that.
> JE: What about sign language on stage?
> GP: Not really. Keith will begin to play something, and you just keep listening and listening.

It is perhaps paradoxical that some improvised music derives its apparent quality of spontaneity from intense rehearsal. The double bassist Chuck Israels (in Berliner 1994:289) has this to say about working with Bill Evans: "People never understood how arranged Bill Evans's music really was. Sure, it was free and improvised. But the reason we could be so free is that we already knew the beginning, the middle, and the ending."

Standards are the bread and butter of the improvising jazz musician and form a transnational and translinguistic common repertoire enabling musicians literally to "meet on the bandstand," with their instrumental or "story-telling" ability the means of communication. They form a "ground"

through which musicians who speak different languages in everyday life can communicate in a musical (non-verbal) fashion.

This ground of communication is formed not only by the melodies and chord progressions of the piece in question but the conventional structural and tactical manoeuvres tacitly agreed upon during the course of its performance. In some instances procedures are based on etiquette and the sense of allowing someone to finish “saying their say.” For example, a common decision point here is when soloists are not indicating clearly (through the paralinguistic clues of eye contact or body language) whether they intend to continue on soloing into the next cycle of the harmonic changes. The next soloist has to interpret the signs of the end of the first section of the solo by ear in this case, as in whether the phrase in question sounds to their ear resolved or unresolved.

The direction and shape of the phrase, its dynamic intensity, and degree of rhythmic complexity often will give clues as to this decision, as well as if the note ends on a chord tone or a melodic tension.)[169] A downward direction in the melodic shape combined with a decrease in either dynamic and/or rhythmic activity will suggest that the soloist intends concluding the solo. Experienced musicians will know when the soloist is about to finish and will also know where they themselves are in the changes so as to allow for the possibility of the soloist’s overlapping into the beginning of the next section and then taking over at the correct harmonic if not formal point.

4.2.1.3 “Rhythm changes" and the contrafact

Lewis describes the characteristic transformational tactics of bebop

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[169] Landing on a chord tone, the author suggests, may indicate the achievement of relatively greater tonal stability suggesting thereby that the soloist is "winding down," whereas the use of a melodic tension as a point of arrival is more ambiguous.

musicians as follows (1996:94):

> Bop improvisers, like earlier generations of jazz improvisers, used 'heads,' or precomposed melodic material, as starting points for a piece. Bop heads, however, as Gridley (1994:165) points out, 'resembled little or nothing that the listener had heard before.' In a further abstraction, bebop improvisers felt no obligation to use the melodic material of the 'head' as material for improvisational transformation. Instead, the underlying harmonic sequence, usually subjected to extensive re-working by the improvisers, became the basis for improvisation.

One of the favourite vehicles for this kind of improvisatory practice was the Gershwin composition "I Got Rhythm," whose origin and popularity as a Broadway show tune, and its compliance with the 32-bar AABA song form style, defined it clearly as a product of dominant culture. In addition, the B-section of the tune uses the kind of harmonic formula with its extended chain of II-V's, which provided the bebop musicians with ample scope for demonstrations of chromatic finesse. By altering the plain secondary dominants in the bridge to allow for a more chromatic approach, the bebop musicians subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) re-inscribed a commentary on the melodic blandness and harmonic simplicity of the original piece. In fact this composition has survived in its purely harmonic form as what have come to be called "Rhythm changes."

The bebop musicians of the 1940s created a new musical language by privileging harmonic over melodic structures. For Tirro (1993), this approach is typified in Coleman Hawkins's recording of *Body and Soul*. Their new music demanded attention for its artistic value, rather than as entertainment, and they adopted various strategies to realise this goal.

Firstly, their emphasis on the diminished fifth interval, which divides the octave into two equal halves, can be seen as a move away from harmony based on thirds. As Heble claims (2000:37):

> If Bird was, at the time of his playing, seen as an anomaly, it was precisely because he played notes in his improvisations which nobody had dared to acknowledge expect perhaps as passing

> harmonies. The flattened fifth, for instance, the devil itself in music, became a stylistic device that characterized much of what Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and other boppers were doing.

Secondly, their adoption of tempos outside what was commonly accepted as "danceable" highlighted their intention of creating music for listening rather than partying. In the third place, the bebop musicians deliberately avoided familiar melodies, in favour of a much more angular approach to note choices. Where familiar melodies were used, they were often removed from their original context and deployed as ironic or tongue-in-cheek quotations.[170]

The fourth area of emphasis lies in a new conception of rhythm, wherein drummers moved the statement of the pulse from the bass drum to the hi-hat and ride cymbals. In this context, the bass drum was now used for accenting ("dropping bombs") rather than stating the time explicitly. This move allowed for far more subtle nuances in the interpretation of time, which in turn allowed the soloist a greater flexibility. In the fifth place, the beboppers' adoption of such highly stylized elements as dress code[171] and language suggested the formation of a social group designed to prevent the appropriation of their music by commercial (read white[172]) interest groups.

> Pop songs and the blues have served as launching pads for jazz improvisers almost from the beginning, but Parker and his confederates radicalized the procedure by disguising the material they appropriated almost beyond recognition, in an abstract of sleek harmonic lines and daredevil rhythms that gave the impression of blinding speed even at moderate tempos.
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> (Davis, in Woideck 1998:176-7)

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[170] The author has in mind Charlie Parker's inclusion of melodic fragments from Bizet's *Carmen* during his performance at Massey Hall, Toronto.
[171] Thelonious Monk's bamboo-framed dark glasses and the uniform of the "zoot suit" come to mind here.
[172] Parker's mentorship of the young Red Rodney, a white trumpeter, proves the exception rather than the rule.

Baker defines the contrafact as (1987c:1) "a tune which is based on an extant set of chord changes" and goes on to outline its usefulness as follows:

> The contrafact was valuable for a wide variety of reasons. During the bebop era the working performer was expected to function without music much of the time and to be familiar with a common body of tunes and changes which were virtually public domain. Many of the tunes which served as bases were tunes which were a part of the basic repertoire of the bands in which the beboppers served their respective apprenticeships and were consequently very familiar to them.[173]

A contemporary example of this practice is found in Steve Swallow's 1997 CD *Deconstructed*, on which the track *Lost in Boston* is a melodic ***trope*** on the changes of the standard *It's wonderful*, and *Deconstructed* (the title track) is in turn superimposed on the harmonic framework of *Undecided*. Swallow's tactic in this instance reveals an ironic awareness of postmodernist techniques of pastiche and irony, as in the tongue-in-cheek titling of *Name that tune*.

4.2.1.4 Pedagogical methods for improvisation

Steve Lacy, the American soprano saxophonist who spent much of his life resident as an expatriate in France, has this to say regarding the importance of focusing one's attention on the materials of musical study: in other words, on what to play (1994:14, emphasis in original):

> I remain a convinced 'materialist': working intensively on a given material is perhaps the best way to progress and eventually to find your own style, by getting to the bottom of someone else's style. Of course Monk's music is so interesting that I never got tired of working on it and digging into it. Evidently appetite plays a large role in this story. You must find something difficult and stimulating to work on, and stay on it long enough to reap the benefits. It can be the music of Bach, Beethoven, Webern, Ellington, Parker, Tatum, Monk, many

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[173] As a matter of interest, Baker (1987c:1-2) cites no less than 48 contrafacts based on "I got rhythm."

> other masters; it depends on your interests and needs.

Lacy's *Findings*, apart from being a very complete (as well as practical[174]) treatise on improvisation specifically for the soprano saxophone, is somewhat exceptional, in that its primary focus is on developing a general technical vocabulary for the instrument and less on the rule-following element of what is appropriate for a given style. Similarly, Marilyn Crispell's 2002 instructional DVD, *A pianist's guide to free improvisation: Keys to unlocking your creativity*, is less concerned with the rules of a particular jazz language-game than with the necessity for communication in the practice of free improvisation. As she states, with respect to "the art of playing with another person" (2002: chapter 22 ff.):

> Now this is a whole different ball game from playing on your own, as you can imagine, and it involves a different kind of listening. Here we're not just in conversation with ourselves, we're in a conversation with another person, and we don't really know exactly what they're gonna do—so it's like jumping on a trampoline (or something) without a safety net, or walking on a tightrope without a safety net; you could really fall on your face, but that's what makes it really interesting and wonderful.

Crispell, whose pedigree as a player includes extended periods as pianist with Anthony Braxton, mentions five tactics to safeguard against the risks of proceeding without a safety net as follows:

1. soloing and accompanying, in which one instrument becomes the dominant voice
2. the practice-room concept, where there is no necessary musical connection established
3. call and response, in which the players respond to a given musical statement by employing this approach
4. disruption, in which the musicians try to disrupt and erase a given musical statement
5. using a narrative beginning and ending technique over a fixed harmonic background, or pattern.

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[174] Lacy provides technical information relating to the instrument itself like fingering diagrams for obtaining high harmonics, as well as concert and transposed scores of original compositions.

Crispell's interest in free improvisation is exceptional for subverting the telic impetus of much tonal jazz, and, while space does not permit an exhaustive survey of improvisation methods (as in texts for learning to improvise), the author wishes to highlight the manner in which many of these texts generally presuppose the student's aim to be the mastery of the materials of tonal jazz. It has been suggested in this regard (section 4.1.2) that the concept of the chord scale applies largely to the dominant ideology of tonal jazz. Most's *Metamorphosis: Transformation of the jazz solo* (1980), in which various melodic exercises are superimposed on to existing harmonic structures, works in a fashion which reinforces Baker's idea of the contrafact. A section of Most's treatise is based on the progression of Charlie Parker's *Blues for Alice*, in which the exercises progress from very simple melodic shapes to more elaborate and oblique chromatic shapes by using specific categories of note choices based on underlying harmonic schemes.

4.2.1.5 Third Stream

Third Stream music is defined as that which attempts to fuse the rigour of Western concert music with the improvisational quality of jazz. Given the rules of the game of both fields, this is at best an uneasy fusion. Whereas classical music sets timbral purity as its *sine qua non*, this immediately creates an aesthetic conflict with the jazz musician's insistence on individuality and freedom. Classical musicians are trained to follow very closely the nuances of the symbolic language, and, for the most part, the improvisative impulse is frowned upon. For jazz musicians, the emphasis is placed on the ability to create music *extempore*, and this is mainly what other jazz musicians tend to admire when they enthuse about a given musician's skill. There are musicians who have the ability to transcend these differences, but they tend to be exceptionally flexible in terms of their approach to both fields.

In an interview with Anil Prasad (2002), Eberhard Weber had this to say regarding his 2001 recording *Endless Days*:

> AP: You told the musicians on the new record 'You can play everything as long as it doesn't sound like jazz' to encourage a sense of freedom and openness.
>
> EW: [laughs] I love these provocative phrases. When I told the musicians these phrases they laughed, knowing very well what I meant. 'Don't you worry, it won't be jazz' they said. They know that improvisation is also jazz, because improvisation, harmonically, doesn't exist in classical music. So, in the end it was jazz. But I wanted to avoid the typical noodly and doodly jazzy stuff. They immediately understood.

The American Paul McCandless, the fourth member of Weber's quartet, is a multi-instrumentalist (bass clarinet, oboe, and soprano saxophone), a classically trained musician whose approach to phrasing and sound, in this instance, exemplifies an erasure of both swing and individuality. McCandless's "straight" aesthetic operates in the dual areas of rhythmic feel ("time") and timbral iconicity (intonation and tone colour); eighth-notes are played "as written," notes are executed directly "on pitch," and McCandless's "sound" is befitting of the general chamber music atmosphere of the recording.[175]

Weber's deliberate avoidance of the more overt stylistic elements of the "American" jazz language can be seen as metonymic of the problematized discourse of jazz in Europe, by which the author means not a simple "us and them" mentality, but rather in the sense of a text being both a rewriting and a revision of every other text. This discourse is not hostile, at least in the obvious sense that Europe has opened its doors to many American expatriate musicians (Sidney Bechet, Duke Ellington, Dexter Gordon, Steve Lacy come to mind), but there is sometimes a slightly strident element in some writers' view (Gridley et al.) that "If it doesn't swing, it isn't jazz".

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[175] As these hallmarks of avoiding a jazz-like idiom are in keeping with Weber's desired aesthetic ideals for this recording, these remarks should not be construed as criticisms of McCandless's "lack of swing" or other ostensibly "anti-jazz" elements in his playing.

In the United States itself, the Third Stream is exemplified by such recordings as Gil Evans—*Birth of the Cool* and *Sketches of Spain*, Claus Ogerman—*Cityscape*, Michael Brecker Quindectet—*Wide angles*, and especially the work of the Modern Jazz Quartet. The cool element of this music is also typified by the West Coast jazz of such musicians as Gerry Mulligan, Paul Desmond, and, to a lesser extent, Dave Brubeck. Gioia (1998) argues that the "cool" school originates with session musicians in Hollywood film orchestras playing jazz in their free time.

4.3 Towards a model for improvised music

Wittgenstein's theories of language have bearing on the author's discussion of Soundpainting, in so far as they emphasize the rule-following procedures of language, as well as its contingent and contextualized nature. The author has argued that these theories are applicable to musicking in general, and are well suited to the analysis of improvised music, no less subject to rules (in the case of traditional jazz) than WEAM. From these rules emanate a system of "right" and "wrong" note-choices and a theoretical foundation of rules of tension and resolution, which (within the framework of the tonal jazz language-game) recapitulate this central metaphor of WEAM.

The interactions between musicians and their audiences expose both the ritualistic character of such practices and their obedience (or otherwise) to the rules of various language-games (whether those of WEAM in general, or the various "dialects" within the over-arching jazz language-game itself).

Within the jazz realm, the central dynamic of the individual in relation to the community is interrogated and negotiated by means of what Gates has theorized as tropological practices, in which the individual's choice of instrument, attitude to the canon, and using timbre as a means of expressing individuality, all form a category of tactical manoeuvres serving as metaphorical ways of negotiating these issues, with or without the approval of the temporary communities created in the course of performance.

4.3.1 Language-games in improvised music

It seems evident that musical activity can be seen as a form of discourse. Whether this musical discourse operates in any way similarly to language (that is, baldly put, if music means anything), while a fascinating question, is not likely to find its resolution within these pages. One is wary (despite whatever advances may have occurred in neurochemistry in the twenty-first century) of such eighteenth-century concepts as *Affektenlehre*, which laid claim to a necessary connection between musical content and its emotional effect on the listener.

What the author suggests rather is the potential of analysing music as a metalinguistic phenomenon or a metalanguage-game, borrowing from Wittgenstein. This idea of metalinguistics has clear parallels with Prévost's concept (1995:36) of meta-music, which he defines as "music as praxis." Corbett theorizes the paradoxical operations of another kind of "metalanguage" within orthodox musicology, wherein theoretical terms of WEAM like "harmony," "tension," and "resolution" are legitimated as part of a system of codes (1995:218):

> Musicology serves as the best example of a determinant musical metalanguage. In Western classical music a chord change is analyzed as having meaning in relation not only to other music that surrounds it, but to a body of knowledge outside sound, even outside written music—that is, previous analyses. The transparency of terms such as tension, resolution, harmony, and cacophony is in part a result of their origin as words; that is, they are theoretical terms to

> begin with—developed in relation to the abstract concept of functional harmony—that are subsequently given legitimacy in their enunciation as music, a process that then erases the writing through which it was produced.[177]

Lucy Green sees the term "ideology" as more or less supplanted in recent times by the term "discourse," and goes on to define ideology as having three main consequences for musicological (and other) scholarship. Although she seems to be at pains to avoid an overtly Marxist interpretation of the term, she views ideology's over-arching tendencies as towards reification, legitimation, and the perpetuation of social processes, through the operations of the reifying and legitimating processes she mentions (2003:4):

> In short, rather than a crude concept of ideology as a set of imposed falsehoods inducing a straightforwardly 'false' consciousness, it is more helpful to understand ideology as a set of common-sense assumptions which contribute towards making our social relations seem natural and justifiable: ideology helps to explain our world to us, it grows out of human experience and is shared, in various ways and with various consequences, by large numbers of people from different social groups making up a society. But at the same time, through the processes of reification and legitimation, ideology helps to perpetuate social relations 'as they already are.' Therefore, ideology usually operates to the advantage of the most powerful and better-off groups within the society.

This notion of ideology seems to be the animating rationale behind the kind of Blindfold Test as described by Radano, in which those more or less conservative members of the jazz community are asked to assess the work of such people for whose music they might reasonably be expected to feel a natural antipathy (precisely because of their media-created mantle as guardians of the tradition). On the other hand, much of the free

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[177] Corbett's conclusion demonstrates how the ideological concepts of WEAM are equally applicable to the legitimating practices of tonal jazz (*ibid.*): "Thus, we have a coded system that is given a semantic level through a complex system of denial. Meaning is metalinguistically pasted on; music theory fills the position of semantic referent in the musical language; the words of theory speak through the music they seem to animate."

music as played by such musicians as Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, Albert Ayler and others, emerged during the social ferment of the 1960s and was sometimes explicitly linked with political agendas such as civil rights, the problem of identity within White-dominated society for many African-American artists and musicians, and the notion of liberation.

Radano describes the gradual acceptance of free jazz by the establishment in the following terms (1993:149):

> Many critics, on the other hand, had come to terms with free jazz by the late 1960s, and spoke favorably of performances that advanced Coltrane's stylistic innovations and Coleman's reinterpretation of the organically evolving, interactive nature of ensemble playing.

4.4 Towards an ethnomusicology of improvisation

As a provisional agenda towards this task, the author attempts now to summarize the salient points of the above discussion. The first difficulty is to define the terms "jazz", "free jazz", and "improvisation" satisfactorily. In considering the types (or *genera*) of music which allow for improvisation as a central organizing principle, it should be borne in mind that the exclusion of this practice from WEAM is a relatively recent and short-lived phenomenon, arising from the elevation of the score to the status of autonomous object, which concept in turn allowed for a range of critical approaches like Schenkerian analysis and so on. For Attali, this elevation is bound up in his examination of the political economy of music.[178]

Secondly, the problem has to do with the nature of these *genera* themselves, and, crucially, with the circumstances in which these musics are performed, propagated, and consumed. Steps towards a universal theory of improvisation are dogged by the realisation that each genus

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[178] The author discusses Attali's concept of noise in section 5.3.3.

contains within in it its own set of procedures that, in turn, sanction or condemn the artistic products as evidenced by a particular historical period. Wittgenstein's idiosyncratic use of the term "grammar" is an especially useful analytical idea as it suggests a close relationship between language and its associated rules for making sense. This leads to the conclusion that tonal jazz improvisation as a musical activity is concerned with axiomatic systems of tonal organisation leading to the chord scale method as a way of producing "the right noises." So, for each genus of improvised music, it seems logical enough to state that there obtains a set of rules, limits, boundaries, or "grammars" for making "sense". McGowan (2002) considers these grammars as "dialects," thereby reinforcing the metaphorical links between music and language that seem to pervade musicological discourse.

Now the question emerges: given the new types of technology available in this brave new postmodern world, are the style-boundaries between these new and readily available musical and artistic styles still safe and impermeable? Or are the classifications of musical productions currently even more problematized by postmodernism's agenda of breaking down the boundaries themselves? Multi-disciplinarity more than ever seems now the order of the day, and one might suggest here that this has necessitated a fundamental re-evaluation of the very idea of discipline as being hermetically sealed off from the demands of others, like some esoteric Medieval guild-system.

What emerges from the above discussion is the impossibility of finding any universal model for analyzing improvised music. Given the wide variety of musicking practices available today, the interdisciplinary character of much contemporary performance, and the advent of highly sophisticated technologies for manipulating music itself, the author suggests that “playing” with the hallowed forms of music is a part of postmodernism’s response to the formerly rigid style-boundaries that had existed in the past. Each language-game within musicking, in the author’s view, has to be considered on its own merits, according to its own rules, and therefore

Wittgenstein's notions point to contingency, rather than a full and final settlement of what constitutes the nature of musical meaning.

Chapter 5 : Creativity, collaboration, and communication in improvised music

5.1 Five characteristics of group improvisation

R. Keith Sawyer, a leading scholar in the field of creativity research, defines five characteristics of group improvisation as follows (2003:102-114):

- An emphasis on creative process rather than creative product
- An emphasis on creative processes that are problem-finding rather than problem-solving
- The comparison of art to everyday language use
- The importance of collaboration, with fellow artists and with the audience
- The role of the ready-made, or cliché, in art.

In chapter 2, the author's aim was to draw dividing lines between viewpoints that emphasize process over product. To support this argument, the author drew distinctions between the improvised, contingent, and momentary elements of musicking as process, as opposed to the emphasis being placed on the notion of the musical work as to some extent existing outside time. This is not to suggest that a work, as fixed through musical notation, somehow exhibits less creativity than its improvised counterpart, but that the work and event distinction is a useful and necessary one in the understanding of the particular problems raised by improvised music in general, and Thompson's Soundpainting in particular.

The author has suggested that this conception raises certain issues with regard to defining the difference between composition and improvisation. When Thompson defines Soundpainting as "live composition," for instance, professors of composition insist that this definition is a contradiction in terms (section 4.1.4.2). In their view, according to

Thompson, composition has to be repeatable, editable, and in other ways subject to revision after the fact, characteristics that are absent from spontaneously created music by definition.[179] Such criticisms, in the author's view, clearly depend on the distinction between music as work and music as event. One might also consider this distinction as one between written language and speech, in which composition is analogous to writing, and improvisation to conversation.

Sawyer's emphasis on the problem-finding element within improvisation (as opposed to problem-solving) rests on a conception of unscripted improvisation that brings to the fore its collaborative and emergent qualities (2003:105):

> An improvisational performance is also, of necessity, a problem-finding process—albeit a collective one. For comparison, consider a traditional theater performance, perhaps a play by Shakespeare, where the actors start with a script, with memories of past performances by other companies—the long tradition of Shakespearean theater. This type of performance is at the problem-solving end of the spectrum, because the 'problem' is well-specified: to create a successful performance of the script. In contrast, in improvisation the actors have to create everything: the dramatic elements emerge from the dialogue, in a problem-finding process that is collaborative and emergent.

Although Sawyer in this case is referring to scripted and unscripted performances in the theatrical context, this distinction has similar resonance with such performances in music. A typical instance of a scripted musical performance is a symphony concert (in which the musical score stands for “the script”), while the free jazz of the 1960s lies at the other end of the spectrum, in which the performance is, to all intents and purposes, unscripted.

Emergence is an important concept for Sawyer’s theory of improvisation. As defined by Hopper in the context of the linguistic sign, an emergent

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[179] The author returns to this definition of Soundpainting as "live composition" in section 6.2.2.

grammar has the following characteristics (1998:157, emphasis in original):

> Signs whose form and meaning are subject to communicative acts are held to have a structure described as emergent. This means that a sign's form (that is, both its external aspect and the use to which it is put) is provisional, and is dependent, not on an essential inner core of constant meaning, but on previous uses and contexts in which the current speaker has used or heard it. Grammar has the same provisional and context-dependent property as the sign. An approach to grammar that adopts this postulate is referred to as *Emergent Grammar*.

Hopper's thinking on emergence has clear implications for improvised music in general, and Soundpainting in particular. These are brought to the fore when he examines the relationship between emergence and structure, in which he characterizes structure as fluid and open (*ibid.*):

> The notion of emergence is a pregnant one. It is not intended to be a standard sense of origins or genealogy, not an historical question of how the grammar came to be the way it is, but instead, it takes the adjective emergent seriously as a continual movement toward structure, a postponement or deferral of structure, a view of structure as always provisional, always negotiable, and in fact, as epiphenomenal, that is, as an effect rather than a cause.

In this sense, the jazz musician's development of a vocabulary of individual utterances in the context of a repertoire (standards or the blues, for example) tends to predispose him or her toward a view of these elements of the repertoire as fixed and eternal, rather like the work-concept in WEAM. In fact, much of the manner in which musicians like Thompson and the Art Ensemble of Chicago are playing (in the Barthean sense) with historical forms is deliberately ironic, thereby interrogating precisely the fixed nature of these forms. Furthermore, the ludic element of such encounters with the repertoire highlights a dialectical play between rhetoric and structure, as expressed by Clifton (1983:211):

> This dialectic between rhetoric and structure, freedom and control, outside and inside, can be further explored by considering the way in which the members of this dialectic play with each other. This has already been suggested to some extent with the realization that

> rhetoric can frequently have pretensions about being structural. The rhetorical gesture wears a mask, so to speak, and momentarily assumes the role of structure. Structure, meanwhile, allows this to happen.

Although Clifton is describing this dialectic with reference to sonata form in WEAM, there seem to be convincing parallels between the nature of this game and the jazz language-game. In neither case is structure as fixed and immobile as one might assume at first listening, and there is a degree of room for the negotiation of individual subjectivity, whether literally or figuratively. [180] The author has suggested that the tactics of signifyin(g) and timbral play in turn point to a dialectic between the individual musician and the group, and it seems clear that these have a rhetorical function.[181]

Sawyer's third defining characteristic of improvisation, regarding the comparison between art and everyday language use, is based on his observations regarding improvising actors and jazz musicians, in which both sets of participants (2003:107) "compare their ensemble interaction to conversation." Drawing on the theories of Dewey and Collingwood regarding the connections between art and language, Sawyer qualifies this comparison by suggesting (*ibid.*): "But for both Dewey and Collingwood, art is like language only in a certain sense; it is like language as used in everyday social settings—the *pragmatics*, rather than the ***syntax*** of language."

In similar fashion, the author has argued (2.1.6.2) that certain types of improvised music exhibit similarities with Wittgenstein's pragmatic notion

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[180] It is noteworthy that analysis refers to musical themes in sonata form as “first subject,” “second subject,” and so on. Mithen highlights this anthropomorphism by suggesting: (2006:275): “Even when listening to music made by instruments rather than the human voice, we treat music as a virtual person and attribute to it an emotional state and sometimes a personality and intention. It is also now clear why so much of music is structured as if a conversation is taking place within the music itself, and why we often intuitively feel that a piece of music should have a meaning attached to it, even if we cannot grasp what that might be.”

[181] Gary Burton (Mattingly, 1991) explicitly links his game plan for improvisation with conversation.

of the language-game, as manifested in his closely related idea of language as use.[182] For Silverstein (in his introduction to Sawyer's study of the creative and emergent properties of conversation) Sawyer's strategy is to extend the concept of pragmatics into the metapragmatic realm, in which signs as mediators for interaction play a central role (2003b:ix):

> Among humans, of course, bodies do more than move through spacetime in the cause-and-effect, or mechanically 'pragmatic' world of physical and biological reality. Human bodies create signs—for example, speech phonations that constitute utterances with well-formed grammatical properties; movements of bodily extremities traced in space that constitute gestures; and conventional inscriptions of these that then circulate as interpersonal communicational artifacts in sound, sight, and touch. It is in this realm of signs that problems of emergence and creativity arise, for our actions are not merely mechanically pragmatic, but, as it turns out, 'metapragmatic' as well.

By interpreting the sign as a product of human activity, Silverstein suggests that Sawyer elevates sign-creation to the realm of metapragmatics by situating such activity in the world of social events (*ibid*.):

> Through our dynamic and ongoing use of signs in interaction, we signal to each other not only the pragmatic. We signal to each other what kind of social event we (frequently unconsciously) presume has been going on and will have been going on—note the complex anticipatory retrospection!—between or among us in an interval-moment, such that our pragmatic signs—were the presumption intersubjectively in force—might unproblematically be effective among us in moving such an event along.

Everyday conversation, for Sawyer, contains greater and lesser degrees of improvisation, the extent to which improvisation is permitted being both context-dependent (the place and social space in which the conversation

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[182] According to this interpretation, one might speak for instance of a style of music like "Dixieland" as being a general case of a language-game, a particular performer's style as being a rather more specific case thereof, and eventually describe a given performance as being a quite specific example of this idea. Some postmodern music juxtaposes elements from different styles in ironic attempts to cross the apparent boundaries between styles, hereby interrogating the role of the canon and the community in limiting the artist's freedom of movement between such boundaries.

takes place) and a function of the perceived social relationship between the participants (as exhibited in the degree of formality or familiarity in the language usage). Conversation, whether relatively formulaic or free, contains the added implication of interaction between participants to manage the direction of the conversation. It might be argued that jazz musicians, who sometimes begin their solos by imitating a musical phrase that the preceding soloist has concluded with, also use this element of turn-taking. In addition to providing continuity from soloist to soloist, this practice suggests a collaborative and conversational emphasis. As Sawyer claims (1999:192): "Everyday conversation is also collaborative, because no single person controls or directs a conversation; instead, the direction of its flow is collectively determined, by all of the participants' contributions."

In his discussion of primate communication, Mithen highlights the musicality of this process by foregrounding the rhythmic and melodic qualities, as well as its dependence on synchronous and turn-taking procedures (2006:120-121):

> Finally, a key feature of the gelada and gibbon communication systems is that they are musical in nature, in the sense that they make substantial use of rhythm and melody, and involve synchronization and turn-taking. Again, depending upon how one would wish to define 'musical,' this term could be applied to non-human primate communication systems as a whole.

It is noteworthy that in the field of conversation analysis, as Wennerstrom claims, timing is everything, and this leads to a situation in which the pauses in conversation (the silences) assume an importance equal to the direction and flow of the conversation itself (2001:167):

> In particular, conversation analysts have always paid close attention to the timing of talk. One of the most important observations offered in the CA tradition is that there is relatively little silence in conversation. Although it may vary somewhat from culture to culture, even a second's silence may begin to sound like an awkward pause in the context of a lively conversation. Participants are skilled at synchronizing their turns so that, for the most part, one speaker has the floor at a time, with one turn latching on to the next or overlapping

> only slightly. Thus, with a strong research focus on the junctures between turns of talk, pause length has always had a high priority as an object of study in this tradition of analysis.

The importance of synchronization and turn-taking for the purpose of communication, as reflected for example in the conversational micro-interactions between two close friends, is writ large in the context of relations between participants in process-related artistic fields like jazz improvisation and improvised theatre. Part of the joy and exhilaration of such improvised performances lies (paradoxically perhaps) in the acknowledgement of the possibility of failure, as Crispell (section 4.2.1.4) has noted in this regard. To safeguard against such failures (such as when an actor "dries"), jazz musicians tend to develop a vocabulary of stock phrases, the kind of phrases that Baker (1987a:43-47) categorizes as public domain whole-tone and diminished patterns respectively. As Sawyer (2003:112) claims:

> Ready-mades are even more important in jazz improvisation. Some of the most famous jazz improvisers relied on a large repertoire of stock phrases; one of the most creative improvisers of all time, Charlie Parker, drew on a personal repertoire of 100 motifs, each of them between 4 and 10 notes in length.

Steinel (1995) describes such motifs as "cells," usually four-note groups, which are susceptible to manipulation by means of operations like Retrograde, Inversion, and Retrograde Inversion. Coincidentally perhaps, these are the same procedures used within orthodox serialism, such as that of the Second Vienna School of Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern. Sawyer (2001) highlights a potential tension between the acquisition of a personal vocabulary of musical patterns and the need for innovation as follows:

> Jazz musicians frequently discuss an internal tension between their own personally developed patterns—called *licks*—and the need to continually innovate at a personal level. Musicians practise and perform the same songs repeatedly, and can often express themselves more effectively when they have a predetermined set of musical ideas available. However, if this process is carried too far, the improvisational nature of the performance is compromised. Jazz

> musicians are aware of the tension between the need to develop ideas in advance and the potential for a gradual evolution to patterned rigidity.

For Kenny and Gellrich (2002:118), in speaking of the "spontaneous rhetoric" of improvisation, this storehouse of material is internally constrained with reference to a knowledge base, defined as "the internalization of source materials that are idiomatic to individual improvising cultures."

5.1.1 Creativity myths

Sawyer (2006b:18-27) examines no less than nine commonly held and persistent myths, which seem to contribute to the mystification of the creative process. Terming these “creativity myths,” Sawyer traces their historical origins and suggests, ultimately, that these myths unnecessarily complicate what is for him a fairly straightforward and consequently unmysterious process. This conceptualization of the mythic element of creativity is pertinent to the author's discussion of Soundpainting, because it is all too easy to assume that the creative process is ineffable, and therefore resistant to analysis. For Sawyer (2006b:19): "Creativity can be explained without invoking an unconscious muse. Rather than a mysterious unconscious force, the explanation of creativity lies in hard work and everyday mental processes." The author examines four of these myths, which are germane to the examination of Soundpainting as a collaborative exercise in spontaneous musicking.

5.1.1.1 Creativity as a product of the unconscious

As Sawyer claims (2006b:18):

> The psychoanalytic conception of creativity has many similarities with the ancient belief in divine madness, because they both emphasized the passive role of the creator's mind. Rather than life breathed from God, the creative inspiration arrives from the unconscious.

Sawyer ascribes the origins of this particular myth to the Romantic era and links it additionally to psychoanalysis. The exploration of the unconscious was one of the key agendas of Surrealism, which sought, through the method of automatism, to bring the hidden operations of dreams and the unconscious into the open. André Breton defined surrealism as follows (in Nadeau 1968:89):

> Pure psychic automatism, by which an attempt is made to express, either verbally, in writing or in any other manner, the true functioning of thought. The dictation of thought, in the absence of all control by the reason, excluding any aesthetic or moral preoccupation.

LeBaron (2002) discusses the relationship between Surrealism and improvised music with reference to the postmodern project, and, in emphasizing the fixity of the genre-boundaries within jazz, draws a somewhat scathing response from Lewis (2004a:21):

> LeBaron's account, however spurious in its attempted revisionism, draws (perhaps unwittingly) upon a particularly complex stereotype of African-American music-making that treats 'jazz' not as a fluid, contested, dynamic genre with porous borders, but as a body of received, unchanging methods, with hermetically sealed histories, and most crucially, an always-already supply of blacks who, regardless of background, interests or affinities, are genetically bound to the embodiment of the stereotype.

The problem for Lewis appears to be with LeBaron's unproblematically historicized view of jazz. It might be also be argued that the emphasis on creativity as dependent on the operations of the unconscious mind unduly privileges the psychoanalytic element in the creative process. Moreover, in so doing, this myth places creativity beyond the individual's control, turning him or her into a passive receiver of divine or unconscious inspiration, and thereby erases any notion of agency mediated through the creative process. It is plainly not the case that Thompson's engagement with Soundpainting (whether considered as a language or a system) is somehow accidental; on the contrary, he has spent a great deal of conscious effort in designing, and communicating his musical ideas by means of clear and unambiguous signals, which are the very antithesis of

the stereotypical understanding of improvised music as spontaneous and created “in the heat of the moment.”

5.1.1.2 Creativity as representing the inner spirit of the individual

This particular creativity myth has deep-seated ramifications for entrenching the uniqueness and individuality of the composer, and reinforces Attali's pessimistic portrayal of the increasing specialization of the roles of composer and performer (section 5.5.3.2). As Sawyer asserts (2006b:19-20): "In the Renaissance, some scholars began to argue that creative art represented the inner spirit of the individual, and today, most Americans tend to think that creativity is the unique expression of some inner force of the individual."

It might be argued that this emphasis on the individuality of the composer's work reaches its high-water mark in the modernist period, in which the performers are instructed merely to function as passive interpreters of the composer's intentions. This tendency is also bolstered by the cult of the conductor as star, and the need for the assertion of the individual rights of the composer as the sole author of the work, the basis of modern copyright law.

5.1.1.3 Creativity as spontaneity

The author has questioned the commonly held definition of improvisation as “spontaneous” (section 4.1.1). Elliott likewise interrogates the concept of spontaneity in his discussion of Coltrane's landmark 1959 recording of his composition *Giant Steps*. Elliott, while characterizing Coltrane's solo as "one of the most revered improvisations in the history of jazz," foregrounds the extent to which this apparently spontaneous piece is exactly the opposite (1995:169):

> The originality, complexity, and speed of Coltrane's music making is astonishing. It is important to realize, however, that this is not

> spontaneous music making in the sense of thoughtless, unpremeditated, unstudied or unconscious activity. It is the opposite. Coltrane's solo is thoughtful, premeditated, studied, and conscious. What Coltrane achieves in *Giant Steps* is firmly rooted in Western tonal music and the bebop jazz tradition specifically. Moreover, to musically think-in-action at such a rapid tempo, Coltrane had to develop an extraordinarily high level of musicianship. Indeed, as part of his musical preparation, Coltrane reproduced and studied the improvisations of his predecessors in great detail.

Giant Steps avoids traditional functional harmony by dividing the harmonic structure into three distinct key areas (B major, G major, and Eb major respectively), which are then subjected to the conventional melodic tactics of statement, variation, and repetition. Tirro analyzes the complex structure of *Giant Steps* in some detail while noting its significance to jazz history as follows (1993:47):

> No saxophonist after Charlie Parker has been more admired or imitated than John Coltrane, and no Coltrane composition has had a more lasting effect than *Giant Steps.* At a time in the history of jazz when harmonic rhythm was slowing down under increasing pressure from the developments in modal theory and practice, Coltrane recorded his *Giant Steps*, in which the chords fly by relentlessly. Performed at a blistering tempo, the sixteen-measure structure is filled with twenty-six chords, almost two per measure. Further, the chords do not progress in the most familiar patterns (the circle of fifths, I-IV-V-I, I-VI-II-V-I, etc.), and they require harmonic improvisation on nine of the twelve possible root positions—B, C#, D, Eb, F, F# G, A, Bb (all the notes of the twelve-tone scale except the augmented triad C-E-G#).

The premeditated element in Coltrane's solo is the systematic application of permutations of pentatonic fragments (mostly based on the 1 2 3 5 scalar pattern), as well as occasional linear material, which enable him convincingly to negotiate the deceptive resolutions that characterize this composition. What is evident from Elliott's discussion is that Coltrane not only developed a systematic approach to improvising in this instance, but also engaged with the implications of the canon of Western tonal music in general, and the bebop language in particular. It seems beyond doubt that this was an altogether conscious engagement with the complex melodic and harmonic problems of the piece.

5.1.1.4 Creativity as originality

Sawyer's discussion of the originality myth, which presupposes that art must exhibit originality to be classed as truly creative, hinges on the linguistic shift in meaning of the term "original." As he claims (2006b:24):

> The idea that art should be original and should break with conventions is less than 200 years old. In the Renaissance, art was considered to be one of two kinds of imitation. The imitation of nature was original imitation; the imitation of other works of art was ordinary imitation. When the term originality was first coined, it meant newness and truth of observation—not the sense of a radical break with convention as we mean today. The most original artists were those who best imitated nature.

Sawyer examines the notorious case of Duchamp's exhibition of a urinal as artwork to illustrate how this tactic problematized the prevailing conception of what could be safely categorized as art, and concludes that creativity may be defined as the search for balance between "imitation and innovation," while foregrounding the role of the conventional and traditional in the creative process (2006b:24-25):

> The sociocultural approach shows that all creativity includes elements of innovation and tradition. There is no such thing as a completely novel work. To explain creativity, we have to examine the balance of imitation and innovation, and the key role played by convention and tradition.

Taken together, Sawyer's examination of these common creativity myths exposes a number of underlying assumptions that have conspired to make the process apparently beyond the reach of the average person. According to these myths, artists are unique and special individuals who may or may not be divinely inspired madmen (or women), who spontaneously produce works for the consumption of an ignorant but adoring public. These mythologies share something with Adorno's view of jazz and popular music as "opiates of the masses," to which the only antidote was modernist music. However, the privileging of the individual creator as a result of these mythic constructions tends to overlook the

community's contribution to the realization of what Sawyer characterizes as "group flow."

5.1.2 Individual and group flow

Berliner's monumental *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* is a landmark study concerned with the means by which jazz improvisers acquire and develop their musical vocabularies. His description of the experience of improvisation describes a context in which communication takes place at a very high level (1994:394):

> Journeying together through the medium of performance, musicians assist one another in entering an incomparably intense realm of human experience where thrive diverse overlapping domains of sensitivity and knowledge: intellectual and 'intuitive': aesthetic and emotional: physical, sensual, and spiritual: private and communal. Once touched by such experiences, improvisers retain them united as their principal goal, the standard for all performances.

Highlighting the communal nature of the jazz experience, Berliner captures the essence of the group dynamic in the context of improvised jazz. Brilliant as this description may be, it describes jazz improvisation of the highest order, where any deficiencies in technique and vocabulary evaporate in the moment of creation. It seems to the author that what Berliner is describing is the same as what Csikszentmihalyi has theorized as the state of flow, or optimal experience. He defines this concept as follows (1990:71):

> We have seen how people describe the common characteristics of optimal experience: a sense that one's skills are adequate to cope with the challenges at hand, in a goal-directed, rule-bound action system[183] that provides clear clues as to how one is performing. Concentration is so intense that there is no attention left over to think about anything irrelevant, or to worry about problems. Self-consciousness disappears, and the sense of time becomes distorted.

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[183] To what extent it is possible to categorize Soundpainting as a system in accordance with this conception of "a goal-directed, rule-bound action system" forms a central thread of the following chapter.

> An activity that produces such experiences is so gratifying that people are willing to do it for its own sake, with little concern for what they will get out of it, even when it is difficult,[184] or dangerous.

In engaging with any form of musicking, there is certainly an element of risk-taking, requiring the courage of one's convictions as an individual to place oneself in the public arena. The consequences of failure in these circumstances range from embarrassment to termination of employment, and musicians develop tactics for managing risk, as Crispell has remarked (section 4.2.1.4). Once the difficulties have been overcome and the newcomer gains experience (and acceptance by his or her peers), the way is open for ecstatic musical experiences such as Csikszentmihalyi describes.

While not disavowing this depiction of optimal experience, Sawyer highlights a key difference between his thinking and Csikszentmihalyi's concept by suggesting that it describes flow mostly with reference to the individual's experience. Sawyer extends this concept to include the notion of communal optimal experience, which he terms group flow (2003:43, emphasis in original):

> When a group is performing at its peak, I refer to the group as being in *group flow*, in the same way that an individual performing at his or her peak often experiences a subjective feeling of flow. The concept of group flow is related to Csikszentmihalyi's flow, but with a critical difference. Csikszentmihalyi intended flow to represent a state of consciousness within the individual performer, whereas group flow is a property of the entire group as a collective unit.[185]

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[184] This point perhaps accounts for why musicians will endure the sometimes trying day-to-day circumstances of orchestral life because of the emotional reward of playing music together under flow circumstances.
[185] This notion seems to be an animating principle in many types of improvisational activity, as Sawyer's work in diverse areas of this activity indicates.

5.2 Collaboration and competition in improvised music

Blom's systematic survey of collaboration (2004) describes the different ways and contexts in which the sharing of musical ideas may take place:

> Within a definition of collaboration as cooperation, there are many different, often opposing ways in which a collaborative outcome can be reached. Some collaborations are for the short term and occur between people, often virtual strangers, who come together for a relatively brief duration while many collaborations are 'highly intimate interactions spanning months or years so that personal traits and temperaments take on major importance.'
>
> A collaboration can be fixed (e.g. a company putting on a play), or open-ended (chamber music or jazz groups). Collaborator interactions may be intimate or remote, ranging from constant face-to-face communication, to people who have never met (Gilbert and Sullivan, for example, who rarely met, preferring to conduct their collaboration 'at arms length via intermediaries.'[186]

Proceeding from this viewpoint, then, one must classify Soundpainting as somewhat less open-ended than a typical chamber music or jazz group. There seem to be three key differences between a typical Soundpainting event and that of a chamber or jazz group:

- Soundpainting requires the performers to acquire an understanding of the gestures in advance (typically, through a workshop led by an expert)
- Soundpainting in most cases does not require the existence of a score or textual map as a mnemonic device
- Soundpainting is not limited to collaborations between musicians. This is what Thompson means by "universal," not the contingently produced music, but the applicability of the signals to performers from different disciplines.[187]

Some amplification of these points may be useful at this stage, as follows:

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[186] Blom's enclosed quotations originate from Abra and Abra (1999).
[187] The Soundpainting environment is not limited to musicians, but includes the work of other artists such as actors, dancers and mimes, for instance, and therefore the gestures are of necessity multi-disciplinary or rather trans-disciplinary.

Instance one, in which the signals are acquired in the context of a workshop, suggests the need for a certain amount of verbal explanation on the Soundpainter's part. Although the signals are for the most part intuitive and transparent in performance, a degree of familiarity with their meaning ensures consistent responses from one performance to the next, results that are to some extent independent of the musical competence of the ensemble. This is quite different from free jazz, where the aim and object is to create something altogether new in the moment without recourse to a formalized system of signals.

This instance suggests the operation of a kind of a musical social contract, somewhat different from (but no less binding than) the kind of contract undertaken by musicians in a symphony orchestra vis-à-vis their acceptance of the conductor's authority as the final arbiter of the interpretation of a work.[188] In the case of orchestral musicians, this acceptance of the rules of the game is directly connected to their employment prospects, and moreover, they have been subject to a very elaborate and rigorously controlled rite of passage (by audition) to gain employment in the orchestra in the first place.

Instance two (the absence of a score as mnemonic device) marks the parting of the ways between participants in many Soundpainting events and Blom's classes of open-ended collaboration (as in practitioners of chamber music and jazz respectively). It seems reasonably obvious that the majority of chamber groups, whose intention or *raison d'être* is the interpretation of works from a given historical period, will refer to the score of a given work during rehearsal as a set of instructions for the realization of a performance. Their adherence to the score (or a particular edition thereof) is both a fact of life for them as well as a measure of the authenticity (or otherwise) of the performance. Additionally, however, in

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[188] The author is indebted to Richard Vella for this observation.

the case of a performance by a string quartet, for argument's sake, there will be a set of agreed-upon cues initiated by the leader that will serve to indicate changes of tempo, dynamics, entry points, and so on.

As such, then, the signals within Soundpainting are both inter-disciplinary (in that they function within the boundaries of the discipline in question and therefore the <long tone> gesture to a musician means something different to a dancer or an actor) and transdisciplinary (in that through this process of interpretation they are applicable within different artistic disciplines). Thompson has stated his affinity for the Broadway musical as a genre incorporating divergent activities (i.e. those of conductor, musician, actor, dancer, lighting engineer, and so on) and it is perhaps originating from this complex production style that some of the transdisciplinary concerns of Soundpainting emanate. The direct influence of musical theatre as a discipline is evident in, for example, Thompson's *PEXO Symphony*.

> Collaborations may be very hierarchical, or be horizontal and more democratic. When a collaboration is homogeneous, each participant performs roughly the same service. Leonard Bernstein made the observation that 'collaboration can get to the point where you are not sure who wrote what.'[189] However, a collaboration of many can often be viewed from the outside, as having been created by one person, and Richard Rodgers notes that many have this perception of the landmark musical *Oklahoma!*

In *Oklahoma!'s* case, as Blom notes, despite the democratic nature of its creation, someone had to take the ultimate responsibility for the finished product. In the realm of the Broadway musical, the staging is an intricate and complex operation, which demands clearly demarcated roles for each participant. Sometimes collaboration allows for a more fluid approach, as Blom indicates with respect to the composer Meredith Monk (enclosed material in Duckworth 1995:367):

> Meredith Monk says that the way she and the members of the

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[189] Blom's enclosures originate from Abra and Abra (1999).

> ensemble work has 'a real give-and-take kind of quality to it.' She likens her vocal collaborative process with ensemble members, to the way a choreographer works with bodies and dance—'I can have people try something and I can hear it. Then I can revise it, hear it, and then revise it again.'

In the bebop period, the competitive element reached its peak in the *machismo* atmosphere of the onstage "cutting contest," in which musicians strove to demonstrate technical superiority over their peers. The tension between this individualistic element and the fact that these performances took place in the context of a group (quartet, quintet, and so on) is to some extent defused in the free jazz era, in which the emphasis deliberately returned to collective collaboration. The author suggested (section 4.1.4.4), following Ake, that this sentiment may have been the animating factor behind Coleman and Cherry's deliberate choice of instruments that deflated the *machismo* image of the jazz musician as virtuoso technician.

Prévost highlights another problem for collaboration across boundaries as follows (1995:34): "Lending music to another form of expression, e.g. film or dance, may lead to a dilution, a deflection or even a deformation of the musician's ideas. This dilemma is at the heart of all creative collaboration." What he is suggesting is that collaboration contains within itself a degree of compromise, which some musicians are willing to engage with for the purposes of the collaborative process, and others not.

5.3 Communication in improvised music

Davidson (1997:209ff), in her discussion of the sociocultural elements of a given performance, brings to her argument the notion of the existence of underlying "sociocultural rules which dictate and give value to the composition and its performance." She mentions such variables as the use of particular scale systems, a model aesthetic, the size of the ensemble, and the "specifically defined inter-performer, inter-audience, and performer-audience behaviours" which she goes on to define as a set of "overriding sociocultural factors which shape the processes and

behaviours brought to the performance context."

Taken together with Iyer's definition of communication "as process" (section 3.1), that is, "as a collective activity that harmonizes individuals rather than a telegraphic model of communication as mere transmission of literal, verbal meanings," Davidson's "overriding sociocultural factors" may be seen as ritualized according to the performance conventions of the musicking in question, and dependent upon the discourse of non-verbal communication. For Davidson and Correia (2002:243):

> The nature of the social mediation that goes on among performer, coperformer, and audience in the construction of the performance and the critical role of the body in shaping this have received very little attention in the psychology research literature. One relevant study is on the singer Annie Lennox. Analysis showed that in addition to the specific movements related directly to the communication of the song—such as coordination signals and expressive gestures about the narrative content of the songs—some other types of movements were used purely for audience display or showing-off purposes. These involved a deliberate attempt to involve audience participation and had nothing to do with the song's narrative.

For Bateson, non-verbal communication is about establishing relationships (2000:418-419):

> It seems that the discourse of nonverbal communication is precisely concerned with matters of relationship—love, hate, respect, fear, dependency, etc.—between self and vis-à-vis or between self and environment and that the nature of human society is such that falsification of this discourse rapidly becomes pathogenic.

Hodge and Kress (1988:1), emphasize the necessity of situating semiotics as a discipline within the field of the social:

> In its (semiotic) terms, everything in a culture can be seen as a form of communication, organized in ways akin to verbal language, to be understood in a terms of a common set of fundamental rules or principles.

For these authors, the idea of a semiotics divorced from the contingencies of human existence and the practice of everyday communication is flawed.

As they suggest (1998:4):

> Each producer of a message relies on its recipients for it to function as intended. This requires recipients to have knowledge of a set of messages on another level, messages that provide specific information about how to read the message.

Bateson, in discussing the schizophrenic patient, examines the conventional diagnosis of "ego weakness" and defines it as a fundamental inability on the patient's part to read signals. He states (2000:194):

> I now define ego weakness as trouble in identifying and interpreting those signals which should tell the individual what sort of message a message is, *i. e.*, trouble with the signals of the same logical type as 'This is play.'

Bateson continues his remarks on the schizophrenic as follows (2000:194-195):

> He is unable to pick up the more abstract labels which we are most of us able to use conventionally but are most of us unable to identify in the sense that we don't know what told us what sort of message it was. It is as if we somehow made a correct guess. We are actually quite unconscious of receiving these messages which tell us what sort of message we receive.

It is evident that many language-games depend for their success on the correct reading of such meta-messages.[190] For Hodge and Kress, such language-games as joking or the employment of ironic language depend on such "messages about messages" (1988:4):

> A simple example is a 'joke,' a statement which might by itself prove offensive to the recipient. The message-maker however relies on the fact that the reader knows that such a statement, perhaps with other signals of 'joke' attached, is 'not to be taken seriously.' The operation of irony is another well-understood case of a second-level message

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[190] As Small claims (1998:58): "Bateson calls these messages about messages *metamessages*, and they are important in the understanding of activities such as art and games, which seem on the one hand to be lacking in survival values yet are practised with the utmost seriousness by all members of the human race."

> regulating the function of a message.

It is possible that such language-games may indeed be misinterpreted, and as they state (*ibid*.):

> The recipient of course may not have knowledge of that level of message—a situation common in cross-cultural interaction—as when a member of an ethnic or racial minority chooses not to treat an offensive statement as 'a joke.'

Small, in an interlude from *Musicking* called "The Language of Gesture," describes the operations of biological communication as follows (1998:57):

> Bodily posture and movement, facial expression, and vocal intonation provide in the more complex animals a wide repertory of gestures and responses by means of which information about relationships is given and received. In complex and contradictory creatures like human beings these gestures can deal with a number of complex and contradictory relationships all at once. Gestures from me may indicate to you at one and the same time that I love, and hate, and fear, and am dominated by you, that I should like to strike you but intend to nurture you.[191]

Small (1998:56) regards these gestures as means of enhancing information that is fundamentally concerned with relationships between creatures (human or otherwise). These relationships are to do with basic issues regarding survival and the kind of information being conveyed:

> Bateson's answer is that although the means of communication are extremely varied, what is necessary for an organism to know always concerns a relationship: how the perceiving creature relates to the outside entity that is being perceived, and vice versa. Is it predator, for example, is it prey, is it offspring or a potential mate? And thus should I flee it, or attack it, or nurture it, or mate with it? It is clearly of vital importance for the creature to have the right answers to these questions.

Similarly, Wittgenstein insists (PI §539) that, until the context of a particular picture is established, its meaning is open to various

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[191] Small (*ibid.*) concludes by saying: "Such complexities of relationship are not unknown in human life, as any watcher of soap opera will testify."

interpretations:

> I see a picture which represents a smiling face. What do I do if I take the smile now as a kind one, now as malicious? Don't I often imagine it with a spatial or temporal context which is one either of kindness or malice? Thus I might supply the picture with the fancy that the smiler was smiling down on a child at play, or again on the suffering of an enemy.

The picture of the smiling face in this case is rendered meaningful not only by the spatio-temporal circumstances but also by what is going on beyond the picture-frame, and what kind of relationship is thereby brought into focus. This has a clear bearing on musical performance contexts, in which, as Davidson (1997) and Reason (2004) have argued, there are a complex set of non-verbal signals that serve to contextualize the individual's status within the continuum of individual-group relations, and to add meaning and value to that which he or she is "saying." Beyond the musical picture-frame of improvised music, so to speak, bodily signals and gestures may be seen as conveying as much information as is contained in the music itself.

5.3.1 Shannon's theory of communication

Claude Shannon, considered as one of the pioneers of communication theory, laid the groundwork for a so-called mathematical model of communication in a 1948 technical paper. Shannon's main concern, in the infancy of digital technology, was to design a relatively error-free system for long-range telecommunications. In this regard, Shannon was not particularly interested in the human, or linguistic, element, and based his work on signal theory within digital electronics. The significant points about Shannon's theoretical model, for the purposes of this study, are that his objective was to eliminate as far as possible noise from the system, and that, because he was concerned solely with uninterpreted data (pure information), it is a depiction of a uni-directional system, in which no room is considered for feedback.

Feedback is defined by the father of ***cybernetics***, Norbert Wiener, as

follows (1966:55): "In its simplest form the feedback principle means that a behaviour is tested with reference to its result and success or failure of this result influences the future behaviour." Wiener's definition of this principle lends itself well to a model of Soundpainting as a communication system in which the responses of the participants have an effect on the Soundpainter's actions. The definition of cybernetics as a study of regulating mechanisms within biology and engineering can likewise plausibly be mapped onto orthodox conducting as regards the conductor's primary functions: regulating the musical flow of the performance and acting as the interpreter of the composer's intentions. It is noteworthy to consider that Thompson himself prefers to conceive of Soundpainting as a language rather than a system; the author discusses some implications of this conception in chapter 6.

5.3.2 Cybernetics and the virtual orchestra

During the course of the twentieth century, Norbert Wiener, Gregory Bateson and others (such as Ashby and Vygotsky) developed a body of work in the area of systems theory, known as cybernetics. In cybernetics, the area of inquiry is with the mechanisms of regulation in all manner of self-organizing systems via such notions as feedback and the role of the "steersman," from which term is derived the name of this field of study. It seems plausible to suggest that cybernetics provides a systems model for musical organizations, from the symphony orchestra to the improvising ensemble (whether free or organized, like Soundpainting). Under the aegis of systems theory fall such musical experiments as Nancarrow's compositions for player pianos, Antheil's *Ballet Mécanique* (1927), and McLurkin (2002) and Miranda's work (2003) with robotic orchestras, as documented in Sawyer (2006b:102-104).

In discussing the latter two experiments, Sawyer refers to the theory of group intelligence known as distributed cognition, in which musical decisions are negotiated collectively using artificial intelligence models.

Describing McLurkin's experiment at MIT's Artificial Intelligence Lab, Sawyer defines this as a case of distributed cognition, as follows (2006b:103):

> The robots worked together to make collective decisions about how to split a song into parts, so that each robot would know which part to play on its sound chip. This simulated orchestra didn't need a conductor or an arranger to play together; that would have been centralized cognition, and McLurkin's orchestra was a classic example of distributed cognition.

In cybernetic terms, this is likewise a case of a self-regulating system, with the control element distributed among the participants, rather than centralized in the figure of the conductor, as in the orthodox symphony orchestra. In describing Miranda's 2003 experiment at Sony's Computer Lab in Paris, Sawyer notes how, in this case, the virtual orchestra (consisting of ten "performers") was programmed to listen and respond to the melodic sequences created without a score to follow (2006b:103-104):

> But rather than perform an existing score, Miranda used the theories of distributed cognition to have them collectively create their own original score. Each player was programmed to be able to generate a simple sequence of musical notes. But more important, each player was programmed to listen to the other players, to evaluate their novel sequences, and to imitate some of them with variations. Miranda then left his virtual orchestra to 'rehearse' for a few days; when he came back, the orchestra had produced haunting melodic streams. This was collaborative, distributed creativity; the melodies were created by a group of 10 virtual players, independent agents that worked together to create.

The element of responsiveness that Miranda's orchestra is programmed to achieve is fairly routine in the context of improvised performance, in which human performers have a greater freedom of choice of responses, which are construed as grammatically appropriate according to the stylistic constraints of the performance genre. As Kenny and Gellrich note (2002:118):

> Referents, however, are associated with or specific to a particular performance: the external, culturally supplied forms that assist with the transmission of improvised ideas. These points of departure

> include a range of musical and nonmusical (i.e., graphics) stimuli that, whether sounded or not, ultimately become deeply embedded in a musician's internalized creative resources. The musical referents of jazz, for example, are its cyclical, often 32-bar song structures, its chords (and rules that govern treatment of their extensions), and its characteristic rhythmic patterns. Two of the referent's most important functions are its ability to limit improvisational choices according to appropriate guidelines and its role in building perceptual paradigms for listener appreciation.

As these authors further assert (*ibid*.):

> In contrast to knowledge bases, which performers are not typically aware of during performance (because they are internalized and automated), referents influence improvisers more directly, providing the formal and musical material unique to each improvisation. However individual one artist's interpretation of the jazz standard ’Body and Soul‘ may be, for example, it is still likely to share many similarities with another artist's version, thereby providing a perceptual degree of similarity for listeners. The same cannot be said for each artist's knowledge base, which may be as unique as each musician's experiences and personalities.

The distinction that these authors are proposing, that is to say, between the musician's individual knowledge base and the more socioculturally conditioned set of referents, is a useful one for Soundpainting, as it maintains a division between the psychological acquisition of idiosyncratic language and the social context through which such individual utterances are mediated: in short, between the speaking subject and the communal sociolinguistic space in which the subject may be said to speak. Considering the ubiquity of music in contemporary culture, DeNora's definition of what she terms "musically configured space" (2003:119) reveals the element of control implicit in such musical activity:

> Music—its production and its reception—is inevitably located somewhere. That 'somewhere'—musically configured space—is where we can begin to situate music as a technology of 'control.'

This 'somewhere' may exist in reality, as in a live performance, or in a relatively more mediatized context, such as the recording studio, radio, the Internet, or television. As a consequence of this mediatization, it might be necessary likewise to theorize the possibility of a 'virtual control,' one in

which the setting of boundaries takes place in an invisibly policed space. The question now arises: in the case of live performance, who is "in charge" of this musically configured space? In other words, how is music negotiated within this 'somewhere' to which DeNora is referring? To what extent are the operations of autocracy and democracy apparent, and how are such issues resolved?

To some extent such questions are resolved with reference to Bourdieu's notion of the social space, in which operate the hidden mechanisms of control and distancing (1991:235):

> The categories of perception of the social world are essentially the product of the incorporation of the objective structures of the social space. Consequently, they incline agents to accept the social world as it is, to take it for granted, rather than to rebel against it, to put forward opposed and even antagonistic tendencies. The sense of one's place, as the sense of what one can or cannot 'allow oneself,' implies a tacit acceptance of one's position, a sense of limits ('that's not meant for us') or—what amounts to the same thing—a sense of distances, to be marked and maintained, respected, and expected of others.

If it is the case, as argued by both Small (1998) and Ramanna (1998, 2005), that musicking takes place similarly within a defined and circumscribed social space, then within the context of the symphony orchestra, the conductor is the obvious authority figure, who maintains order and respect within the orchestral hierarchy. It is his or her responsibility not only to manage the musical results obtained in the performance, but also to maintain the implicit markers of rank and responsibility within the social organization of the orchestra itself.[192] The conductor's physical separation from the orchestral players (a function of proxemics within the social space of the concert hall) further reinforces his or her position of authority.

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[192] This responsibility is often in fact assigned to the orchestra manager, who is in charge of disciplinary matters within the orchestral hierarchy.

To realize a performance within the WEAM tradition, a rigid hierarchical organizational structure is necessary for the symphony orchestra to function properly. In this case, whatever the implications may be for the personal happiness of the participants, "everyone knows their place,"[193] and, despite the opportunities for unfairness and abuse that this scenario makes possible, it is difficult somehow to imagine things being otherwise. Whatever successful experiments have been carried out with conductorless orchestras, these are very much the exception rather than the rule.[194]

5.4 Musically configured space: power and hierarchy

> Marc Duby: How do you see the future? Do you see it positively? Do you have any feelings that it could go wrong? Or that things can go wrong, go backwards?
>
> Pauline Oliveros: Well, I think I'm most concerned how things are wrong right now, in this moment. I mean you have, as far as I'm concerned, a division: and on the one side you have those people who are committed to money and power, and on the other side is people who are committed to harmony and balance and the love of humanity. And, you know, what do you choose? Do you choose money and power and a straight line to death and destruction, or do you choose (laughs) humanity, or harmonious relationships, which are not based on money or power, but on love, and love of life?
>
> In any case, the future can go either way.

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[193] With regard to job satisfaction, Seifter (2001) describes the consequences of this state of affairs: "Paul Judy reports that when Harvard Business School professor J. Richard Hackman studied job attitudes among people working in 13 different job groups, he discovered that symphony orchestra musicians ranked below prison guards in job satisfaction. Further, when asked about their satisfaction with opportunities for career growth, symphony orchestra musicians fared even worse, ranking 9th out of the 13 surveyed job categories. Clearly, although the results of an orchestral performance can be exceptionally uplifting, the means of attaining the results are often anything but uplifting to those whose job it is to achieve them."

[194] Small (1998:85) cites the example of the Persimfans Orchestra in 1920s Soviet Russia as a democratically managed orchestra, which functioned without a conductor. The present-day Orpheus Chamber Orchestra is similarly managed (Seifter 2001).

(Author's interview, Johannesburg, September 2005)

For Blom, hierarchical collaborations contain implicit power relations (Abra and Abra 1999:285-286):

> When a collaboration is heterogeneous, some opinions have priority over others 'with extreme instances becoming virtual tyrannies.' These hierarchical relationships are concerned with power and dominance. When devising the musical *West Side Story*, for example, despite the collaboration of such names as Bernstein, Sondheim and Laurents, 'director/choreographer Jerome Robbins had the final say.'

DeNora's view of musically configured space as reflecting the operations of a technology of control (section 5.3.2) can be theorized in conjunction with Bourdieu's notion of the social space. A relatively prosaic interpretation of these ideas of space is to consider the actual performance spaces in which various musical genres take place. In *Musicking*, for example, Small's thick description of a symphony concert locates the composer, musicians and audience in a Geertzian web of networked relationships.

For Small, "the song remains the same," whatever style of music is under review: following Bateson, Small conceives of musical events as "about" relationships between human beings who proclaim their identity through the temporary community of the group. This proclamation holds, the author suggests, as much for the performers and conductor (as in the WEAM field or the bandleader or Soundpainter, as the case may be), as for the members of the audience. Under such circumstances, issues of leadership, collaboration, and organizational structure come under the spotlight, so to speak.

Kenny and Gellrich, in comparing children's play with the improvised

performance of Miles Davis, as discussed in Smith (1998), find parallels in the relative absence of overt control in each case (2002:128):

> A similar relaxation of authoritarian control in improvisation is discussed by Smith (1998), who investigated Miles Davis's creation of a ritualized performance space. Davis's success as a mentor and bandleader was based on similar principles to those exhibited by the children, especially his ability to exploit the semistructured possibilities of group creativity. Just as a lack of predictable control provided a point of focus for the children making up *Snow White*, musicians in Davis's groups were impelled, through Davis's refusal to provide certainty, to engage in a heightened form of group cohesion and creativity.[195]

Musicking may take place in a real acoustic space or may be modified *post facto* by means of contemporary recording technologies. It was suggested at the height of Weather Report's powers that the band were using the studio as an additional musician, so important was the deployment of such technologies in the forging of the band's sound. The unique bell-like clusters on Josef Zawinul's *Milky Way*, the opening track of their eponymous debut album, were produced by electronically altering the volume envelope of a grand piano on which Zawinul played widely spaced chords with the sustain pedal held down. Obviously such a piece could not be performed live, and as such represents a product that could only be realized in the recording studio.

This electronic transformation of the timbral characteristics of an acoustic instrument was foreshadowed by composers within the field of *musique concrète* such as Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry[196] as well as Cage

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[195] These authors' conclusions with respect to Davis's procedure exhibit a fascinating paradox *(ibid.)*: "In the absence of traditional hierarchical (top-down) leadership structures, on the one hand these musicians were freer to actively participate in creative contributions, while on the other they needed to listen and defer to one another's projections more closely than before. Not surprisingly, these interchanges gave rise to a subtle and efficient form of communication that paradoxically focused even greater attention on Davis himself than before, cementing his pivotal role as group mentor and instigator of new ideas."

[196] Henry's re-discovery by contemporary electronic musicians in the trance genre is documented in Taylor (2001:69-71).

and Stockhausen. The tedious and unwieldy procedures in realizing such electronic compositions involved a disproportionately large amount of time spent physically editing magnetic tape.[197]

Digital technology, which basically operates on numerical representations of "digitized" sound, drastically reduces such editing time, thereby raising a new and different set of technological problems for the composer in this field. These advances in the transformational ease and power of computers for such manipulations also have served to open up the field of music creation and production to anyone who can afford the asking price of a reasonably powerful computer and its attendant software. This state of affairs (despite its sometimes negative repercussions for live performers) can be seen as a healthy scenario, as it suggests a move in the direction of a democratization of musicking—a move not without its price, as Lucy Green (2001:3) notes:

> The relative paucity of music-makers by contrast with the plenitude of music-listeners today is not the result of pure chance. Sound recording and reproduction technology, the expansion of the music industry and mass media into major international concerns, and the Internet have made music ever more accessible, widespread and even unavoidable for the listener. But whilst the music industry and the media have increased music's availability, they have simultaneously dictated norms of performance and composition that result from such high levels of capital investment as to be virtually impossible for amateur musicians to attain.

Green's point regarding the normative role of the music industry and the media is a vital one, but this applies mostly to record companies run under

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[197] For example, to lower the pitch of a given sound by an octave the tape is played back at half its original speed, analogously with the laws of physics. Reversing a sound requires playing the tape backwards. Given that some compositions of this period sometimes comprised thousands of such manipulated sounds, it is not surprising that digital technology, which operates on binary data "representing" the sound within a computer and is consequently virtually instantaneous in these operations, has been so quickly and whole-heartedly accepted by the electronic music community. There is debate about the "warmth" (or lack thereof) of digital, especially among fans of analogue recording, valve amplifiers, and vintage synthesizers—in short, "old-fashioned" technology.

the aegis of big business. The democratization of the tools of the recording trade as spearheaded by the rise in availability of such tools as "virtual" instruments on various computer platforms has led to a revolution in the sheer number of recordings by tiny[198] independent companies which do not need a huge budget to market a product designed to be sold at local level, small-scale gigs or made available via the Internet.

Within the field of improvised music performance, the hierarchical structures are somewhat less rigid as compared with those of the orchestra. The nearest equivalent to the symphony orchestra in the jazz genre is the big band, which, in its heyday of the 1930s, generally functioned without a separate conductor. In the big band format, the musicians are also placed in sections, according to their function, as in rhythm section, saxophone section, trumpet section, and so on, but, mostly for economic and logistical reasons, a separate conductor was seldom seen to be necessary. Duke Ellington, for example, would lead his band from the piano and seldom moved from this position.

In Ellington's case, the sheer longevity of his band (and the early pressure on him to acquire arranging skills quickly, on the job) enabled him to write completely idiosyncratically for the individuals within the band. Although Ellington was clearly the bandleader, his ongoing collaboration with Billy Strayhorn sometimes made it difficult for the public to distinguish exactly whose arrangement they were listening to, so thoroughly had their individual styles merged. Duke recognized that the famous "Ellington effect" was a product of the collective skills of the musicians involved in the realization of his goals, and, significantly perhaps, was one of the few bandleaders able to sustain his orchestra in the lean years immediately following World War II.

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[198] Many of these are one-man operations, their products produced in home studios on low budgets.

If Duke Ellington may be said to represent one of the most distinctive voices in innovative, mainstream jazz arranging, from which the relatively free (at times chaotic-sounding) work of Sun Ra is very far removed, they nonetheless share an abiding interest in (and chose to formulate their musical ideas through) the big band format. For Ra, this format was society itself writ small (Szwed, cited in Heble 2000:139, n6):

> From the music he had experienced, big bands were living microcosms of government; the big bands best represented society, and harmonious relationships between people. The bands' history showed what could be done. But bands also showed what could go wrong. When soloists were lured away from bands by promoters and turned into 'stars' of small combos it promoted self-sufficiency and destroyed initiative, creating chaos in black communities.

Clearly Ra's wariness at such scurrilous promoters' tactics stems from a belief that the interests of the group are of higher moral import than the needs of the individuals concerned. Both Ellington and Sun also believed in the spiritual power of music: for Ellington, a deeply religious man, his later composing becomes more and more explicitly linked to his Christian faith,[199] whereas, for Sun Ra and his Intergalactic Research Arkestra, in service to his Astro-black mythology, music forms the indispensable accompaniment to his slogan: "Space is the place!"

The fluid organizational structure of a Soundpainting event, while locating the authority for the proceedings in the person of the Soundpainter, both draws from and ironically comments on the taken-for-granted divisions of labour within the more rigid conventions of the orchestra and the big band. Space in this case is an index not only of sheer proximity, but a metaphor for the power relations that vest authority in the conductor or bandleader.

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[199] As Graham Lock (1999:3) states: "If Ellington, unlike Ra and Braxton, has not been deemed mad, it is probably because his utopianism has largely been channeled through conventional religious forms, most extensively in the three Sacred Concerts of his later years, examples of an African American tradition of affirmative music that can be traced back to the slaves' spirituals."

5.4.1 Social topology and organizational structure

According to Bourdieu (1991:229-230):

> To begin with, sociology presents itself as a *social topology*. Accordingly, the social world can be represented in the form of a (multi-dimensional) space constructed on the basis of principles of differentiation or distribution constituted by the set of properties active in the social universe under consideration, that is, able to confer force or power on their possessor in that universe. Agents and groups of agents are thus defined by their *relative positions* in this space.

It seems feasible to conceive of musicking as taking place within an instance of Bourdieu's multi-dimensional space. In improvised music, in which identities are open to negotiation within a proxemic and musical space, an important part of the formation of Bourdieu's "social universe" is conveyed through the organizational structure of the group itself. Collier (section 1.5.3) has explicitly linked the organization of the symphony orchestra with that of a government-approved model of the ideal society, in which everyone is "in step" with the orders emanating from above. For Hodge and Kress, this state of affairs is maintained through the operations of what they define as a logonomic system (1988:4):

> A logonomic system is a set of rules prescribing the conditions for production and reception of meanings; which specify who can claim to initiate (produce, communicate) or know (receive, understand) meanings about what topics under what circumstances and with what modalities (how, when, why).

In the context of the turbulent 1960s, jazz, and especially free jazz, subjected such logonomic systems to close scrutiny, and musicking was viewed in some cases as the site of struggle for the right to speak, and thereby to gain control of the signifier. The control of the logonomic system of the symphony orchestra is vested in the conductor, as Collier notes, and this has clear implications for Thompson's method, which, in many ways, playfully interrogates the social and musical dynamics of the concert hall. As Sherwood (1999) suggests, even Thompson's use of the term "orchestra" has subversive implications:

> Even his definition of 'orchestra' pushes the limit. The Walter Thompson Orchestra seems to have developed from a jazz/big band group into an extended family of singers, actors, dancers, even painters, who sometimes share the stage with his core of about twenty musicians.

One of the hallmarks of Soundpainting is its flexibility with regard to the size and instrumental combinations of the ensemble. Thompson himself notes (1996:9):

> One of the wonderful aspects of Soundpainting is that an ensemble may comprise any number of musicians performing on any combination of instruments. It can be used with more traditional combinations such as SATB choruses, jazz big bands, string quartets, symphony and chamber orchestras, or with an ensemble of 20 guitarists, an ensemble made up of 5 drummers; or an ensemble of 1 guitar, 4 trombones, 1 vocalist, 3 accordions, 1 laptop player, and 6 flutes.

Within the more traditional framework of the jazz language-game, the most obvious organizational structure is that of the big band, which, as noted in the previous section, shares some similarities with that of the orchestra. Bolstered by arranging methods that cater for such combinations of instruments (Pease and Pullig 2001), this "classic" combination tends to be part of the canon-formation of jazz historiography, especially when based on an unproblematically conceived chronological history of performers and their groups. In principle, an improvising ensemble may consist of any number of instruments, combined in any number of ways, as Thompson's remarks about potential Soundpainting combinations illustrate (1996:9).

In mainstream arranging practice, however, as the group increases in size and potential complexity of timbral possibilities, the arranger's skills become increasingly focused on managing the acoustic and timbral space allocated to each instrument so as to allow for the right balance for the instrumental combination at hand. This is musically configured space at its most "scientific," in the sense that following the procedures as outlined will always yield a result in accordance with the physical laws of the harmonic

series, on which in turn is based the system of tonality that is prevalent in mainstream arranging for big band of the common practice period.

Heble (2000) has extensively theorized a concept of dissonance as a trope for the expression of identity in the music of Duke Ellington, wherein Ellington's deployment of this device acts as a form of signifyin(g) against the harmonic blandness of Tin Pan Alley and, by extension, its hijacking of African American music. For Ellington, this quiet but firm protest is couched purely in musical terms; in the later ferment of civil rights in 1960s America, the protest is much rougher-edged and overtly political.

5.4.2 Improvising big bands

The quintessential organizational structure for mainstream jazz large ensembles is the big band format, and, while a comprehensive survey of its complex history is beyond the scope of this discussion, a few salient points regarding this format are deemed of significance. As already noted (section 5.4), the big band is organized into sections (like the orchestra), which principle allows arrangers in the jazz idiom to make use of sectional writing, in which call and response patterns between sections are a typical procedure. Given its size, the big band is an uneconomic proposition at the best of times, although in its heyday (in the swing era of the 1930s) this format represented all that was innovative and was seen as emblematic of American jazz.

The principles of arranging that apply to the big band format have been codified into procedures for managing the wide range of timbral and dynamic possibilities available in this genre, and there is a correspondingly wide range of idiosyncratic contributions from arrangers who are willing to take on the challenge of writing in an idiomatically correct, yet innovative, manner for this format. Once again, a balance needs to be maintained between the arranger's individual style and the accepted conventions of the genre. Such problems have been solved by exemplars of the style like

Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and others in the classic period, while more contemporary stylists like Dave Holland and Maria Schneider have extended the harmonic sophistication and timbral possibilities of this format to reflect a more modern sound.

The possibilities for improvisers in this format are typically fairly limited, at least in its mainstream version, in the sense that it is not designed as a vehicle for extended soloing. A typical mainstream big band arrangement tends to incorporate scope for a few choruses of solo improvisation, because the central focus in this style is generally the interaction between sections, whether antiphonally (call and response) or in the form of the classic "shout" chorus, in which a unison or harmonized phrase is stated by the trumpet, saxophone, and trombone sections together, usually immediately following the last solo.

Although there are many examples of innovative writing for big band emanating from the United States, which may fairly claim to be the originator of this format, it is in Europe that a different big band tradition has developed, in the work of such composers and arrangers as Alexander von Schlippenbach (Globe Unity and the Berlin Contemporary Jazz Orchestra) in Germany, the bassist Barry Guy[200] in Britain, and the expatriate American Steve Lacy in France, to name a few.[201] Although it is impossible to generalize about such a group of artists, they may be said to share an easier willingness to integrate the compositional procedures of the avant-garde into the traditional framework of the big band, which in turn suggests that the genre-boundaries (or linguistic borders) between experimental music and jazz were less clearly defined in Europe than in

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[200] In England, the bassist/composer Barry Guy founded the London Jazz Composers' Orchestra in the early 1970s "partly as a UK response to the possibilities set in train by Carla Bley and Michael Mantler with the Jazz Composers' Orchestra Association."
(Source: http://www.shef.ac.uk/misc/rec/ps/efi/mljco.html).

[201] The list is of necessity highly selective, but one should also mention Graham Collier, Mike Westbrook (UK), and Chris McGregor (SA).

the United States. In any case, the danger of falling into such essentialist generalizations is to some extent avoided through the simple fact that many of these bands by the 1980s or so had become truly international, with members of many nationalities taking part.[202]

The organizational problems of managing the tension between free improvisation and the historical constraints (and political implications) of the big band style are complex, to say the least.[203] Van Heerden is alert to the hegemonic implications of this problematic history in examining the links between sport and jazz (1996):

> The big band resembles a sports team, having to work as a 'team' along with star players (soloists), and having to compete with other bands. Sport in turn encapsulates the corporate ethos of capitalism. It has been suggested that the rise of jazz superstars goes hand-in-hand with the growing absorption of black Americans into American mainstream capitalist society.

Lewis suggests, in defining improvised music as "a social location inhabited by a considerable number of present-day musicians, coming from diverse cultural backgrounds and musical practices, who have chosen to make improvisation a central part of their musical discourse" (2004b:110):

> Working as an improviser in the field of improvised music emphasizes not only form and technique but individual life choices as well as cultural, ethnic, and personal location. In performances of improvised music, the possibility of internalizing other value systems is implicit from the start. The focus of musical discourse suddenly shifts from the individual, autonomous creator to the collective—the individual as part of global humanity.

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[202] For example, the personnel on the eponymous Berlin Contemporary Jazz Orchestra recording includes players from Japan, the United States, and Canada, as well as a nucleus of regulars from both the former German Democratic and Federal Republics. Thompson himself divides his time between the United States and Sweden.

[203] Carla Bley's sprawling “chronotransduction” *Escalator over the Hill* (1971) is a remarkable early instance of potential solutions of this problem.

5.5 Deconstructing noise and silence

"Without music, the prehistoric past is just too quiet to be believed."

(Mithen 2006:4)

The author considers the relationship between sound and silence as a central metaphor in musicking. In this context it may be said that musicians articulate utterances against the background of a musically configured space, in which is enacted and dramatized a continuum of musical and social relationships, between musicians and collaborators in the moment, between musicians and the audience, and finally between musicians and the canon of their respective language-game.

Todd Jenkins, in introducing the first volume of his monumental *Free Jazz and Free Improvisation: An Encyclopaedia*, discusses Thelonious Monk's idiosyncratic contribution to jazz improvisation in terms of Monk's "dramatic" use of silence as follows (2004a:xxxvi):

> He made especially good use of silence as a dramatic device.[204] His compositions often sounded as if Jackson Pollock had flung black spots of ink onto a blank manuscript page. The stilted, uncomfortably edgy *Evidence* is a prime example; unfamiliar listeners almost need to follow along with the sheet music in order to pinpoint the 'one.'

Jenkins suggests further that Monk's approach to composition, while not cast in an ostensibly "free" mould, presages, in some important respects, the concerns of free improvisation. For Jenkins (2004a:xxxv):

> Monk's experience could serve as a virtual blueprint for the patterns that developed in the free community. He had his own personal sense of rhythm, chordal logic, and melodic structure, which not only made him an instantly recognizable player but reduced the number of

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[204] Heble (section 4.1.4.4) has noted a similar process at work in the music of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, in which the expectations of the audience are frustrated by painfully long silences.

compatible sidemen to the barest handful.

It is important to note how Jenkins emphasizes the "personal" elements of Monk's highly individual style with respect to rhythm, harmony, and note choices. These idiosyncrasies, for Jenkins, contribute toward making Monk's sound "instantly recognizable," a point that, once again, highlights the complex and not unproblematic representation of the individual within the jazz world.

5.5.1 Sound and silence as aesthetic oppositions

There exist many clichés in the recording industry to market a particular style of music, and, for a time, the German-based recording company ECM[205] used the slogan: "The most beautiful sound next to silence" as their motto or trademark. This slogan is in keeping with the generally contemplative, low-key nature, which identifies much of their catalogue, and sets up an imaginary tension between "beautiful sound" and "silence" as its *modus operandi*.

The first problem is to identify exactly what is meant by "beautiful" sound, as this clearly invites the listener (or consumer) to partake of a set of aesthetic assumptions on the nature of beauty as provided by the record company. It is worth noting that the ECM catalogue allows for a range of "product"[206] from the Art Ensemble of Chicago and Circle (examples of atonality and free jazz) to the generally much "safer" recordings of such artists as Keith Jarrett and Pat Metheny, whose compositions tend to be situated in a relatively tonal environment and exhibit a much more traditional approach to their formal structuring.

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[205] ECM stands for Editions of Contemporary Music and is the brainchild of Manfred Eicher, formerly a bass-player.
[206] Used in the ungrammatical sense of the recording industry's main *raison d'être*, the selling of musical commodities, termed generically "product" and not "products."

Secondly, the opposition of sound to silence does not account for the problem of defining what sound is, and to what extent the organising imperatives and proclivities of composers come into play. Is all the music in the ECM catalogue in this view defined as "beautiful sound"? This argues homogeneity of intent on ECM's part that is belied, as stated earlier, by the range of musics that co-exist (uneasily, one might suspect) within their catalogue. What exactly is meant by "beauty," a term not without its ambiguities,[207] and as Umberto Eco argues persuasively in a different context (2004), for many, based on a tradition of Western scholarship and philosophical discussions bound up in a somewhat partisan framework?

John Cage's notorious silent piece of the 1950s, *4′ 33″*, for better or worse, is one of WEAM's great conundrums. To compose a piece for piano (or other instruments) in which no actual music is performed is surely evidence of "The Emperor's New Clothes" syndrome, and evidence (to some) of Cage's palpable lunacy. Cage himself discusses an imaginary staging of the piece in a somewhat facetious manner (1966:276):

> I have spent many pleasant hours in the woods conducting performances of my silent piece, transcriptions, that is, for an audience of myself, since they were much longer than the popular length which I have had published. At one performance, I passed the first movement by attempting to identify a mushroom which remained successfully unidentified. The second movement was extremely dramatic, beginning with the sounds of a buck and a doe leaping up to within ten feet of my rocky podium. The expressivity of this movement was not only dramatic but unusually sad from my point of view, for the animals were frightened simply because I was a human being. However, they left hesitatingly and fittingly within the structure of the work. The third movement was a return to the theme of the first, but with all those profound, so-well-known alterations of world feeling associated by German tradition with the A-B-A.

Nicholas Cook (1992:11ff.) discusses this anecdote in some detail, pointing out its somewhat tongue-in-cheek tone and its allusion to

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[207] Witness the inherent contradiction in the title of one of Monk's compositions: *Ugly Beauty*.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's experience at Sleepy Hollow. Cook realizes the serious intent behind the apparent quackery in saying: "Yet the point he is making is a serious one: anything can be heard as music, Cage is saying, if the listener chooses to hear it that way."

5.5.2 Noise, signifyin(g), quotation, and the postmodern

McClary has described (section 4.1.4.4), with regard to the notion of signifyin(g), the manner in which this practice is mediated through the performers' choice of funky and masked sounds. The difference between acquiring what might be termed basic musical skills through imitation (section 4.1.2) and commenting self-reflexively, or ironically, on one's situation within the social order (and thereby, enacting agency) is described by Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., with reference to "the relationship between signifying and quotation," as cited in Metzer (2003:50, n11):

> Musical Signifyin(g) is not the same, simply, as the borrowing and restating of pre-existent material, or the performing of variations on pre-existent material,[208] or even the simple re-working of pre-existent material. While it is all of these, what makes it different from simple borrowing, varying, or reworking is its transformation of such material by using it rhetorically or figuratively—through troping, in other words—by trifling with, teasing, or censuring it in some way.[209]

Jenkins views Monk's transformation of standards and their accompanying harmonic structures as a means of recasting them "in his own image," clearly pointing toward the potential establishment of musical identity through such procedures in the process (2004a:xxxv-xxxvi):

> Monk would habitually cluster notes together in hurried wads of

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[208] The persistence of the standard in jazz is a clear instance of Floyd's idea of "variations on pre-existing material," while the contrafact (in which the original melody is transformed beyond recognition while maintaining the formal and harmonic structure) may be seen as a subversive political tactic.

[209] Floyd's remarks on troping may be seen as elements of a complex musical language-game. Similarly, Soundpainting may avail itself of any or all of these tactics in the course of performance.

> conflicting tones, take long pauses before the next fusillade, or jump up on a whim for one of his peculiar shuffling dances. He was a pioneer in bypassing traditional chord structures, as his recastings of standards like “Just You, Just Me” or “Memories of You” reveal. Monk reshaped musical traditions fearlessly in his own image, using portions of them as scant starting points for wherever his heart and hands led him.

A hallmark of Monk's playing is his use of highly dissonant clusters, which add a noise element to his harmonic approach. In highlighting the problems inherent in mapping such clusters from piano to guitar, Gary Wittner[210] highlights some of the unique and characteristic elements of Monk's playing style (such as the use of chords that include seconds). It is worth noting that Heble (2000) considers the musical dissonances in the work of composers like Duke Ellington and Sun Ra as metaphorical tropes, which serve to dramatize the tension between private and public selves in a revealing way. This tension is played out, in turn, against the background of the search for an original voice (Heble 2000:92-3):

> Interestingly, many theorists of improvisation are explicit in seeing a connection between improvisation and identity, between artistic processes and agency in self-representation. Improvising percussionist Eddie Prévost, for one, states flatly that 'improvised music is a music of self-determination' (quoted in Smith and Dean, 63). Tom Nunn, in his recent book *Wisdom of the Impulse*, similarly suggests that the practice of free improvisation often has as its impetus 'a search for one's own "original voice" where specific restrictions of form, style and technique can be dropped, leaving space for the deeper, more intuitive personality to express itself.'

Ironically, the search for this original voice may involve recourse to quotation of "other" material, which is assimilated into the distinctive personal language of the improviser. The topic of quotation in musicking, and its varied range of tactical purposes, is a vast one, and well beyond

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[210] As Wittner notes in this regard (1999:6): "It should be mentioned here that the guitar, though capable of many possibilities, was at an inherent disadvantage in this project. Monk had a maximum of ten fingers available (not to mention the occasional elbow), while the guitar is limited to six strings. In addition, the use of chords with seconds is a large part of Monk's harmonic vocabulary, and these are not nearly as playable on the guitar. I did, however, include as many of these types of voicings as was practical."

the scope of this current work. However, as it is a key feature of improvised jazz and Soundpainting, the author wishes to highlight a few features of its deployment. As Floyd has suggested, the transformation of existing material in the course of improvisation may have a rhetorical or figurative purpose, in which the improviser "comments" on a salient musical element, or its associations with another genre, often in an ironic or humorous fashion.

For Monson, such rhetorical tactics are evidence of what she terms "intermusicality." This term has obvious links with the poststructuralist notion of intertextuality (section 3.1.2), but for Monson (1996:97), the musical quotation "embodies the conflict between tradition and innovation in jazz performance as well as the larger question of how instrumental music conveys cultural meaning." Drawing from Bakhtin's work in language, Monson defines both centripetal and centrifugal tendencies in intermusical practice as follows (1996:99):

> On the centripetal side are forces of centralization, unification, authoritativeness (hegemony), and standardization; on the centrifugal are those of decentralization, disunity, and competition among multiple social voices. Bakhtin sees these forces intersecting in any particular speech utterance, which has aspects that affirm the general category and those that are highly particular to the moment.

In the words of Bakhtin himself (1981:272):

> Every utterance participates in the 'unitary language' (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces). Such is the fleeting language of a day, of an epoch, a social group, a genre, a school and so forth. It is possible to give a concrete and detailed account of any utterance, once having exposed it as a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies in the life of language.

Bakhtin's view, while sharing something of the Saussurean notions of *langue* and *parole*, goes further in exposing the tensions and contradictions within such a "fleeting language," and Monson astutely applies Bakhtin's dialogism to the problem of boundaries within music. As

she suggests (1996:99): "The idea that the centripetal and centrifugal are dependent on each other for their mutual definition in ways that vary over time is an important part of the story."

For Bakhtin (1981:293-294):

> Language, for the universal consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral or impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from here that one must take the word, and make it one's own.

Jenkins's remarks about Monk (2004a:xxxv-xxxvi) can be seen as appropriate in Bakhtin's sense of "taking the word and making it one's own," if one merely substitutes musical notes for words in the above quotation. Notes and words are different phenomena, admittedly, but Jenkins and Monson are talking about the metaphorical, and not the literal, manifestations of language. Monson defines intermusicality with reference to examples of musical irony or parody from jazz practice, beginning by comparing John Coltrane's version of the show tune *My Favorite Things* with what Gates categorizes as its "vapid original." Gates characterizes Coltrane's version as an instance of formal parody in claiming (1998:909):

> Another example of formal parody is to suggest a given structure precisely by failing to coincide with it—that is, to suggest it by dissemblance. Repetition of a form and then inversion of the same through a process of variation is central to jazz. A stellar example is John Coltrane's rendition of "My Favorite Things" compared to Julie Andrews's vapid original.

In considering the various types of transformation ("of form, harmony, and groove") that Coltrane applies to the piece, Monson notes how (1996:107): "In time, Coltrane's versions of the tune became the symbol of an increasingly open direction in improvisational aesthetics and an example frequently cited by musicians and audience members who wished to

emphasize the way in which jazz versions of standards frequently surpass the originals in musical power." Comparisons are odious, as the cliché goes, but it seems slightly unfair to valorize the jazz version by bracketing the purpose and context of its original Broadway counterpart. Monson is alert to this conflict of interests, and states (1996:105): "I wish to emphasize my awareness that the African American versions are not inherently 'better' but relative to a particular aesthetic, which many non-African Americans share as well."[211]

Monson perceptively suggests the possibility of Coltrane's interpreting the original in an ironic light in noting (1996:117):

> Since the lyrics would have been on the song sheet music the song plugger brought to the quartet, Coltrane would have been well aware of the emphasis on white things in the lyric—girls in white dresses, snowflakes on eyelashes, silver white winters, cream-colored ponies. In 1960—a year of tremendous escalation in the Civil Rights movement and a time of growing politicization of the jazz community—there was certainly the possibility that Coltrane looked upon the lyrics with an ironic eye.[212]

It is important to note, in this regard, that Korsyn (2003) regards irony as the governing trope of what Attali describes as "composition." The author discusses salient elements of Attali's political economy of music in the following section, while suggesting at this point that Gates's ideas of irony and parody have something in common with Hutcheon's ideas on postmodern architecture, when she claims (1989:12):

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[211] Suggesting that Coltrane's version "means" more than the original has the potential, in the author's view, of leading to a problem as expressed by Roger Scruton, who criticizes deconstruction's extreme scepticism with regard to the "meaning" of a text (2005: 40):
'Deconstruction' tells us that there is no such thing as objective meaning, since meaning is the product of interpretation, and interpretation is always misinterpretation. Many critics seize on this global scepticism about meaning as a basis for denying that one work of literature can be more meaningful than another. There is no special reason to teach Shakespeare rather than Donald Duck or Barbara Cartland, when objective meaning attaches to none of them.

[212] Monson concludes by suggesting (1996:117-118): "Even if he didn't, however, the potential for an ironic interpretation on the part of his listeners and fellow musicians is clearly present."

> Postmodernism has called into question the messianic faith of modernism, the faith that technical innovation and purity of form can assure social order, even if that faith disregards the social and aesthetic values of those who must inhabit those modernist buildings. Postmodern architecture is plural and historical, not pluralist and historicist; it neither ignores nor condemns the long heritage of its built culture—including the modern. It uses the reappropriated forms of the past to speak to a society from within the values and history of that society, while still questioning it. It is in this way that its historical representations, however parodic, get politicized.

Hutcheon's view of postmodern architecture (with respect to "the reappropriated forms of the past") has clear bearing on how the individual jazz musician deals with the negotiation of identity in relation both to history and the community. It is clear that Monson sees Coltrane's *My Favorite Things* as speaking to "a society from within the values and history of that society, while still questioning it," in Hutcheon's terms, and, further, whether intentional or not, it is likewise clear that Coltrane's ironic view of the piece has the effect of politicizing it as an outcome of his particular quest for self-expression.

Although the subject matter of Clifton's *Music as Heard* is mostly concerned with the compositional practices of WEAM, his view of the composer as ironist is relevant to the present discussion (1983:269):

> By using music to present a flawed and absurd world and the artificiality of standards of conduct, the composer as ironist affirms a belief not only in such a world, but in something higher and less open to ridicule. Irony is possible because the latter belief grounds the former, and the ironical statement emerges in a situation whose form and meaning are opposed.

In the case of Coltrane's "playing with" *My Favorite Things*, the ironic element in his transformation of this piece can be seen as an example of composition, in Attali's sense of the term (see following section). Although the piece is still recognizable, the extent (and radicalism) of Coltrane's transformations suggests the possibility of regarding it as an altogether new composition, to the degree that Coltrane and the quartet as a collective have appropriated it through the tactic of signifyin(g).

With respect to Attali's concept of noise, the author suggests (after Cumming's notion of timbral iconicity) that noise in this instance is made manifest in the quartet version through Coltrane's choice of the soprano saxophone as the incarnation of his personal voice. This is additional to the elements of rhythm, harmony, and form that Monson identifies, and is a crucial element in defining the hallmark sound of the performance. Considering the short space of time separating this 1960 recording from Coltrane's later, completely free and ecstatic recordings, such as *Ascension* (1965), this need for self-expression may be seen as the animating force, and is definitely utopian in Clifton's sense of a belief (1983:269) in "something higher and less open to ridicule."

5.5.3 Noise in the political economy of music

For Attali (2003:138):

> Free jazz was the first attempt to express in economic terms the refusal of the cultural alienation inherent in repetition, to use music to build a new culture. What institutional politics, trapped within representation, could not do, what violence, crushed by counterviolence, could not achieve, free jazz tried to bring about through the production of a new music outside of the industry.

The twentieth century (sometimes known as the Age of Information) was to see many great changes in all kinds of communication technology, and, in the field of music, developments and improvements in recording technology led to an ever-increasing availability of new possibilities for composing, manipulating, archiving, and distributing music. The advent of digital technology, whose power and ease of use is unrivalled as compared with the previous analogue-based tape technologies, had the effect of making very sophisticated equipment and procedures available to the general public at comparatively low cost. These and similar developments had a profound and lasting effect on music's place in society. By way of an example, the practice of digital sampling forced a review of existing copyright law, and, in turn, suggested a re-evaluation of

the composer's place in society.

Korsyn's case study (2003:125-130) of Attali's *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, identifies four governing tropes as underpinning rhetorical devices in Attali's account of the corresponding stages in the political economy of music. These are:

- Sacrifice (metaphor)
- Representation (metonymy)
- Repetition (synecdoche)
- Composition (irony).

In the context of improvised jazz and Soundpainting, which clearly draw on music from the African American tradition, Gates asserts the ascendancy of the signifyin(g) trope as a means of highlighting notions of agency and individuality. Korsyn's study identifies further tropes with regard to Attali's concept of musicking as a metaphor for the social.

5.5.3.1 Sacrifice (metaphor)

In Korsyn's view, the primary function of music at this stage of Attali's schema is to disguise, or at least suppress, the violent origins of society. Music's state of innocence is reflected in two defining characteristics of this stage of evolution: firstly, that music is not separated from the body, and secondly, that music does not have exchange-value, and therefore cannot be bought or sold.

5.5.3.2 Representation (metonymy)

Korsyn interprets Attali's second stage according to the metonymic trope, in which music acquires exchange-value through a "fall into commodification" (2003:127):

> In contrast to the metaphoric fusion of ritual, the governing trope in this new stage is metonymy, the trope of differentiation and reductive part—part relations. The fall into commodification introduced a

> division of labor not found previously: the roles of composer and performer were increasingly differentiated; the audience and musicians were separated, not only through the introduction of distinct performance spaces but also through the star system; the body was exiled from music, since 'acrobatics was confined to the circus' (Attali 2003:72).

The consequences of this stage in the evolution of music are devastating, in that the body is banished from the musicking process, making way for an increasing specialization and differentiation of the roles of composer and performer. The star system (combined with the establishment of systems of copyright and ownership) privileges the individual over the collective, and, as Korsyn concludes (*ibid*.): "In this reduction of music to money, the whole is reduced to a part that is related by contiguity, not by metaphoric resemblance."

5.5.3.3 Repetition (synecdoche)

Attali describes the role of music in the network of repetition[213] as follows (2003:5):

> Fetishized as a commodity, music is illustrative of our entire society: derivatize a social form, repress an activity of the body, specialize its practice, sell it as a spectacle, generalize its consumption, then see to it that it is stockpiled until it loses its meaning.

Attali describes commodity fetishism in terms which resonate with Debord's idea of the society of the spectacle, although Debord is even more scathing about the role of "stardom" in this process (2006:§61):

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[213] As Corbett observes, with respect to Attali's term "repetition" (1995:220): "Jacques Attali leaves his use of the word 'repetition' ambivalent; it could mean either intertextual repetition (chorus structures, refrains, regular meter) or repetitions of the entire text (regular airplay on the radio or use of the repeat button on CD machines). We should also leave the meaning of repetition unfixed, since the above modes of meaning making do not constitute a system per se. They do not have formal characteristics. They are illusive, polymorphous. The creation of meaning cuts across textual instances (songs, phrases, genres, styles, modes, formats) and masks itself by forming audible regularities."

> The individual who in service to the spectacle is placed in stardom's spotlight is in fact the opposite of an individual, and as clearly the enemy of the individual in himself as of the individual in others. In entering the spectacle as a model to be identified with, he renounces all autonomy in order himself to identify with the general law of obedience to the course of things.

In Debord's words are heard the death knell of the notion of the individual as a possibility. The individual participant becomes either the indentured servant of the spectacular order, or is reduced to the role of passive consumer of music as soap opera, an infinitely substitutable and interchangeable vacuum from which no sound escapes. The connections with postmodernism seem obvious, especially in the light of Hutcheon's idea of postmodernism's "conflictual response to literary modernism," defined in these terms (1989:15):

> On the one hand, the postmodern obviously was made possible by the self-referentiality, irony, ambiguity, and parody that characterize much of the art of modernism, as well as by its explorations of language and its challenges to the classic realist system of representation; on the other hand, postmodern fiction has come to contest the modernist ideology of artistic autonomy, individual expression,[214] and the deliberate separation of art from mass culture and everyday life.

Similarly, Radano defines Anthony Braxton's relationship to modernism as emblematic of Gates's "signifying trope," as follows (1993:26):

> For Braxton, modernism has had a liberating effect, serving as a means of expressing ideas and impulses central to the African-American tradition. He has affirmed what Henry Louis Gates, Jr., has called the 'signifying trope' of African-American creative expression, moving in multiple dualities that subvert notions of closure, binariness, and determinacy as he creates a multiply referring, contradictory whole.

Throughout his discussion, Korsyn notes Attali's pessimism with regard to the steady decline of music's value in society, from which position it is only redeemed in the final stage of composition.

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[214] There seems an evident resonance with Sawyer's creativity myths as discussed in section 5.1.1.2.

5.5.3.4 Composition (irony)

In its final stage (or network) as composition, music emerges as a form of utopia. This is an ironic narrative network in the sense that music liberates itself not as a return to its origins but exists now on a higher level. Attali's four stages of music as narrative therefore preclude the possibility of a return to the original state of Grace, in which music was uncontaminated by commodification. The ironic or compositional level, into which music is now emerging, puts music at the forefront of human activity as a predictive tool. As Korsyn notes (2003:125-6): "Attali believes not only that music and society are interimplicated but that music can be prophetic, heralding developments that a social formation may later experience."

Despite the book's ambitious scope in strategies and its (sometimes disputed) influence on American musicology, Korsyn is quick to remark that Attali's optimism regarding technology's potential as a helpmeet for human liberation is evidence of a romantic or utopian strain (2003:130): "Attali seems to share McLuhan's faith that electronic media will produce a retribalization: in contrast to the primacy of the visual in print culture, electronic media will recapture the primacy of aurality, producing a global village." What Korsyn's case study exposes is a conceptual framework underlying Attali's view of music as mythic narrative, a framework which in turn accounts for his optimistic view of music as existing without exchange value and functioning as a tool for predicting the future.

Deutscher is more sceptical about technology's role in general in this future retribalization, maintaining that Attali's imaginary primeval community never existed in the first place (2005:63):

> The paradox of contemporary times is our belief that technology can restore for us lost immediacy: lost because we live in a complex and separated community. It seems to us that modern technology—air travel, the phone, the electronic chatroom—is able to bring us back together. But we never had the full community some like to think we lost. We were always at a kind of distance (geographical, emotional,

> political, generational, cognitive) from each other. And we never accomplish the instantaneity we think is promised by new technologies.

For Leyshon *et al*., Attali exposes the connection between music and binary oppositions (1998:2-3):

> By adopting the term 'noise' as the central problematic for his study, Attali immediately recognizes the social role of music in the establishment and maintenance of binary opposites recognized as fundamental to the social construction of modern consciousness: order and chaos, human and non-human, civilization and barbarism, culture and nature. In the cultural politics of sound, deployment of the term 'noise' to distinguish between music and nonmusic acts as a very powerful ideological signifier. For a sound to be classified as 'noise' places it outside understanding and beyond culture in the realm of pure materiality, a world of sound waves and audio frequencies, pitch, and timbre.

This reading of Attali brings to the forefront music's complicity with the hegemonic tendencies of the social order. In this conspiracy, classifying something as noise is not simply removing an irritant that obscures clear communication, but also serves as a means of marginalizing whatever the dominant ideology regards as a threat to the established order. The distinction between music and non-music functions hegemonically, in the sense that capitalist interests, like recording companies, have the power to dictate what is marketed and what is not. In terms of this distinction, one might say that these companies literally have the power to silence the opposition. It is not accidental, therefore, that "progressive" artists tried to create alternative modes of production, taking upon themselves the tasks of recording, packaging, marketing, and distributing their music.

Musicians like Charles Mingus, Sun Ra, and many others formed independent companies, tactically operating outside the rules of the marketplace in a doomed attempt to wrest control from the majors. By organizing themselves into collectives, many such musicians attempted to work against the competitive and individualistic strain within jazz. For Attali, this battle was fought purely in economic terms (2003:138):

> Free jazz, which broke completely with the cautious version of jazz that had gained acceptance, ran into implacable monetary censorship. Certain record companies in the United State (sic) went so far as to adopt the policy of no longer recording black musicians, only whites who played like blacks. Thus free jazz very quickly became a reflection of and a forum for the political struggle of blacks in reaction to their insertion into repetition. Attempts were made, rallying all of the colonized forms of music in opposition to the censorship of the official industry, to establish a parallel industry to produce and promote new music.

This parallel industry, which grew to fruition in the 1960s, harnessed the utopian ideals of community and benevolent anarchism with the noble intention of finding a voice for those who could not, for various reasons, obtain recording contracts with "legitimate" companies. Often these ideals were linked to educational initiatives, especially in the decaying inner cities of America, in which spaces musicians sought to win back their right to self-expression at home, in the communities from which they sprang.

Attali's analysis, in retrospect, over-simplifies the issue somewhat by ignoring the fact that while the free movement was mainly allied to black rights, there were also white collectivists who championed the cause of universal liberation. Thus musicians like Charlie Haden (Liberation Music Orchestra) and Carla Bley (Jazz Composers' Orchestra Association) also formed (and continue to run) orchestras and collectives with strongly politicized overtones, whose music draws on a variety of sources, such as Kurt Weill and the music of the Spanish Civil War.

In conclusion, for Corbett (1995:220):

> The infra-semantic level of music is the unnamed basis of Attali's analysis. It is music's political-economic situation in culture. I hesitate to call it a 'function' of music, since it not only indicates music's activity within culture—its effects—but it also suggests the way music is produced, the way that it constitutes its subjects, the way that music can be known about, the manner in which power manifests itself in relation to music—that is, how power is invested in music and how power is wielded on music.

5.5.4 Cage, noise, and the aleatoric

For Clifton (1983:205):

> The idea of play as constitutive of reality, or (and this amounts to the same thing) of reality as something which is played, forms the ontological core from which the specific play forms of music may be considered. The general heading of *ludic* embraces all forms of controlled play, including, of course, all situations where the control is disguised.

Cage himself was fascinated by the musical potential of noise, as this 1937 statement indicates (1995:3):

> Wherever we are, what we hear is mostly noise. When we ignore it, it disturbs us. When we listen to it, we find it fascinating. The sound of a truck at 50 m.p.h. Static between the stations. Rain. We want to capture and control these sounds, to use them, not as sound effects, but as musical instruments.

Cage's manifesto regards all sound (including noise and, obviously, silence) as part of a continuum of available possibilities for composers. The futurist credo of Luigi Russolo celebrated noise for its own sake, and he designed a series of noise machines (such as the infamous *intonorumori*)[215] to celebrate a misplaced faith in modernism. Nowadays, ensembles like Einstürzende Neubauten make use of electric drills, anvils, and other industrial machinery as integral parts of their musical soundscape, and it may be said that any lines of distinction between what is classified as music and non-music have been irretrievably problematized, if not erased altogether.

Cook confirms this viewpoint when he states (1992:11):

> From this point of view, composing music becomes not so much a matter of designing musically interesting sounds as such, as of

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[215] Osborn discusses these futurist tactics and inventions in some detail. (Source: http://www.futurism.org.uk/music.htm).

> creating contexts in which sounds will be heard as musically interesting. This idea is reflected not just in avant-garde art music, but also in the broad and inclusive range of sounds that is to be heard in contemporary pop music; listeners, it seems, will tacitly accept virtually any sound as being potentially musical, provided that it appears in an appropriate context.

Appropriately contextualized sound is the key point, and the author is reminded of Van Heerden's observation (section 4.1) regarding the decontextualization of jazz, wherein he views it as both background music and propaganda. Clearly, there is a vast array of "things" that may be construed as noise factors, and the elimination of the electronic interference of noise was one of the chief objectives in Shannon's theory of communication.

5.5.5 Soundpainting, noise, and the avant-garde

For Robin Kelley (1999):

> The term avant-garde obscures as much as it reveals. There have been many self-proclaimed avant-garde movements in music and in the arts more generally, and depending on how one defines avant-garde or the specific historical context in which these movements emerged, one might argue that jazz's unique position as neither "folk" culture nor a product of mainstream Western arts institutions, combined with its ever-changing improvisational character, renders the entire genre avant-garde. Or one could point to the apparent, although largely unacknowledged, role that black improvisational music has had on American and European avant-garde composers such as John Cage (Lewis 1996).[216] If we simply limited our scope to avant-garde developments in jazz itself, one could easily include the work of Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, or Thelonious Monk at particular historical junctures.

By noting the element of cross-pollination in jazz wherein black improvisational music has been seen to influence avant-garde composers like Cage, Lewis (2004b) ascribes this to the existence of what he terms Afrological and Eurological perspectives. In speaking of these interactions,

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[216] A revised version of this article is published as Lewis (2004b).

Kelley (1999) suggest that these form a crucial element in the forging of an avant-garde community of practice, which Torff (2006:169, emphases in original) describes as follows:

> Sociocultural theory pays particular attention to one form of cultural mediation—the efforts made and encouragement given by other people. The growing interest in *socially shared cognition* refers to the study of how people come to engage in shared belief. Apart from knowledge people hold through direct observation, all knowledge is the result of entering into a shared belief with a group of like-minded others called a *community of practice*.

Torff's notion of the community of practice is relevant to both the WEAM and jazz contexts, in which practitioners tend to specialize in the fluent manipulation of elements of their respective language-games (with or without recourse to notation). A side effect of this specialized process of language acquisition, the author suggests, is that it is fairly unusual to find performers who possess equal facility in the vocabulary of these different genres. Orchestral musicians who improvise convincingly in the jazz realm, and, conversely, jazz musicians who can play the WEAM repertoire comfortably in an orchestra, are comparatively rare.[217]

Such musicians manage to combine a high degree of cognitive and "linguistic" skills with a correspondingly high level of technical facility, whether singers or instrumentalists. With regard to Lewis's notion of Afrological and Eurological perspectives, such musicians show evidence of familiarity with both traditions as well as knowledge of the musical and philosophical debates and issues (in Bourdieu's terms, the struggle for cultural capital) played out in these fields. Soundpainting no less demonstrates how a community of practice is formed within a subset of improvising practitioners who share familiarity with at least the language-games of jazz and WEAM. Selinger describes such practitioners in the following terms (*Deconstructing Haydn*, CD notes):

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[217] Keith Jarrett and Wynton Marsalis provide stellar (and immediate) exceptions to this generalization.

> For me, the pre-planning mostly involved choosing the right musicians to make up the group. Ideally it seemed to me that there should be a good balance between 'classical' players and experienced improvisers. Of course, the best would have been to have excellent players who are well versed in both settings, but this was not practical, so I tried to make sure that every section had at least one experienced improviser. That I did accomplish this is a testament to the changes in the thinking of musicians today, and the willingness of good musicians to try something new.

As Vella points out, this willingness to take part in an experiment and to take the time to learn the Soundpainting gestures, implies no less of a social contract than that entered into by orchestral musicians. In this contract is implicitly acknowledged a faithfulness to Thompson's vision of a new method for spontaneous musicking, in which the content of individual utterance is determined by the Soundpainting gestures themselves, and in which the relationship of the individual performer to the group is conceived of in the context of the various traditions from which such statements emerge.

Chapter 6 : Soundpainting—history, process, and system

In the following chapter, the author discusses the origins of Soundpainting in the context of the canons of improvised and experimental musicking. Drawing on the author's interview with Thompson (Paris, March 2003), a central thread of the discussion is the history of Soundpainting and its relationship to "the tradition." In addition, the author considers the influence of Anthony Braxton on Thompson's work.

The <palette> gesture in Soundpainting is examined as a means by which the Soundpainter is able to make use of musical quotation and recursion. As a compositional device whereby the Soundpainter may "quote" from material that has been rehearsed in advance of the event, the deployment of <palettes> forms an organizational procedure in Gil Selinger's *Deconstructing Haydn*, for example.

6.1 Soundpainting: a brief history

Walter Thompson (2006:12) describes the circumstances in which the Soundpainting language originated as follows:

> Thompson moved to New York City on 1980 and formed the Walter Thompson Big Band (now the Walter Thompson Orchestra) in 1984. During the first year with his orchestra, while conducting a performance in Brooklyn, New York, Thompson needed to communicate with the orchestra in the middle of one of his compositions. They were performing a section of improvisation where Trumpet 2 was soloing. During the solo, Thompson wanted to have one of the other trumpet players create a background. Not wanting to emulate bandleaders who yell or speak out loud to their orchestra, Thompson decided to use some of the signs he had experimented with in his Woodstock days.

During an earlier sojourn at the Creative Music School in Woodstock in the 1970s, in fact, Thompson had already begun to experiment with gestures

during that school's summer recess, in which period he organized jam sessions with the students who remained there (*ibid.*):

> Out of these sessions Thompson formed his first orchestra and produced a series of concerts at the Woodstock Kleinert Gallery. The focus of the orchestra was on large-group jazz-based improvisation. It was during these early days that Thompson began experimenting with signing improvisation. He created very basic gestures, asking for a long tone or improvisation in a pointillist style, for example.

The Creative Music School (CMS) and Thompson's years of study with Anthony Braxton are clearly formative influences on his musical development. The CMS was founded by Karl Berger, Don Cherry, and Ornette Coleman, and the curriculum included workshops for the students by visiting lecturers, many of whom were luminaries of free jazz as well as experimental music (*ibid.*): "Great composers and performers such as John Cage, Ed Blackwell, Carlos Santana, Don Cherry, Anthony Braxton, and Carla Bley gave 2-week workshop/performances with the students."

6.1.1. "A very elaborate series of chord changes"

The following extract originates from the author's interview with Walter Thompson (Paris, March 2003):

> Thompson: I really think that Soundpainting is a direct lineage of jazz, in that, when Charlie Parker came along, and, for all the reasons, he, you know, went in another direction with the music, because he really just busted his ass, and he learned all this different keys and he tried all these different things, kind of like he (inaudible) came from the facility of the clarinet. You know, he played faster …syncopation became a different thing…and then from Charlie Parker came the movement with Miles Davis and then the West Coast school, the Chet Bakers, and, you know, more of a Cool thing, and while that was going on, even Miles was leaning towards working with less harmonic structures like the constant changing Tin Pan Alley type changes.
>
> And then along comes, you know, Ornette Coleman, Coltrane, and now all of a sudden it's the structures, the harmonic structures are removed in a different way… the whole centre, as Ornette says,

> 'harmolodics,' that melody and harmony, I mean, that the melody is implied in the harmony and how you structure that, and free jazz and then the AACM and Anthony Braxton and Roscoe Mitchell, Oliver Lake and all the wonderful things that have been going on, and Mischa Mengelberg and all that people have done in Europe and other parts of the world where they're influenced by jazz and have their own thing come out of it, and then (pause) in straight lineage from that is Soundpainting (laughter), 'cause we're sitting here speaking about my frustrations with the free jazz thing and that's my own thing coming out of that, it's out of free jazz.

It is noteworthy that while expressing a sense of frustration with the limitations of free jazz, Thompson nonetheless sees this system, for reasons to be elucidated below, as part of the "direct lineage" of this type of improvisation.

> Thompson: So improvisation has gone from Charlie Parker opening up to this other thing, Miles opening up this other thing, Ornette opening up this other thing, and Anthony Braxton who was my teacher, and then it opened up with other people in all kinds of ways, people, you know, taking in Xenakis, taking in Stockhausen, the AACM[219] took in all of that, and those people were my influences, along with Charles Ives (pause) and so I see what I do as a very elaborate series (laughter) of chord changes…
>
> Duby: Yes. Yes. Could be that…
>
> Thompson: Conceptually, you know…I kind of see this as a direct lineage from jazz, not what Wynton Marsalis is doing as a direct lineage, not at all, but this, this, I see myself as directly coming from Charlie Parker. But I think I can truthfully say, honestly say, that it comes out of, you know, my work initially, from my parents, my exposure to Charles Ives's music, my exposure to people like Anthony Braxton, and that, I think, is the foundation of it.

In this section from the author's interview (Paris 2003), it is evident that Thompson is fully conversant with the histories of both jazz and so-called experimental music, both in America and Europe. His list of formative influences on his own musicking, and also in respect of Soundpainting, testifies to a high degree of eclecticism, taking in figures both from the jazz canon, as well as some of the "founding fathers" (Stockhausen, Xenakis,

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[219] Association for Advancement of Creative Musicians.

and Ives[220]) of experimental music. What Thompson is presenting in this section of the interview is a personal history of jazz improvisation from a 21st century viewpoint. Such a history acknowledges the influence of the great icons of jazz history (Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane) as well as revealing the importance of such figures as Anthony Braxton who are far harder unequivocally to classify as "jazz" musicians, in the orthodox sense of the term.

Isolating some key points from what Thompson is saying above, it should be evident that the nature of Soundpainting is to interrogate some of the assumptions and genre-boundaries[221] of jazz as well as experimental music. Thompson's work in the field of improvised music shares areas of interest with such groups as the Chicago-based AACM and the Art Ensemble of Chicago, both of which organizations exhibit a complex attitude to commonly held definitions of what jazz is about.

Heble (2000:74), discussing the kind of jazz emanating from such groups as the AACM and the Art Ensemble of Chicago, typifies a certain ambiguity on their part toward the tradition as follows:

> The new Chicago jazz, despite its indebtedness to and involvement with black tradition, then, refuses simply to posit history as a kind of autonomous and recuperable narrative. By problematizing and parodying past texts and genres in the history of jazz, members of the AACM urge us to examine the ways in which we make meaning in culture.[222]

So saying, Heble highlights one of the key difficulties raised by a

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[220] Quotation with respect to Ives's music is further discussed in section 6.1.3.
[221] The notion of genre-boundaries suggests Wittgenstein's idiosyncratic use of the term "grammar," through which concept linguistic moves are construed as "making sense" or not.
[222] Heble concludes his remarks by suggesting that the debate hinges on contemporary ambivalence toward representation: "Or, in Hutcheon's (1995:34) words, representation 'now self-consciously acknowledges its existence as representation—that is, as interpreting (indeed as creating) its referent, not as offering direct and immediate access to it.'"

postmodern conception of history and culture. Postmodernism interrogates the grand narratives of the continuity of history by repeatedly posing the question: "Whose history is under discussion?" This ambivalence toward history is likewise evident in the work of the Art Ensemble of Chicago. For Heble (2000:72-3), their work is proof of "the extent to which history, for the Art Ensemble, is not simply a realm of recoverable facts":

> The title of the piece, *Old Time Southside Street Dance*, invokes history; it generates expectations of musical referentiality. But the piece itself does little to fulfil these expectations. The improvisational and experimental stretches seem new (rather than old), and the very thought of someone even *attempting* to dance to this music seems far-fetched. The ironic gap between what the title of the piece leads us to expect and what the piece itself delivers is evidence of the band's awareness that any representation of the past, any evocation of 'old times,' is inevitably a reconstruction informed by the present.

As Mandel states, the AEC's eclecticism has something to do with their refusal to acknowledge the accepted definitions of jazz as a descriptive term for their music (1999:37):

> The Art Ensemble's slogan 'Great Black Music—Ancient to the Future' is a working strategy, by which the musicians stake claim to all the world's rhythms and any or every compositional technique as well as the Afro-American tradition of collective improvisation. Always self-aware, often ironic, and sometimes downright sarcastic, the Art Ensemble of Chicago draws on tics and tropes of bebop, doo-wop, swing, soul, reggae, South African song, minimalism, Dixieland, sound concrete and theatrical performance art, and anything else its members come upon to redefine 'jazz'—a term they deem inadequate.

In this regard, Boulez's remarks on the pursuit of authenticity are likewise relevant (2003:47):

> Today, great store is set by authenticity, by recreating the exact conditions of a particular era; to a certain extent, that can be a good thing, because in that way the score is protected from outrageous distortions. But such a pursuit of authenticity can also be rather pointless; it is wishful thinking to recreate the past exactly.

For Monson, this problem of authenticity is compounded by a linear conception of jazz history as found in some "standard historical accounts"

of its development (1998:149):

> The political contexts of the civil rights movement in the U.S. and the independence movements on the African continent surely informed the accelerated conflation of musical and political freedom, but standard historical accounts of jazz in the decade prior to the emergence of free jazz tend to emphasize a linear succession of musical styles that move from cool jazz to hard bop on an inevitable trajectory toward the modernism and musical avant-gardism of the sixties.

Thompson's familiarity with the work of both the AACM and AEC indicates a similar awareness of such an "ironic gap" in his own work. In this light his tongue-in-cheek reference to Soundpainting as "an elaborate series of chord changes" reflects ironically on the ostensibly modernist complexity and difficulty of bebop, of whom the leading exemplar was Charlie Parker. Thompson's acknowledgement of the mentorship and influence of Anthony Braxton, with whom he studied composition and saxophone for six years, similarly points to a figure whose struggles with the confines of modernity have been extensively documented (Heffley 1996; Lock 1988, 1999; Radano 1993).

6.1.2 "Free to be not free"

Steve Lacy (1994:75), in his contextualization of the free music of the 1960s, suggests its kinship with other creative practices of the time as follows: "Back in the 60's, we played completely (we thought) free: no melody, harmony, rhythm, or structure—just controlled chaos, automatic writing, action painting."

Lacy's point highlights the music's links to some of the artistic ferments and new tactics within twentieth-century creative endeavour. In reverse order, action painting harks back to Jackson Pollock, whose controversial approach to painting was to lay the canvas on the ground, horizontally, and to create artworks that depended on improvisation on the painter's part. Interestingly, in conversation with the author, the Austrian guitarist

Burkhard Stangl has suggested that the table guitar[223] concept, as utilised for example by Keith Rowe in performances by the British improvising group AMM, has its origins in Pollock's revolutionary procedure.

Historically, as Lacy states, absolute freedom of expression (as in the early 1960s) soon led to a situation wherein the music became stale, and, to solve this problem, it was necessary to introduce a set of limits or controls on what was allowable, precisely as a means to rejuvenate the somewhat static results of this conception of improvisation.

The idea of controlled chaos indicates one of the central paradoxes in improvisation as a tactical response to the dynamic tension between self-expression and the expectations of the community: a problem solved for the author in the high flowering of WEAM through the agency and mediation of the conductor. The romantic picture of the composer as the figure in whom is vouchsafed the sometimes contradictory position of guardian and extender of the boundaries of the tradition, and the conductor as intermediary through gesture, depends for its completion on the sometimes anonymous figures of the orchestral players themselves, shadowy figures in service of the orchestral *Klangideal*. Obviously, in this instance, the boundaries of chaos are patrolled by the provision of the notational strategy as symbolic language-game, and entry to the orchestra depends on the acquisition and perfection of musico-literary skills.

In free improvisation, the central problem is precisely how the composer/conductor of the sound-event controls these boundaries. In the context of Wittgenstein's notion of grammar as rules for making sense, it is all too easy (especially for those brought up on a diet of tonal music) to say that free music does not on the face of it "make sense" at all. When

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[223] In this approach, the guitar is laid flat on a horizontal surface, and the player may make use of unconventional playing techniques. For Stangl, this had quite clear connections to Pollock's laying canvases on the ground, as opposed to the conventional easel.

form and procedure are products of the negotiated micro-interactions between improvisers, as in the case of Soundpainting, and when a wide range of forms and procedures are available, one might suggest rather that the decisions are created in the moment, and the key tactic for the Soundpainter is to limit possibilities through the parameters of the gestures themselves. Górecki makes a strikingly similar point about composition in saying, as cited by Harley and Trochimczyk (1999-2001): "Composing is a terribly personal matter: the overcoming of difficulties, gaining knowledge, deciding upon a certain order, a certain method of constructing a new piece. This is important. You have to choose your way, you have to pick a proper path from an infinite number of possibilities."

Lacy's comments on the historical developments within free music are pertinent to this discussion in that he summarizes the key problem of limits and control (1994:75):

> It was very exciting, revolutionary music: but after one year, the music started to sound the same, every night. It was no longer 'free.' Then came the 'post-free,' where we started to limit and control, and exploit the kind of playing we had discovered.
>
> After some years of this, the discarded elements (melody, harmony, rhythm, structure, form) returned to the music: renovated, refreshed, wide open with possibilities. We called this 'poly-free,' because the freedom might be anywhere, in a given piece. Also one became free to be not free, if one chose.

What Lacy suggests is the element of paradox, wherein ostensibly free music could be constrained with reference to locating freedom in what must be seen as an ironic response to the domination of the major-minor system. By placing tonality in a new frame, the freedom "to be not free" was the logical conclusion of a revolutionary process in which two apparently contradictory systems (of atonality and tonality) could be ironically juxtaposed.

6.1.3 Soundpainting and Abstract Expressionism

While acknowledging the difficulties of categorizing the range of musics as produced by artists variously labelled as either "free jazz" or "avant-garde," Kelley notes nonetheless how there are some identifiably common features within these diverse musical practices. For Kelley (1999):

> Nevertheless, most of these artists not only identified themselves as part of a new movement, but their work taken collectively reveals some common elements. By moving away from traditional sixteen- and thirty-two-bar song structures, standard chord progressions, and the general rules of tonal harmonic practice, they opened up new possibilities for improvisation by drawing on non-Western music; experimenting with tonality, flexible parameters, and variable rhythms; and developing forms of collective improvisation based on linear rather than harmonic qualities.

As Kelley suggests, the range of possibilities available to the musicians of the free jazz period might or might not incorporate elements of what is now referred to as "world music," atonality, irregular rhythms, and an emphasis on the instantaneous and collective in keeping with some of the political aims of "the new thing." Kelley continues by highlighting the misconception that all free music was chaotic and anarchic in its results, and concludes by suggesting a degree of commonality between free jazz and abstract expressionism on the basis of their common tendency towards abstraction (*ibid.*):

> The music may or may not have a tonal center; it may have a fixed pulse or some recurring rhythmic pattern, or the music may be suspended 'out of time'; and there may be composed themes or prearranged rules for improvisation. In other words, free jazz is hardly chaos, and it certainly is not uniform. By some accounts, free jazz was to music what abstract expressionism was to painting, because it embraced the abstract features of postwar modernism.

In alluding to the dramatic possibilities of silence in Monk's music, Jenkins similarly (2004a:xxxvi) links Monk's compositional style with the abstract expressionist art of Jackson Pollock. Ornette Coleman was to compare himself with Pollock in a 1981 interview, as Mona Hadler has suggested (1995b:248):

> The most apparent connection between jazz musicians and the artists

> of the Abstract Expressionist generation is their shared commitment to an improvisational process. There was in fact a reciprocity between artists and musicians in this regard. Ornette Coleman, an originator of free-form jazz or free improvisation, has compared himself to Pollock, stating that Pollock was 'in the same state I was in and doing what I was doing.'[224]

Sawyer argues that Jackson Pollock practised and refined his revolutionary painting techniques in a self-reflexive and quite deliberate fashion. Despite the apparent spontaneity in Pollock's art, his approach was a studied one, in which the refinement of technique was accompanied by solid practising (2006b:17): "Pollock worked hard to master different techniques for dripping paint, experimenting with the results, and he composed his works in advance so that they would give the appearance of maximum spontaneity."

In an interview with Topper Sherwood, Thompson points to the connection between the visual object and its musical or choreographic equivalent by claiming (1999):

> Once of Cajun country and now a longtime East Coast musician and educator, Mr. Thompson says he is eager to 'break down the walls' between disciplines. 'For me, there are no lines there,' the conductor explains. 'All art is related. We can look at a painting and imagine it musically or choreographically or imagine it in terms of motion.'

The ability of seeing the potential for dynamism in an ostensibly static work of visual art, as described by Thompson, points to the rationale behind the name Soundpainting itself. Thompson's transdisciplinary impulse, the author suggests, is embodied in the paradoxical name he chose for his approach to improvisation, a name that unites both the visual and aural elements of the Soundpainting language.

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[224] The enclosed quotation (1981:140) is from Chad Mandeles's article "Jackson Pollock and Jazz: Structural Parallels," in *Arts Magazine* Oct. 1981:139-41. As Hadler concludes (*ibid.*), "When Coleman's Atlantic LP *Free Jazz* was released in 1961, it bore a reproduction of a Pollock—by then famous—inside its gatefold cover."

6.1.4 Soundpainting and quotation

Metzer (2003:23) has this to say with regard to Charles Ives's use of quotation:

> Quoted melodies invite a similar effort, as the listener links them with the past from which they come. Ever the nostalgic, Ives was not content with that simple affair. He did not merely borrow past tunes but distorted them. Such treatment heightens nostalgia by doubling the distance between a melody and its origins, since to the chronological gap between a quotation and its period of currency there is added a musical one between the transformed and original versions.

Discussing the work of the composers Berio, Stockhausen, and Rochberg with regarding to the problem of "controlling the limitless sonic terrain" their new approaches to serialism had made possible, Metzer suggests (2003:111):

> One connection which captivated these composers was that between past and present. In its post-war apogee, serialism, along with other avant-garde styles, had stanched the past, attempting to create music that could exist without the blood of tradition. Quotation allowed composers to remove these obstructions and to have the past circulate in the present. Not only could the past flow in the present but the present could also flow into the past.

Rochberg's comments in respect of the necessity of renewal share similar ground with Lacy's earlier remarks (section 6.1.1.1) regarding free jazz in the 1960s (Metzer 2003:111):

> As Rochberg repeatedly asserted in his essays on renewal, new styles, including serialism, had atrophied, becoming lifeless to listeners. In attacking these styles, he focused on the act of listening, an act ignored by most serial composers writing on music. From the position of the listener, the shortcomings of this music were all too clear. It had no expressive range, what little it could express being limited to 'overintense' extremes.

Discussing Rochberg's *Music for the Magic Theater* (1965), Metzer finds evidence of extensive fragmentation in the sense that the composer's borrowings (from the tonal language of the past) point to absences and

ruptures rather than innocently nostalgic recapitulations (2003:121):

> On these torn pages of the past is written the tension between renewal and nostalgia that runs throughout the work. Possessing the treasured means of resolution, the quotations point to renewal. That means, however, is never gained, as the borrowings are abruptly shorn before reaching a close. As incomplete sheets of the past, the quotations no longer point to renewal, but to things lost. Strewn throughout the composition, the tattered tonal borrowings as a group arouse a feeling of nostalgia. They reinforce the perception that the past is fragmentary and cannot fully live in the present.

Heble has argued in similar vein with respect to the Art Ensemble of Chicago and their performance of *Old Time Southside Street Dance* (section 6.1.1.1), in which the contrast between the title of the piece and its very different musical content ironically evokes a type of "down-home" nostalgia, doomed never to be fulfilled.

6.1.5 Soundpainting gestures as iconic signs

The practical information on Soundpainting is contained in Thompson's workbook, which is a detailed instruction manual on the first-order level, that is, of the gestures themselves. This research does not aim therefore at an exhaustive taxonomy of the gestures as signs in themselves, but rather on what might be termed the higher-order elaborations of sets of relationships, and relationships of relationships, as elaborated in Small's reading of Bateson in this regard. At the base of this argument is found the insistence on musicking as to some extent gaining its meaning from the relationships set in motion by the contextualized confirmation, or disconfirmation, of listeners' expectations. As Attali has stated (2003:5):

> Today, music heralds—regardless of what the property mode of capital will be—the establishment of a society of repetition in which nothing will happen anymore. But at the same time, it heralds the emergence of a formidable subversion, one leading to a radically new organization never yet theorized, of which self-management is but a distant echo.

For Attali, the prophetic element in musicking is its subversive component,

which interrogates the hegemony of the "society of repetition," in which mass production plays the central role. Music both acknowledges and subverts repetition, in Attali's view, and in this regard the modernist avant-garde of experimental music, free jazz, and Soundpainting share this tactical approach, a deep questioning of the taken-for-granted assumptions of music marketed as products of the "spectacle" (in Debord's terms).

The iconic element of the gestures of Soundpainting is often conveyed in a humorous manner. For example, the <rock> gesture, in which the Soundpainter clenches the fist (to mimic throwing a rock), can be interpreted quite literally "to mean what it says," but at the same time the punning visual element in this gesture lends it an ironic, tongue-in-cheek quality. In this sense, many of the gestures have a double meaning, functioning both as icons and as ironic reflections of an unproblematic iconicity.

In this fashion, that is to say, in the use of an agreed-upon system of iconic signs, Soundpainting solves the problem of the unrepeatable character of much free improvisation, which perhaps accounts for Thompson’s motivation for developing Soundpainting. Mithen (2006:119), in discussing the types of gestures used by great apes for the purpose of communicating, defines these as iconic in the sense that:

> The path of the gesture matches the desired path of body movement. This contrasts with the symbolic gestures used by human sign language, where there is an arbitrary relationship between the shape or movement of the gesture and its meaning—although it should be noted that the majority of human gestures, and many of those in sign language, also have an iconic element.

6.1.6 Recursion in an improvisation by Charlie Parker

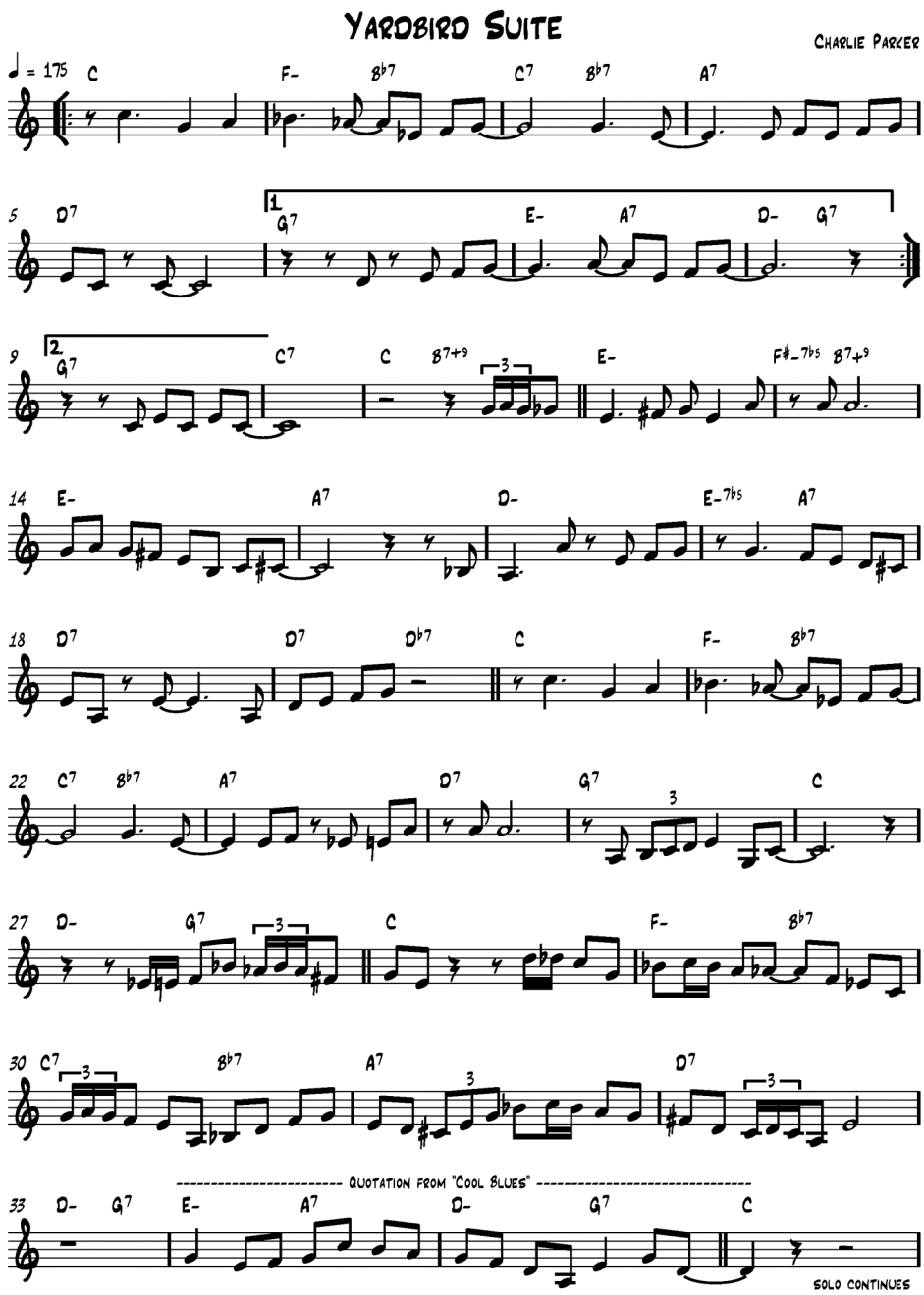

Figure 6.1.6: Charlie Parker—*Cool Blues* nested within *Yardbird Suite*

Bars 34-36 of the above musical example illustrate a simple case of recursion, which Hofstadter (1999:127) characterizes as follows: "(Stories inside stories, movies inside movies, paintings inside paintings, Russian dolls inside Russian dolls (even parenthetical comments inside

parenthetical comments)—these are just a few of the charms of recursion.)"[225] As Mithen defines the term (2006:256-257):

> Recursion is the manner in which a linguistic phrase can be embedded within itself, as in the case of a clause within a clause. It plays a key role in enabling the generation of an infinite range of expressions from a finite suite of elements.

In the case of the above-transcribed solo, Parker nests a fragment from his own composition *Cool Blues* within his improvisation on *Yardbird Suite*. By referring to his own body of work, Parker may be seen as affirming a form of what Sawyer defines as the ready-made element in improvisation (section 5.1). It is possible to construe Parker's quotation from an extant piece as "filler" material, because it is never used again in the solo, and also appears after a full bar's rest, in which Parker briefly pauses. It is also possible to construe Parker's nesting tactic as tongue-in-cheek, especially in view of the deliberately studied and laconic style of its delivery as utterance. Perhaps the most telling point about this phrase is that it is incomplete with regard to the original composition, in which it appears as follows:

With regard to *Cool Blues*, the author has suggested (1987:40-46) that this piece contains thematic links between the materials that Parker transforms in the course of his improvisation. In other contexts, the quotation may allude to signifyin(g), as in the Massey Hall concert, in which Parker "learnedly" (or parodically) cites passages from Bizet's *Carmen*.

6.1.7 A note on palettes

A central implication of recursion, as Mithen has indicated (2006:256-257), is that it allows for "the generation of an infinite range of expressions from

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[225] Although this quotation appears unnecessarily complicated at first glance, closer inspection reveals that the removal of the outermost brackets for cosmetic purposes then makes the phrase within the innermost brackets nonsensical.

a finite suite of elements." In Soundpainting, the principle of recursion is illustrated in numerous ways, some illustrations including for purposes of this argument, (in Mithen's sense of providing an infinite range of combinatorial possibilities) <stab freeze>,[226] and rather less obviously, the <palette> signal. With reference to his own *Deconstructing Haydn* recording, the improvising cellist Gil Selinger defines the Soundpainting <palette> signal in the following terms (2001:1):

> In preparing and presenting this deconstruction of Haydn's *Cello Concerto in C major*, we created 'palettes' which are nothing more than brief musical quotations from the original work. Presented in their pure form, they sound identical to what Haydn wrote himself with a few slight alterations. As they appear in the piece, they are small extractions of melody, harmony or even gesture. You may hear a rhythmic idea, small melody fragment or any other extracted musical concept presented and reworked through improvisation.

The significance of the <palette> signal is chiefly that it allows the Soundpainter to initiate pre-rehearsed material into the Soundpainting event proper. For example, in Paris, the ensemble with which the author performed workshopped a palette incorporating elements of the *James Bond* theme and topical dialogue around an imaginary confrontation between George Bush and Jacques Chirac, in which naturally Chirac emerged the victor. In performances in Pretoria directed by François Jeanneau and in Bloemfontein by the author, both ensembles used Abdullah Ibrahim's composition *Mannenberg* as the basis of another palette.

In Soundpainting, <palettes> provide a way for the composer/conductor to employ recursive tactics to return to pre-rehearsed original material, and this gesture is used extensively in the Soundpainting rendition of the Haydn *Cello Concerto in C major*, which forms the second part of Selinger's *Deconstructing Haydn*.

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[226] In this gesture, the performers are required to repeat whatever fragment they have just played.

6.1.8 Anthony Braxton and Walter Thompson

Derek Bailey describes the somewhat controversial figure of Anthony Braxton as follows (1992:57):

> Anthony Braxton, who works, as did many of his great predecessors, to extend his tradition and not merely to celebrate it, has been at various times a favourite target of the propagandists, attacking him for: betraying his race (as was Louis Armstrong); being an intellectual (as was Charlie Parker); and diluting the musical purity of his tradition (as was John Coltrane). In short, he stands accused of just about all those things which have previously served to enrich and strengthen jazz. Braxton, recognized by the musicians who work with him as an outstanding musical figure, is unlikely to be deflected by this sort of stuff but if jazz no longer values the sort of qualities he represents then it has a pretty arid future.

One of the first problems for jazz critics has been Braxton's refusal to stay within the genre-boundaries of the field. Braxton's resistance to being pigeonholed in a particular style is demonstrated by his extensive output including recordings in many genres, from opera to jazz and twentieth century art music, as well as a body of theoretical writings (*The Tri-Axium Writings*) on music and philosophy. Wynton Marsalis, the self-appointed custodian of the jazz tradition, has refused to see Braxton as a jazz musician at all, an opinion that gives away more about Marsalis's neo-classicist (read conservative) stance than it does about Braxton's status as a pioneer and iconoclast.

Braxton's *For Alto* (1971), a two-record set of compositions for unaccompanied alto saxophone, was widely hailed as a harbinger of "the shape of things to come," and heralded a new trend in which instrumentalists (typically of the single-note persuasion) followed suit by issuing sets of such recordings during the 1970s and later. Typically these single-line instruments did not provide any harmonic framework or possibility for self-accompaniment (as in the case of music for solo piano or guitar). "Recorded in 1969, this historic album was the first lengthy document of solo saxophone improvisation" (*For Alto* CD notes). Heffley

defines the relationship between music and language in Braxton's terminology in this fashion (1996:228):

> Braxton calls his solo alto music 'language music.' The way he uses the word 'language' is as people do when they say 'the language of the blues,' or 'the language of love': the particular voice with which particular sound events speak. The more general usage of the word would present trills, for example, as a *part* of the language which is music; Braxton calls them a 'language type' in their own right, a field within which (compositional and improvisational) statements can be made. 'My saxophone music,' he told Townley, 'is nothing more than language systems...which allow me to enter new areas.'

For Corbett, there are three key relationships at play in musicking, all of which are relevant to this recording of Braxton (1995:226): "There are three bodies: the body of the performer, the body of the instrument, the body of knowledge." What Corbett is suggesting is at the heart of the jazz musician's need to acknowledge the tradition while at the same time making a personal and innovative statement so as to establish himself or herself as a "speaking subject." This double bind (the tension between the individual and the tradition) is resolved in Monk's solo piano recording *Solo Monk*, in which the pianist pays homage to earlier piano stylists like James P. Johnson and the ragtime period in general in a tribute that is more ironic than purely nostalgic.[227]

Heffley (1996:228-9) sees Braxton's unaccompanied casting of *For Alto* as "a bold move," especially since the source material consists of Braxton's original compositions and assumes no familiarity with a shared body of tradition, as in the case of jazz standards.

> If he had recorded solo a full set of standards or song-form-based jazz heads, the solo situation in itself would have been a bold move,

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[227] The nostalgic element is expressed in Monk's choice of repertoire, presumably from material that he was familiar with in his youth, such as *Dinah* and other fairly 'corny' Tin Pan Alley standards, while the ironic component is demonstrated by his uncanny fracturing of the rhythmic structure of such pieces, which are punctuated by long silences and re-castings of the harmonic framework in new and sometimes shocking dissonances.

> but not without some promptings from both Western and African American traditions. Seen through the latter, it is a move resonant with the ancient and still current pattern of a collective voice splitting itself into an individual expression winging on the wind of the supportive background of the collective, then reuniting to do the same through another individual voice.

Heffley views *For Alto* as incorporating elements from the Western art "composer" tradition as well as significant traces of "Africanization" in its use of such quasi-vocal timbral manipulations, such as growls, smears, notes of indeterminate pitch, and so on, and explicitly links this timbral manipulation to ritual practices and the testifying tradition within religious ceremony.

> One sees this pattern in nonhuman primate behavior, in countless tribal rituals around the world, in the call-and-response and testifying dynamics of churches (dynamics mirroring the Hebrew psalmist and congregation, or the Greek protagonist and chorus), and in the cycle of ensemble and solo statements in the many musical traditions.

Braxton's interaction with the collective should be seen in the light of Corbett's comments regarding the body of knowledge (1995:226), in the sense that the ensemble is imaginary, and Braxton's utterances take place in the musical space of the recording studio. The author has in mind Jenkins's assessment of Steve Lacy's solo work, in which the acoustic environment is an important variable and undoubtedly has an influence on the particular sound-world that Lacy calls into being (2004b: 206):

> Lacy's solo efforts tend to be of a piece, each showing his pinpoint precision of intonation and delivery no matter what the underlying motif. One of the best to grace the market recently is *Hooky* (2000, Emanem), recorded in Montréal in March 1976. The acoustics of St.-Jean l'Évangéliste Church enabled Lacy to essentially duet with himself, in the manner of Europeans like Evan Parker.

Both recordings raise a problem with regard to a definition of musical space. Clifton's phenomenological account of music, while drawing from the WEAM tradition, sheds light on this concept by defining existence itself as a function of spatial location (1983:137-138):

> Thus, 'to be' means to be located: to be here or there, near or far, present or absent, under or above, high or low. Space is presupposed in every perceptual act, since space is part of what defines the relation between perceiving subject and perceived object. Space is implicit even in the sentence 'I experience that piece as being atonal.' In spatial terms, it can be interpreted thus: 'I (the center, here) experience (activity occurring in a specific place) that (there, periphery) as being atonal (the spaces characteristic of atonal music).' But this is a reflective statement, a result of stepping out of the indwelling act, and as such it seems to imply a distinction between 'I' and 'that piece.' In the moment of lived experience, however, this distinction disappears, such that the spaces formed by music are actually inhabited by my being there, in the space-time world of that piece.

In speaking of a "musical space," one is suggesting affinities with Ramanna's notion of "discourse of place" as well as Bourdieu's idea of *habitus*, in which protagonists are constantly engaged in the game of negotiation of identity. As Bourdieu states (1990:63, emphasis in original):

> The habitus, as society written into the body, into the biological individual, enables the infinite number of acts of the game—written into the game as possibilities and objective demands—to be produced; the constraints and demands of the game, although they are not restricted to a code of rules, *impose themselves* on those people—and those people alone—who, because they have a feel for the game, a feel, that is, for the immanent necessity of the game, are prepared to perceive them and carry them out.

Braxton's *For Alto* interacts with the past in drawing from such traditional jazz elements as the blues and the lyricism of ballad playing, and in this sense pays homage to what Bourdieu terms "the constraints and demands of the game." At the same time, however, Braxton acknowledges the influence of WEAM's avant-garde, by dedicating one of the most radical pieces on the recording to John Cage. This piece (*To Composer John Cage*) employs extended techniques such as honks as well as "multiphonics, pointillistic intervals, and scalar lyricism" in a way that is nothing short of revolutionary. In so doing, Braxton indicates a familiarity with other games (notably the modernist avant-garde one) and demonstrates an eclecticism that transcends the boundaries of the "traditional jazz" language-game.

Braxton's approach to standards is characterized by a steadfast refusal to abide by the accepted rules of this game. His tenor saxophone solo on *There is no greater love* (Circle, *Paris Concert*), for instance, displays a studied avoidance of "acceptable" note-choices, and sounds even more atonal and modernistic in the context of the fairly straight-ahead harmonic progression of the piece. Circle's interpretation of this standard, in adopting the traditional game plan of head and solos, and even the hallowed format of four bar call and response exchanges between the trio and the drummer Barry Altschul, is the most conservative of all the pieces on the album, but Braxton balks at modifying his language to accommodate this.

Braxton's piano playing on *Live at the Knitting Factory* is mostly couched in an atonal language at odds with the repertoire of standards chosen for the performance. Such staples as Kenny Dorham's *Blue Bossa*, which has a permanent place in the set list of corporate functions and wedding gigs, are subjected to a somewhat antagonistic juxtaposition of the language-games of jazz and experimental music in the context of Braxton's highly technical pianism.[228] Additionally, Braxton for the most part seldom allows the band to re-state the heads in traditional jazz fashion, thereby subverting yet another formal closure characteristic of the standards language-game. Braxton's tactic may be seen in this context as an avoidance of this traditional and somewhat telic notion of closure within the standard jazz idiom.

Similarly, Thompson (section 6.2.1) acknowledges a debt to two potentially antagonistic traditions: that of jazz, of which Soundpainting to his mind is part of "a direct lineage," as well as the avant-garde, as typified by such figures as Ives, Xenakis, and Stockhausen. It has already been noted that Thompson studied both saxophone and composition with Braxton, and a

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[228] While acknowledging Braxton's right to express himself as he sees fit, this antagonism sometimes seems downright perverse in its deliberate "wrongness."

not dissimilar eclecticism of approach is undoubtedly evident in Soundpainting, which combines this open-endedness with a reluctance to be boxed-in by stylistic parameters, and in so doing, acknowledges a contemporary attitude towards the fluidity of genre definitions. In the adoption of this tactic Thompson displays with Braxton an ironic ambiguity toward the rules of the game.

In Braxton's case, this is a not uncontroversial move, as it dramatizes this personal conflict in terms of the idiosyncratic musical space created by such tactics. As the Wikipedia entry on Anthony Braxton states:

> Even at the peak of his renown in the mid- to late '70s, Braxton was a controversial figure amongst musicians and critics. His self-invented (yet heavily theoretical) approach to playing and composing jazz seemed to have as much in common with late 20th century classical music as it did jazz, and therefore alienated those who considered jazz at a full remove from European idioms.

For Lyotard, the site of this controversy is patrolled and circumscribed by linguistic rules, which proliferate throughout contemporary discourse (1984:40-41):

> New languages are added to the old ones, forming suburbs of the old town: 'the symbolism of chemistry and the notation of the infinitesimal calculus.'[229] Thirty-five years later we can add to the list: machine languages, the matrices of game theory, new systems of musical notation, systems of notation for nondenotative forms of logic (temporal logics, deontic logics, modal logics), the language of the genetic code, graphs of phonological codes, and so on.

Although Lyotard in this case is describing written languages, it is precisely in this sense of openness to the language-games of both jazz and experimental music that Braxton is at his most controversial. These language-games may be expressed either in written form or purely through what Joseph Roach has described as 'orature.' Following the work of Ngugi wa'Thiongo, Roach has defined orature as (1995:45): "The range of

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[229] Lyotard is referring to Wittgenstein PI § 18.

cultural forms invested in speech, gesture, song, dance, storytelling, proverbs, customs, rites, and rituals."

Roach's central theme may be defined as the interdependence of performance and collective memory, wherein literature and orature are construed not as an opposition of schematized categories, but as two modes of language that have influenced one another interactively over time. For Certeau, orality is defined as that which must be differentiated from the scriptural (1988:134):

> In very diverse ways, orality is defined by (or as) that from which a 'legitimate' practice—whether in science, politics, or the classroom—must differentiate itself. The 'oral' is that which does not contribute to progress; reciprocally, the 'scriptural' is that which separates itself from the magical world of voices and tradition. A frontier (and a front) of Western culture is established by that separation.

This frontier defines and circumscribes what is legitimate within the cultural field of Western civilization, and may be seen as a hegemonic strategy for determining what contributes to progress, and what does not. In this light, written language authorizes itself by creating this division, and negating what Certeau describes as "the magical world of voices and tradition." One should not lose sight of the possibility (or necessity, perhaps) of construing this magical world as suffused with sound, filled to overflowing with noise, in Attali's sense of the term. Soundpainting in many ways acknowledges the existence of this world, not least of all in its joyously contradictory employment of elements drawn from the language-games of the participants' collective histories.

The range and variety of extended techniques employed by Braxton in *For Alto* attest to this possibility, in that the most immediately "controversial" element in his playing is not his adoption of the linguistic elements of experimental music notation *per se*, but his thoroughly revolutionary exploration of their sonic possibilities as sounds in and for themselves. For Radano, the apparently controversial elements in Braxton's music were employed as grist to the mill of the record industry's marketing strategy

(1995a:190):

> To enhance the image of stylistic coherence, moreover, publicists attenuated the radicalism of Braxton's art by shifting attention to more superficial matters. Centralizing the most diverting characteristics of Braxton's personality and creativity, they would shape a public image that on the surface celebrated pluralistic excess while maintaining the conventions of tradition. The idiosyncrasies of the caricature would, in turn, help to sell a hyperbolic story of 'controversy' that supported promotional goals while matching claims of his larger-than-life importance.

One might say that a similar process (in which the focus is on the right to curatorship of the jazz canon) animates Wynton Marsalis's elevation to the status of keeper of the jazz flame (Nisenson 2000). While many jazz musicians are antipathetic to Marsalis's status in jazz, it should be noted that he is one of the most publicly successful of those musicians who have managed to maintain a balance between classical phrasing and jazz and is rated both as an interpreter of the WEAM repertoire and a jazz improviser.

Giddins, when choosing Braxton's *Piece Three* from Creative Music Orchestra as most representative of its year of recording (1976), in a section called *Postwar Jazz: An Arbitrary Roadmap,* describes the composition as follows (2004:478-479):

> Not exactly typical Braxton, but then what is? And who else would have tried something as ironic and unexpected as this brazen sendup of a march—a piece, incidentally, that actually had everyone taking a position. The jubilant theme, which owes as much to the beer garden as the military needs, modulates to a repeated oompah figure, as though stuck in a rut.

The Soundpainting language can be shown to employ two elements in common with this piece of Braxton's as follows: i) in a generalized sense that any of these tactics are available in all contemporary forms of musicking, Thompson's language may employ satirical, parodic or ludic elements at any given moment, and ii) more specifically, Thompson's use of the <stab freeze> gesture (2006:30), described as "a CD-like skip with

the material," while producing irregularly repeated bursts of speech or music, displays a similar line of thought to Braxton's compositional approaches in his 1976 piece.

6.2 Soundpainting as collaborative process

The author examines the element of collaboration in Soundpainting with respect to the ideas of peer learning, live composition, indeterminacy, and extended techniques.

6.2.1 Peer learning

The author attended a week of workshops in Soundpainting in Paris during 2003, in which Thompson explained the basis and content of a selection of the gestures to be used in the subsequent live performances. During these workshops, a more or less constant nucleus of actors, musicians, and a dancer were initiated into the details of the Soundpainting system, and a set of approximately 80 gestures was explored in some detail.

In comparison with the workshops which François Jeanneau had directed in Pretoria three months prior to this, the ensemble contained musicians of a generally higher calibre, who were more familiar with the demands of such avant-garde concepts as <extended techniques>, in addition to the variable of actors and dancers. Thompson began by explaining the basic terminology of the gestures as deployed in a Soundpainting event: long tones, volume, and indications with respect to tempo and dynamic shapes.

The significant point is that the acquisition of these gestures in both instances took place in a group context, as opposed to the individual's more traditional development of musical skills through practising his or her instrument in isolation. In this regard, Sawyer's remarks regarding peer collaboration and learning seem particularly relevant. Drawing a contrast between this methodology and what he refers to as transmission and

acquisition-based learning, Sawyer states (2006:187):

> In contrast, learning sciences research emphasizes a new style of learning—one in which the teacher works with students in a community of learners, providing appropriate knowledge to student project groups as they build knowledge together. The teacher is always present but is not dominating the discussion; the teacher often facilitates or channels the discussion, but if students are working together effectively an experienced teacher may realize that the best thing to do is to remain silent.

In the case of both workshops, Thompson and Jeanneau acted more or less as facilitators, allowing the events to emerge from the ensemble's understanding of the gestures, rather than prescribing the content of the music. This allowed for rapid development in the degree of complexity of the proceedings, as both workshop leaders soon began to combine the signs into syntactical strings, somewhat akin to the way in which children combine simple words into sentences in their process of acquiring familiarity with ordinary language. Drawing on twenty years of research into collaborative learning methods, Sawyer suggests (*ibid.*):

> Peer teaching has been shown to provide enhanced learning to both the peer teacher and the student, and cooperative classroom groups result in greater learning than competitive or individualistically structured learning environments. Collaboration in structured, in-class formats has been shown to increase students' knowledge in a wide range of subjects, including biology, mathematics, composing narratives, and computer programming.

The implications of Sawyer's point for music education are very significant, and the author will return to these in the final chapter of this work, but let it be noted in the meantime that the traditional methods of one-on-one instrumental instruction may well tend to foster competitiveness and individualism to the detriment of understanding the different demands of collaboration within an ensemble context. The aspirant musician should be encouraged to develop an individual voice, while nonetheless acknowledging his or her place within the ensemble at any given moment, and modifying their contribution in accordance with the flow of the proceedings.

6.2.2 Soundpainting as live composition

"For me, improvisation and composition are almost the same thing; I don't see them being separate. I don't know where my improvisation starts and my composition begins—they're one and the same." (Butch Morris, cited in Mandel 1999:63).

According to the romantic ideal of the composer as in touch with mysterious and ineffable creative processes, who pursues the muse in splendid isolation from the demands of day-to-day living, Thompson's definition of Soundpainting as "live composition" may seem something of a contradiction in terms. Attali challenges this traditional (and somewhat Proustian) view of the composer in stating (2003:143):

> Composition does not prohibit communication. It changes the rules. It makes it a collective creation, rather than an exchange of coded messages. To express oneself is to create a code, or to plug into a code in the process of being elaborated by the other.
>
> Composition—a labor on sounds, without a grammar, without a directing thought, a pretext for festival—is no longer a central network, an unavoidable monologue, becoming instead a real potential for relationships.

It must be admitted that Attali's view of composition is somewhat unorthodox, for it is a far cry from the powerful mythology of the composer as genius, the sole agent of creativity (section 5.1). Cook describes the underpinnings of this mythology (2001:14):

> To understand music as performance means to see it as an irreducibly social phenomenon, even when only a single individual is involved. This observation derives its force from the extent to which the manifestly social practice of music has been conceptualized in terms of a direct and private communication from composer to listener.

Cook problematizes the "direct and private" nature of this communication as working against the "manifestly social" nature of musicking as

performance. For McClary in her Afterword to *Noise*, Attali's optimism about the future of musicking is demonstrated by his choice of terminology as follows (2003:156):

> Attali's term for the hope of the future, *Composition*, seems strange at first glance, for this is the word used in Western culture for centuries to designate the creation of music in general. But the word has been mystified since the nineteenth century, such that it summons up the figure of a semidivine being, struck by holy inspiration, and delivering forth ineffable delphic utterances. Attali's usage returns us to the literal components of the word, which quite simply means 'to put together.'

The availability of music composition software, such as Apple's *GarageBand*, which requires no prior training to produce musical results,[230] bears out Attali's optimistic claims. What he is suggesting is that access to this mysterious process called composition is no longer the exclusive province of the trained composer. Defining composition in its simplest terms as "a labor on sounds" points to a democratization of music as signifier, at the same time making few aesthetic judgements about the value of such activity.

Thompson similarly has little to say about the relative aesthetic value of his Soundpainting compositions. What interests him seems rather to be the success of the musicking as process, not making judgements about its artistic quality as product.

The Soundpainter, as composer/conductor subsumes *at the same moment in one and the same physical body* the traditionally entrenched separation of the roles of composer and performer. This division of labour may well be termed "traditional," but is a relatively recent phenomenon. As Small points out, this role division was not always the case, as, in the Baroque period, for example, the task of conducting was often assigned to

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[230] *Garageband* includes a set of pre-recorded loops which may be assembled into a final composition with relative ease and speed compared to the 'pencil and paper' method of the past.

one of the musicians in the orchestra, usually the continuo player, whose part often consisted of a set of fairly skeletal instructions (figured bass), not unlike a lead sheet as found in jazz fake books.[231]

Both these types of notational approaches allow for a certain degree of latitude in interpretation; for the Baroque player, he was supplied only with the bass-line and the chord figurations. The decision as to how to voice the chords was left literally in his hands. For this reason, he could have an arm free at a critical moment so as to indicate a cue to the other musicians. This state of affairs could only be maintained as long as the size of the orchestra permitted, and the advent of the romantic and modern period orchestras saw a phasing out of this performer/conductor by creating a new role for a human being who basically did not play a musical instrument, but *only conducted*. With the increase in numbers of musicians within the symphony orchestra, one theorizes that the job of conductor may have initially been designed merely as a way to solve the practical problem of sight lines. The musician/conductor was *inside* the orchestra, the conductor *outside*, in the dual senses of physical space and role division.

In the case of the jazz musician, when reading from a "fake book," which consists of melody and chord symbols,[232] he or she supplies improvised material on an interpretive level. In addition, in this genre the notated melody is also open to a degree of rhythmic flexibility through techniques such as anticipation and delay. These techniques, in combination with the chord-scale system, are prevalent in the teaching of improvisation at beginner to intermediate level, and allow for a degree of creativity from the outset in the improviser's engagement with the material to hand.

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[231] In both cases, the performers are allowed a degree of latitude in 'fleshing out the skeleton' by contributing material of their own.
[232] This data may be supplemented with additional material (usually transcribed from the original recording) that is deemed necessary for 'authentic' performance, as in specifically notated bass-lines or rhythmic figures/grooves.

In the case of big band charts where no improvising experience can be assumed by the arranger, it is sometimes the practice to write out an optional solo to cater for such possibilities. As these charts increase in standard of difficulty, the soloist will be provided with chord symbols, and will be expected to create a solo whether by ear or through a theoretical parsing of the progression so as to work out the correct scales through a process of deduction. Parsing in this instance will involve making explicit the relationship between the function and quality of the chords relative to the key signature by making the appropriate melodic note choices within the logical dictates of the changes.

While Soundpainting may or may not draw on the languages of tonality and musical notation to achieve its aims, it is clear that a degree of familiarity with these languages may assist an improviser in interacting with the traditions of jazz and experimental music from which Soundpainting has developed.

6.2.2.1 Soundpainting and indeterminacy

Thompson, in conversation with the author in Paris 2003, also acknowledged the importance of the work of the composer Earle Brown, who was influenced in the 1940s by the work in the visual arts of Calder, Pollock, and Robert Rauschenberg. For Nyman (1999:56), "Brown's interest in the work of Calder and Pollock, which he first saw in 1948 or 9, accounts for the two important elements of his own work: spontaneity and open-form mobility." Brown's approach to indeterminacy was through the use of new notational methods, as Nyman describes (1999:56-57):

> The 1952-3 works, assembled under the overall title *Folio*, are of greater significance[233] since they move directly into performance

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[233] Nyman is referring in this context to Brown's more determinate fully-notated pieces of the early 1950s.

> indeterminacy by introducing 'invented notations of a highly ambiguous graphic nature' which provide for a permanent mobility from one performance to another, designed specifically 'to encourage conceptual "mobility" in the performers' approach to the score.'

By leaving room for latitude in interpretation through graphic indeterminacy, Brown placed an emphasis on collaboration and the contribution of the individual performer(s) to the musical process, acknowledging the element of playfulness in this approach. Clifton similarly isolates this ludic element in both aleatoric and indeterminate musicking, and it is this factor that allows him to subsume both these activities under the same heading (1983:236):

> Still, I choose to gather both indeterminate music and aleatoric music under a single heading, since both involve the playful manipulation of possibilities. Composer and performer indulge in a kind of game whose result becomes identifiable with its process, since no one wins or loses.

The tactic of incorporating indeterminate elements as part of the compositional design of a piece interrogates the more orthodox conception of the performer as subservient to the composer's will, and, in so doing, makes room for a collaborative element to enter into an intersubjective musical space, and has much in common with Thompson's aesthetic ideals in respect to Soundpainting. As Nyman suggests, with reference to Brown's compositional approach, indeterminacy lets in the human element and places the emphasis on the creative process (1999:57):

> If one describes an indeterminate piece as one in which the performer has an active hand in giving the music form, then Brown's are indeterminate in the literal sense. Both Brown and Cage dramatize the structural aspect of process, as Feldman has noted, but whereas Cage fixes the structure temporally, and either suggests the material or (in his earlier pieces) used the *I Ching* to let the content decide itself, Brown composes the content and allows, as he says, the 'human element to operate by opening up the form.' Brown has more recently written that he sees 'form as a function of people acting in response to a described environment…it seems reasonable to consider the potential of the human mind as a collaborative creative parameter.'

Seeing Brown's statement regarding form in the light of Bourdieu's habitus,

further parallels with Soundpainting begin to emerge. In this context, the Soundpainting signals are the "described environment" to which Brown refers, and the degree of indeterminacy is determined by the specificity (or otherwise) of a given signal. In the case of the <long tone> signal, for example, Thompson's language allows for a wide range of interpretation, from completely indeterminate to somewhat determinate to completely specific with respect to pitch, for example, depending on the degree of fixity of the syntax of the signal. Soundpainting, unlike the case of Brown's composition *Folio*, does not depend on notational ambiguity to achieve its goals of indeterminacy, but rather makes use of the degree of latitude built into the signals themselves.

In Europe, the compositional activities of the German free pianist, composer, and bandleader, Alexander von Schlippenbach, have been documented in a series recorded by two main groups under his leadership, Globe Unity Orchestra, and the Berlin Contemporary Jazz Orchestra, formed in 1988. In this regard, his comments on conducting are pertinent to this discussion (http://www.shef.ac.uk/misc/rec/ps/efi/mschlipp.html):

> Many of our pieces need a lot of conducting, and it's a considerable challenge for me. I like to do it and am still discovering the subject and its implications on composition, especially for pieces with improvisation as an essential part. For example, we have a purely 'structural' piece of mine in the repertoire, which is basically about conducting. There's no conventional notation, just abstract semantic information for the players to interpret and react upon. But it's the conductor who gives the performance a formal structure, which can be different with every performance.

In Soundpainting, the "abstract semantic information" to which von Schlippenbach alludes is contained in its signals, and the realization of the piece, as in its "formal structure," is similarly under the direction of the Soundpainter. To the extent that von Schlippenbach's piece is "about" conducting, it may be said that Soundpainting is "about" musicking as process, and in this it certainly shares affinities with Brown's work of 1952-53. Nyman (1999:56) notes Brown's sympathy with abstract expressionism, as evidenced in the "spontaneous" aims of his

indeterminate compositions, and this genre of art also was an obvious influence on Thompson's development of the Soundpainting language.

Ron Thompson (Walter Thompson's father) was an abstract expressionist painter, and a cross-pollination of ideas from musicking and the visual arts is perhaps suggested by the very term Soundpainting itself, an apparent contradiction in terms in that it encompasses both aural and visual elements (section 6.1.2). It should be borne in mind that this is far from an antagonistic opposition, as a similar cross-pollination forms the root of many collaborative endeavours in the twentieth century. One of the earliest examples of multimedia collaboration is the 1917 staging of the ballet *Parade*, which harnessed the talents of many of the leading lights of the avant-garde of early modernism. This early instance of artistic collaboration, while not without its problems,[234] may be seen to have interrogated the pervasive idea of individual creativity and ownership, in turn a product of the mythology of the romantic era.

There are many instances of such collaborations during the twentieth century, perhaps one of the most notable of which being Cage's work with the choreographer Merce Cunningham, as well as the numerous examples of performance art from the 1960s onward, in which these the hitherto impermeable domains of the separate art-forms became to be seen as artificial boundaries to the creative impulse. It might be argued that the main characteristics of Soundpainting are Thompson’s emphasis on the collaborative process and his reluctance to accept the creativity myth that assigns to the composer the sole responsibility for creation.

6.2.2.2 Soundpainting and extended techniques

In accordance with Lewis's discussion of the element of cross-pollination

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[234] As Rodrigues and Garratt note (2005:53), "*Parade* involved—with a great deal of intrigue and back-biting—the combined and starry talents of Jean Cocteau, Pablo Picasso, Erik Satie, Léonide Massine, and Serge Diaghilev."

taking place between jazz and various kinds of experimental music procedures (2004b), Soundpainting also draws on the commonalities between these types of musicking. In this regard, the <extended techniques> gesture (Thompson 2006:31) calls for the performer(s) to employ radical transformations to the "traditional" sound of their respective instruments. These may include the kinds of distortions of technique as described by Corbett with regard to the classical guitar (1995a:227):

> In classical guitar training, for example, sounds that are otherwise obtainable—through a variety of 'extended techniques'—are proscribed by a set of hand positions that cultivate correct and well-disciplined musicianship. These hand positions are painful and by no means 'natural,' but—like penmanship—they require the development of certain muscles and the contortion of the hand into an optimal playing position to execute the score. Connected to this are correct postures, foot and arm positions.

Corbett's point seems to be that training in "correct and well-disciplined musicianship" tends by definition to exclude such tactics as extended techniques, which, as he concludes (*ibid.*), have the effect of rebelling against the emphasis on the physicality of sound as produced by the performer(s)' body:

> The training of the hands, their adjustment and alignment to meet the requirements of correct technique, and thus the development of musculature incapable of producing 'bad' technique, all ensure the reproduction of music outside, off the surface of, away from the performer. Standard technical facility is therefore a strategy by which the instrument and performer are both denied a certain kind of presence in the performance, a strategy by which they are disavowed as the writing of culture and thus a strategy that protects written (preinscribed) music and the discipline of the body against exposure and detection.

In the avant-garde in general, and Soundpainting in particular, these tactics of timbral "play" point to an engagement by the performers with the embodied and physical nature of sound itself, as well as an engagement with the porous boundaries between these types of musicking. Corbett's list of some of these techniques may be useful in amplifying these points, as follows (1995a:231):

> LaDonna Smith rubs a moistened finger on the body of her violin, producing squeaks and sputters.
>
> John Zorn plays his clarinets and game calls into a bowl of water, producing distorted, gurgling sounds.
>
> Butch Morris might choose to turn his cornet around and press his lips to the bell of the horn, producing wet sounds that betray the presence of both surfaces (lip/metal).

By announcing the presence of the performer as embodied producer of sound, the radicalism of extended techniques is in deconstructing the whole tradition of the *Klangideal*, in which the body of the performer is controlled and suppressed in service to the demands of performance without intrusion into the traditional WEAM space of the concert hall.

6.3 Soundpainting: language or system?

As the primary source of information for the first series of Soundpainting gestures is contained in Thompson 2006, the author will not consider the signs as first-order information, but rather examine whether Soundpainting is best defined as a language or as a system. As defined on Thompson's Soundpainting website:

> Soundpainting is the composing/conducting language developed by Walter Thompson for musicians, dancers, poets, actors, and visual artists working in the medium of structured improvisation. At present this language includes more than 750 gestures made by the composer/conductor indicating the type of improvisation that is desired of the performers.
>
> Source: http://soundpainting.com/

In Thompson's workbook, however, Soundpainting is defined slightly differently (Thompson 2006:2):

> Soundpainting is the universal live composing sign language for the performing and visual arts. Soundpainting was created by New York composer Walter Thompson for musicians, dancers, actors, poets, and visual artists working in the medium of structured improvisation. Presently, the language comprises more than 750 gestures that are

> signed by the composer/conductor to indicate the type of improvisation desired of the performers.

Two salient differences emerge in the slight variations between these definitions of Soundpainting. The first one, found at Thompson's website, describes it as a language, as in "the composing/conducting language"), while the later version (Thompson 2006:2) considers Soundpainting as "the universal live composing sign language." It is noteworthy that Thompson makes use of the terms "structured improvisation," "composer/conductor," and "gestures" consistently in both definitions. In the first place, the system of rules is actually "in the hands" of the Soundpainter, who subsumes in one person the gradual separation between the roles of composers and conductors, which reached its apogee in the late romantic period. There are a number of exceptions (Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss come to mind most immediately), but it seems fair to suggest that this division of labour is generally entrenched, "taken for granted," in the Barthean sense. Thompson's method interrogates this division by uniting these two roles in one person who directs the musicking through gestures of the body.[235]

Considering Thompson's use of the term "universal," this is not to be taken in Sun Ra's sense of music as a universal language. Rather, the transdisciplinary character of the gestures means not merely that they are inherently capable of transcending the creative boundaries of the particular language-game in operation, but that the various practitioners in the Soundpainting ensemble understand and apply these gestures in a manner consistent with their particular discipline. While it is true, as Lewis has argued (1996, 2004b) that the boundaries between these language-games are far more "porous" than before, they nonetheless exist, and,

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[235] This is aptly illustrated by the <shape-line> gesture, wherein the musical shapes created by the musicians follow the Soundpainter's movements, thereby fusing (by means of these gestures) the central elements of mime, dance, movement, and music. In this sense, Soundpainting clearly adheres to its definition as a sign language, and, as the author has suggested, conveys its meaning through non-verbal communication.

therefore, the author is suggesting that in this regard Soundpainting is an example of postmodern incredulity towards the musical equivalent of the composer's Proustian creative retreat from the world to gain inspiration in order to return with the Promethean fire of the finished product.

Soundpainting is not carried out in isolation, and the Soundpainter is able to draw inspiration from the musicians, who converse about their individual histories and personalities in the group flow of the Soundpainting event. This process is structured through the common acceptance of the permissible range of interpretations of a given gesture. Through learning the signs collectively in the context of a Soundpainting workshop, additionally, a spirit of teamwork is engendered, which fosters collaboration and creative "profit-sharing" in the compositional process. The eclecticism of the various Soundpainting productions, in this sense, is truly a dynamic function of the continuum of relationships between the creative histories of the individual Soundpainter and the performers.

As an example, during the course of the ensemble's performances in Paris, Thompson allowed François Jeanneau to Soundpaint one half of the ensemble simultaneously by dividing the ensemble into two groups, each with its own Soundpainter "in charge." This act of Thompson's in many ways points to his own interrogation of the autocratic role of the orchestra conductor in WEAM, and provides an ironic reflection (by democratizing Soundpainting itself) of the power structures within orchestral musicking.

The central element of feedback between composer/conductor in the person of the Soundpainter is what enables one to consider Soundpainting as an example of a cybernetic system. Extending the navigational metaphor to the understanding of this type of musicking, the Soundpainter in this light may be regarded as the steersman of the ship for the duration of a particular performance. His or her governor's role in this case is mediated by gesture, allowing for results to be achieved (by means of recursion) that are combinatorially impossible with sheet music, which reflects the narrative will of the individualized composer and takes place in

linear time. It has been argued (Mithen 2006; Hofstadter 1999) that recursion allows for a potentially infinite range of combinatorial outcomes, and the boundaries of this range are traditionally set by the composer, more or less "in stone" through the medium of notation.

Thompson's preference is to view Soundpainting as a language, not a system. In correspondence with the author (19 April 2006), he highlighted a very important aspect of his reasoning in so defining it:

> There are several gestures in Soundpainting which defy reasoning—irregular verbs so-to-speak. In other words, they break the rules of Soundpainting. A good example of this is the 'Watch Me' gesture, which gets used as an 'off' gesture when removing yourself from 'Shapeline' mode. Another example is the 'Synchronize' gesture—in this case, the gesture isn't initiated by a 'Go' gesture—the content is performed once the 'Synchronization' gesture is signed.
>
> In most spoken languages there are irregular verbs—the reasoning for their existence is confusing. I can't say how this came about in other languages, but I would venture to say it's probably for the same reason—in the Soundpainting language, in each case, I had to break the rules to achieve my goals.

So saying, Thompson points to the futility of attempting to finalize Soundpainting as a system with a finite and self-consistent set of rules. In this sense, he may be said to use language, and especially spoken language, as a metaphor for music, which procedure is not only indicated in the ordinary language of improvising musicians (as described by Monson in *Saying Something*), but also in the academic discourse of jazz educators, such as Rossi (2005:11) who speaks of "developing a contemporary multi-colored language for improvisation," and Campbell (2006), whose application of the blues scale in various harmonic contexts is for the purpose of developing the improviser's "vocabulary."

Another important implication of Thompson's view of Soundpainting as a language is his acknowledgement of paradox, or *aporia* within its range of creative possibilities, through his notion of irregular verbs, defying Soundpainting's rules, which themselves have to be broken to achieve the Soundpainter's purposes. His position is akin to those of Boulez and

Schoenberg (section 2.1.3.2), who similarly admit to the impossibility of total control over the material. Thompson, however, approaches this problem of linguistic or systemic self-consistency with sympathy and regard for the performer's contribution, accepting thereby that (because of the human element) no system or language can achieve perfection. Thompson highlights an element of this paradox in suggesting (Sherwood 1999): "You know you're improvising well when you don't know you're improvising well. It's like driving a car along the highway. You tune out, and then suddenly you realize that you've been driving for the last ten miles."

6.3.1 The syntax of Soundpainting

> Marc Duby: How do you see syntax operating in terms of music?
>
> Pauline Oliveros: Well, I think that it's related to what I just said before: I mean that syntax is meaning, and when something new comes along, at first it may seem very unfamiliar, which you generally find is something creative, and then in the cycle of recognition of one or two people, or a small group starting to play with it and so forth, and then it radiates until it becomes a part of common practice.
>
> (Author's interview, Johannesburg, September 2005)

In keeping with a linguistic interpretation of Soundpainting, Thompson categorizes the gestures of Soundpainting in terms of a four-part syntax that enables the Soundpainter to specify the gestures with a high degree of precision (Thompson, CD notes to *Deconstructing Haydn*):

> The syntax of Soundpainting is broken down in four parts: Who, What, How, and When. The 'Who' gestures are Function signals. They indicate which specific performers are being signed. For example, 'Whole Group' means the entire ensemble, or individual performers, such as Dancers 1 and 2 or Actor 5 and Woodwind 1, may be signed. The 'What' gestures, 'Pointillism,' 'Point-to-Point With Alliteration,' and 'Minimalism in F Major With a 5 Feel,' to name a few, are 'Sculpting' signals indicating the type of improvisation to be performed. The 'How' gestures indicate dynamics, duration, and intent. The 'When' gestures, or 'Go' signals, tell the performers when and in what manner to enter the composition. For instance, 'Play' means to come in immediately, hard-edged; 'Enter Slowly' means to

> wait approximately 5 seconds before entering; and 'Develop Organically' means to listen or watch and then enter relating to the directions of the other performer or performers.

The <who> gestures, accordingly, allow the Soundpainter to vary in real-time the instrumental combinations, from soloist to whole ensemble.[236] In this sense, the relationship between the individual and the group is not viewed as somehow antagonistic (in Lyotard's sense), but as arranged along a continuum of possibilities, governed by the number of performers contributing to the event.

The <what> gestures may be regarded as the smallest elements of the Soundpainting language, and allow for combinations through the use of linking signals, which correspond to the simple connectives of ordinary language, such as the <with> and <this (is)> gestures (Thompson 2006:39). This aspect of the language enables the Soundpainter to construct very complex musical and spatio-temporal events, by combining these gestures in any number of ways, such as Thompson's example of <minimalism in F major with a 5 feel>, which unites the elements of style, key, and time signature in a fairly straightforward gestural string. These strings may later be utilized in the event as <memory> gestures, by means of which the Soundpainter as composer/conductor returns to previously organized material.[237]

Thompson considers the <how> gestures as encompassing the elements of "dynamics, duration, and intent," thereby adding a further range of compositional and performance options to the Soundpainter's repertoire, while the gestures available under the heading of <when> indicate how the performer(s) begin and shape their phrases. All of these syntactic elements contribute to the wide range of stylistic potentials of the

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[236] This may also be pre-arranged in advance, through the <palette> gesture, for example.
[237] This instance serves as another example of the recursive possibilities within the Soundpainting language.

Soundpainting language, and in this sense allow the Soundpainter to imbue the event with a range of "meanings," in Oliveros's sense of syntax as a linguistic component of musicking.

6.3.2 Soundpainting and other gesture-based music systems

6.3.2.1 Harmony Signing

In Tenerife 2004, the author attended a workshop in which the music educator and choral conductor Nicholas Bannan demonstrated his system of musical signs known as Harmony Signing. Bannan's system has a narrower range of application than Soundpainting, as it is largely concerned with the signing of musical responses linked to a tonal system, in which the gestures are closely linked to the position of notes within such a system. As such, Harmony Signing is not explicitly concerned with improvisation like Soundpainting, but shares a similar *modus operandi* in the non-verbal communication of musical ideas by means of physical gestures.

6.3.2.2 John Zorn's game pieces

The work of John Zorn, one of the most prominent and prolific members of the New York avant-garde, has been extensively documented by many writers in the field (see especially Mandel 1999). While a detailed discussion of his work and influence is beyond the scope of this research, Zorn's influence is widespread in the field of improvised music, and a few comments regarding his game pieces may be appropriate. His most well known game piece is known as *Cobra*, and in this set of musical and other procedures, Zorn shares similarities with and differences from Thompson in a number of significant ways.

The key similarity between Zorn's pieces and Soundpainting is that both

make use of hand signals to achieve their aims. As Hamilton describes Zorn's procedures (2002:220):

> Zorn's game pieces take their titles from sports and board-games such as *Lacrosse*, *Archery*, *Pool*, and *Cobra*. These pieces are 'composed' insofar as they're performed to a score consisting of a series of hand signals, each corresponding to a type of interaction from quickly traded bursts of sound to longer free-for-alls. As 'conductor,' Zorn simply relays changes to the rest of the players with a hand signal.

However, in a significant departure from Thompson's rules of engagement, Zorn makes room for a variety of "guerrilla tactics," in which, as Hamilton describes (*ibid.*), "the players are permitted to wrest control from the conductor." Although the participants in a Soundpainting event are allowed to sign a gesture of incomprehension if the Soundpainter makes a syntactical error, this is not the same as allowing a subversion of the Soundpainter's role, as Zorn does. In Soundpainting, as evident in the ensemble's performances in Paris, Thompson's abdication of "power" is voluntary, and does not involve a struggle of wills between performers and Soundpainter.

6.3.2.3 Butch Morris and conduction

The New York cornetist, Butch Morris, has also developed a system of signals for musical purposes. Morris's system, known as ***conduction***, has been exhaustively documented (notably in Mandel 1999), and depends on a much smaller number of gestures (around 30) than Thompson's (around 750). In an interview (Mandel 1999:65), Morris describes conduction, not so much as a language in Thompson's terms, but as a "gestural vocabulary":

> Through my gestural vocabulary the improvisers and audience start to hear the music happen. You don't just hear the music happen, you start to hear it happen, and then all of a sudden, it happens.

Morris, in similar fashion to Thompson (section 6.1.1), also acknowledges

the influence of the jazz tradition in inspiring to some extent his development of a non-verbal communication system (*ibid.*):

> 'There's a great validity in having things well thought out," Morris conceded, "but there's an excitement about the other side too. I want to create something as powerful as my heritage and something very magical at the same time. If I'm not reaching for something as powerful as my heritage has been'—Butch lists Ellington, Fletcher Henderson, Count Basie, and Jelly Roll Morton among his predecessors as improvising, composing, conducting instrumentalists—'then it's not going to be meaningful in the long run. I want to create something as powerful as my heritage and something very magical at the same time.'

6.4 Soundpainting, conducting, and improvisation

"Conducting" is where you draw 'designs' in the nowhere—with a stick, or with your hands—which are interpreted as 'instructional messages' by guys wearing bow ties who wish they were fishing.

(Zappa 1990:176)

In an interview with Prasad (2002), Eberhard Weber has highlighted what he regards as the "awfulness" of conductors. In general, the circumstances of the social (and musical) space of the concert hall may be seen as fostering this awfulness, by concentrating virtually absolute power in the hands of one authority figure.

> Prasad: Elaborate on your philosophy as a bandleader.
>
> Weber: The best answer is that if there was such a thing as a second life—which I don't believe in—I believe I would become a conductor. This explains everything. I like to create the music I hear in my interior. As a conductor, you have the ability to squeeze the sounds and interpretation you asked for from 50 to 80 people. On the other hand, when I give it closer thought, I realize I'm not enough of a dictator to conduct an orchestra because it requires a pretty awful person. When you read these biographies of famous conductors, they are all awful people who fail in their private relationships. Often, it seems there is a necessity to be like that. I'm afraid my second life choice wouldn't be the best one, but I long for it. [laughs]

To some extent, this concentration of power represents the central dynamic of this ritualized space, and the dynamics of communication in conducting an orchestra, or conduction, or Soundpainting, clearly are dependent on the social space in which these activities occur. As described by Williams, conductors may be seen as custodians of the great tradition of European symphonic music (2001:38):

> Conductors undoubtedly execute necessary functions in keeping performances of large nineteenth-century scores afloat, but on a less practical plane they also invoke, through a series of ritualized expressions and gestures, the presence of the composer—the person who channels and controls the signification of the music.

Williams (*ibid.*) goes on to define the conductor's role in Derridean terms as follows:

> The conductor, then, can be understood as a supplement in Derrida's sense: the music is complete without him, but by adding to this completion he indicates an insufficiency. He is, we are to believe, someone in contact with lofty musical ideals that are unleashed at the flick of a stick, yet because they are mediated through him they are more contingent than they might otherwise seem. His authority derives from the reception history of a particular canon and from the nineteenth-century organization of the orchestra as a labour force under the control of a manager.

"At the flick of a stick", in a practical application of Williams' view, the conductor at the height of his powers is given the right to hire and fire members of an orchestra. With such overarching power in the hands of the conductor, any member entering the orchestra on probation is actually under such circumstances on trial. According to Thompson, Toscanini apparently had a particular gesture, which summarily served two weeks notice on any instrumentalist who played a wrong note, and, whether urban legend or not, this seems to demonstrate the disastrous culmination of too much power.

In the author's view, this process of communication in orchestral conducting makes the circumstances for the creation of this type of musicking fraught with tension, and reflects the ultimate manifestation of

the nineteenth-century class system insofar as it enacts a master–servant relationship, in which the conductor literally employs a group of willing slaves in the service of the composer's wishes. Similarly, it should be noted the Soundpainter is no less responsible for the outcome of the Soundpainting event, but that in allowing for a democratizing process with respect to the musical signifier, Thompson acknowledges that the process of spontaneous, collective creation is, to a large extent, the responsibility of everyone involved (including the audience). In Soundpainting, all these relationships are understood as mutually dependent, and this is explicitly acknowledged in the Soundpainter's openness to feedback from the performers, who participate as individuals in a relationship no less perhaps ritualized than conducting an orchestra in a concert hall, but one in which the element of control in its traditional sense is radically interrogated.

When the Soundpainter’s attention is focused on the individual contributions of the musicians, the possibility for feedback in the creative process leads to an emphasis on the collective process of engagement, an aesthetic central to most African American forms of musicking. In this process, the relationship of composer to performer and listener is immediate and allows for the possibility that anything can happen. In Soundpainting, the random element is mediated through the learning curve of the participants in absorbing the gestures and, to this extent, the Soundpainter does indeed play the role of conductor, by limiting the options available within the system. This is a subtractive approach which circumscribes options in a theoretically infinite range of contexts by imposing the instantaneous viewpoint of the composer on a set of events which, in accordance with the principles of recursion inherent in Thompson's language, may be ‘played back’ at will.

The Soundpainting website compares a Soundpainting event to a television set with a theoretically infinite range of available channels. This analogy captures, to some extent, the fluid nature of such an event (the possibility that “anything can happen”), but to the author's mind is not altogether appropriate, as watching television is by its very nature a

passive activity. The "channel hopping" analogy does capture to some extent the filmic nature of Soundpainting, in which events may be superimposed on one another, jump cuts may take place, and so on, but it fails to recognize the importance Thompson himself places on the collective and collaborative character of this form of musicking, in which Soundpainter, performer(s), and audience, all have a contribution to make to this spontaneous endeavour of musicking “in the moment.”

Through the Soundpainting language, Thompson is able to integrate the two worlds of jazz and experimental music so as to produce musically intelligible results. By emphasizing the collaborative and process-based nature of this musical network, Thompson humorously interrogates the excesses of orthodox conducting, in which are enacted the sometimes negative conditions of employment for an orchestral musician in the concert hall.

Thompson's "democratization of the signifier" allows for a Soundpainting event to draw from the collective expertise and histories of all the participants, and thereby to allow for a range of possible interpretations that throw into relief the individual's moment-to-moment role in the proceedings. This is achieved by the Soundpainter's ability to constitute new combinations of players through the <group> signs. Finally, it is the nature of Soundpainting to lend itself to a new vision of performance art, one in which the fixed boundaries of collaboration across genre and discipline become deliberately blurred. This allows for a Soundpainting event to combine any stylistic elements drawn from contemporary musical and performance genres in an eclectic fashion in keeping with its contemporary approach to the fluidity of genre-boundaries.

Chapter 7 : Conclusions and recommendations

> If musicking is indeed an aspect of the language of biological communication, then it is part of the survival equipment of every human being. To music is not a mere enhancement of spare-time enjoyment but is an activity by means of which we learn what are our ideal social relationships, and that is as important for the growth of an individual to full social maturity as is talking and understanding speech.
>
> Small (1998:210)

7.1 Findings

The central concern of this thesis was stated in the following terms:

How does Soundpainting operate as a system for the collaborative creation of music in performance?

Defining Soundpainting as a form of sign language opened the way to an examination of various sign-based systems for communication, into which category both orchestral conducting and Soundpainting fall. After considering various theories of the sign (as in the work of Saussure and Peirce), the author evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of a number of theoretical and philosophical approaches (such as semiotics, structuralism, poststructuralism, and deconstruction) as analytical methodologies for Soundpainting. The semio-structuralist approach was seen as a method largely concerned with the analysis of notated music, and the author's conclusion was that it exhibited definite limitations in the area of improvised music.

The author emphasized the general need to regard music as an embodied

creative process, rather than as a reified object of contemplation, stressing at the same time that this way of considering music (as an activity) is especially appropriate to spontaneously created music, of which Soundpainting is an example. In this context, the author suggested that a number of concepts derived from Wittgenstein's philosophy of language (grammar, language-games, and the notion of language as use) might be more appropriate as analytical approaches, in that they cater for both notated and improvised musics, whether subscribing to the rules of tonality or not. Defining improvisational musical activity with respect to the language-games of traditional jazz, free jazz, and Soundpainting, the author suggested that a linear view of developments within this canon is highly problematic, in that it may tend to assume a historical continuity that does not exist, given that such language-games tend to take place in a contested performance space.

A primary research sub-question related to this inquiry was defined as follows:

- What kind of musical skills should performers bring to bear during a Soundpainting performance? This sub-question is bound up with what might be termed "the language acquisition problem," as concerned with Thompson's unique approach to improvisation.

In this instance, the author, following the work of Sawyer *et al.*, argued that the acquisition of musical skills proceeded (primarily for the improvising musician) in the solitary development of instrumental (or vocal) technique pertinent to the language-game in question, and that the competitiveness that might occur as a by-product of this learning process was to some extent offset by the collaborative tendencies, so much a part of collective musicking in the jazz idiom, whatever stylistic language-game is under consideration. Sawyer's concept of improvisation (2003a, 2006a, 2006b) as embodying the notions of skills, collaboration, and communication is relevant to this line of inquiry, as are Hofstadter's remarks regarding the computer science term "bootstrapping," and its applicability to the child's acquisition of sufficient fluency to master more complex linguistic

combinations (1999:294):

> Now as sophistication increased, people realized that a partially written compiler could be used to compile extensions of itself. In other words, once a certain minimal core of a compiler had been written, then that minimal compiler could translate bigger compilers into machine language—which in turn could translate yet bigger compilers, until the final, full-blown compiler had been compiled. This process is affectionately known as "bootstrapping"—for obvious reasons (at least if your native language is English it is obvious). It is not so different from the attainment by a child of a critical level of fluency in his native language, from which point on his vocabulary and fluency can grow by leaps and bounds, since he can *use* language to *acquire* new language.

In addition, the author suggested that an awareness of the languages of both contemporary WEAM and the jazz idiom were an advantage in the Soundpainting context, as the examination of hitherto hallowed stylistic boundaries was a central issue in many contemporary artistic practices, not least of all Soundpainting itself. For example, Soundpainting gestures like <minimalism> and <pointillism> (and many other stylistic gestures within Thompson's language)[238] call for the performer to understand the historical origins of these styles emanating from the practices of both improvised music and WEAM.

An additional research sub-question was defined in the following terms:

- As it deliberately aims to include many of the possible genres of contemporary musical styles as part of its manifesto, under what terms and conditions is Soundpainting subject to analysis?

Aesthetic and stylistic issues were considered in the light of some of the artistic problems raised by the debate around definitions of modernism and postmodernism, in which the place of the artist as sole creator of the work, as well as the nature of the genre-boundaries of contemporary artistic practice, are interrogated. Within the social space as defined by Bourdieu, the nature of the power position in musicking was discussed, drawing in

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[238] These are explored in detail in Thompson (2006).

the role of the composer, the conductor and the player, and the nature of the power dynamics in the collaborative process.

A sub-area considered in conjunction with the main research question was described as:

- The nature of collaboration in creative activity, so as to describe the dynamics of the contribution of the participants in the musical process.

Although collective improvisation was a defining characteristic of early jazz, the increased emphasis on virtuosity that arose in the bebop era (and the bebop musicians' insistence on being taken seriously as artists) tended to foster competitive and individualistic tendencies in this style of musicking. In the free jazz era of the 1960s, a renewed accent was placed on collaboration, partly as a result of the avowed collectivist political aims of many of these musicians. Collaboration from a more contemporary perspective was considered as a defining characteristic of many creative endeavours, especially in the sense that a Soundpainting event draws on a range of skills, collaboration, and communication shared between the Soundpainter, the participants, and even the audience at any given time. Soundpainting moreover allows for a range of interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary approaches, in which the contributions of performers from various disciplines are seamlessly integrated into the event.

The nature of a further research sub-area was stated as follows:

- Contemporary trends in musical theory and analysis, which (in some quarters) display evidence of a radical interrogation of the assumptions of traditional musicology.

In the context of Small's definition of musicking as a process-based activity, the author interrogated some of the philosophical issues in the field of contemporary musicology, which has been informed in some cases by debates around language and legitimation from mostly European thinkers such as Barthes, Bateson, Bourdieu, Derrida, Eco, Lyotard, and

Wittgenstein. These philosophical debates were seen as relevant to the arguments of writers such as Leppert, McClary, and especially Attali, whose influence in certain areas of contemporary musicology is widespread. In addition, the author isolated a further research sub-area:

- Linguistic theory as a comparable analytical methodology, suggested primarily by Thompson's description of Soundpainting as a language about music.

In this context, the author examined some implications of critical theory as pertinent to musicking, finally to consider whether Soundpainting should rightly be viewed as a language or as a system. Examining the underlying metaphorization of music and language in the context of the semiotic debate, the author considered Soundpainting as a sign-system, both literally and figuratively, and concluded that Thompson's language reflected a move towards the democratization of the signifier in contemporary musicking.

A further research sub-area was identified as follows:

- The relationship between music and media as reflecting a triadic modality of creation, mediation, and reception.

Soundpainting, in the author's opinion, exhibits traces of postmodernism's ironic interrogation of some of the assumptions that allow the media (Debord's "spectacle") to operate by means of a star-system, in which icons are held up for public consumption. The purported individuality of this "iconic" system is maintained in all fields in which the mass media hold sway, and belies the fact that many of the products of these individuals are created through extensive collaboration with other musicians, producers, recording engineers, marketers, and so on, rather than as an entirely individualized creation. An example of resistance to the status quo was demonstrated by the formation of artist-based record companies in the 1960s, in which the attempt was made to subvert the hegemonic control of the recording industry.

The operations of a canon-system in jazz and WEAM were interrogated under the heading of the following research sub-area:

- Historically informed performance, because the jazz idiom (like WEAM) subscribes to the notion of a canon of works as well as emphasizing the importance of the creative process.

It may be seen that jazz, like popular music, is not immune from concerns about originality, authenticity, influence, and a range of what Sawyer has defined as creativity myths, many of which are pervasive and uncritically accepted as correct in some quarters. While Thompson explicitly acknowledged the importance of the canons of jazz and contemporary WEAM in the development of Soundpainting, these influences were viewed somewhat ironically, in that Thompson understands the tensions between the genre-boundaries of these types of musicking, and uses Soundpainting as a critical tool for exposing the porous nature of such boundaries.

Finally, the author examined a sub-area connected to performance and agency within improvised musicking:

- Performance and the performative, because notions of agency and identity are central to certain areas of jazz improvisation.

Considering some of the tactics adopted by musicians in the field of improvised music (with special reference to the domains of traditional jazz and free jazz), the author examined some connections between timbre and the assertion of agency in these genres. Gates's concept of "signifyin(g)" was seen as an ironic tactic adopted (mostly but not exclusively) by African American musicians to signal a protest against the established norms of musicking and the constraints of what Bourdieu has theorized as the cultural field. Importantly, Bourdieu theorizes the cultural field as a network of dynamic, rather than static, relationships and further characterizes the interactions within this hierarchy as based on conflict

and struggle (Danaher *et al.* 2002: 21-22):

> A cultural field can be defined as a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations, appointments and titles which constitute an objective hierarchy, and which produce and authorise certain discourses and activities. But it is also constituted by, or out of, the conflict which is involved when groups or individuals attempt to determine what constitutes capital within that field, and how that capital is to be distributed.

In the context of jazz history, the ideological issues of the musicians of the bebop era provide a prime example of the cultural field as a site of struggle, in which these musicians sought to define themselves not as mere entertainers, but as artists demanding to be taken seriously. With reference to Thompson's language for improvising, Soundpainting likewise places a high degree of importance on respecting the contribution of the individual performer to the proceedings, and, in this manner, valorizes the continuum of relationships in place at any time between the individual and the community, similarly seen as dynamic and in flux. By means of the <group> signs, Thompson is able to use the resources of various combinations of performers at any given moment within the Soundpainting event, and this is a further sense in which Soundpainting highlights this continuum of potential relationships.

The author's discussion of Soundpainting examined various tactics and strategies in this type of contemporary musical practice, which, in its eclecticism and transdisciplinary character, may be seen as sharing common ground with some of the practices of both modernism and postmodernism. Regarded as a semiotic system, Soundpainting moreover reveals an ironic awareness of the power dynamics of orthodox conducting, in so far as Thompson continually raises questions about the ideology of orchestral performance. It is in the nature of Soundpainting events to exhibit what Lyotard has termed "incredulity towards meta-narratives" (whether of jazz, WEAM, or any other type of musicking) by ironically placing the individual and group utterances of these language-games in a context in which their capacity for "making sense," according to

established conventions, is often humorously compromised.

At the heart of Thompson's language lies an ambiguous attitude towards history, in the sense that it allows for a Barthean "playing" with the notions of style, genre-boundaries, and accepted grammars by drawing on any or all of these elements at a given time. Understanding and respecting the canon, for Thompson, does not mean necessarily accepting it without question; it seems to mean, rather, a playful engagement with rules and regulations, in which these are freely combined in ways which highlight their unquestioning acceptance in other quarters. In this sense, Soundpainting is both profoundly and ironically part of what Kelley (1999) has defined as the "avant-garde," in which any or all of the elements constituting a given canon could be employed, often in hitherto unexpected ways.

7.2 Recommendations for further research

Soundpainting may be viewed as an end in itself, but can also form a useful adjunct to the traditional pedagogy of jazz improvisation. In this system, students acquire improvisational vocabulary through studying written texts (transcription of jazz solos), listening to the canonic storehouse of jazz styles, engaging with a large body of jazz scholarship, practising on their chosen instruments, and so on—solitary processes that tend to emphasize a competitive element in musical skills acquisition. These activities—together with the jazz canon in which individual musicians are held up as icons—while essential to the development of the improvising musician, tend to neglect the vital collaborative element in improvised musicking, in which the whole is often greater than the sum of the parts.

In keeping with what the author has described as the metaphorization of music and language, an individual (in the context of a group performance within a given musical space) needs to know when to dominate the

conversation, when to concur with the current speaker, when to disagree, when to respond, and when to be silent. Soundpainting tends to encourage the performer's sensitive participation in a dynamic act of co-creation, beyond the framework of the rules and regulations of the chord scale system.

In respect of Soundpainting's contribution to an interrogation of the porous boundaries of contemporary art, there is scope for further study of its decided emphasis on the performer(s)' contribution to the event, a tendency that works against the sometimes tyrannical assumptions of modernist musicking, in which the performer is eminently disposable in accordance with the composer's (or conductor's) wishes. In this regard, Soundpainting's trans-disciplinary character has been emphasized, and its susceptibility to analysis as a proxemic and kinesic system for other categories of performer might well yield some worthwhile results.[239]

In addition, there is scope for considering how other language-games (like Indian classical music, for example) might be integrated into the Soundpainting environment, and how the Soundpainter might deal with the conflict of expectations (between the traditional and the contemporary) that might arise in such circumstances. In this context, Jeanneau's work with traditional musicians in Kazakhstan (which incorporated a symphony orchestra, a children's choir, and Kazakh musicians) provides a point of departure for examining the range of potential problems (and solutions) offered by such inter-disciplinary collaborations.

Merely being aware of the potential of one of the most basic gestures of Soundpainting, that of the <long tone>, elevates the musician's

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[239] There are, naturally, a very wide range of proxemic contexts within musicking. From the jazz club to the concert hall to the rock festival, there are vast differences in the performance context, the sheer scale of the event, the number of people in the audience, and so on, all of which factors tend to influence the way in which musical utterances are constituted, mediated, and understood.

consciousness to a respect for the nature of the musical space in which he or she may be said to speak. As Prévost suggests with regard to long tones, the effect of sustained attention to this process fosters a deeper understanding of the relationship between sound and the musical space from which it emerges (1995:35):

> Playing a long sound and waiting for it to finish might try our patience, perhaps enough to stop the sound and turn attention away from it. But if we play a long sound and listen to it, while we have a perception of its temporal magnitude, we may never be sure that the sound has finished.

The fact of the matter is that this relationship of sound to silence (which, one might suggest, is the central dynamic in all musicking) takes place in one type of musical space or another, in which a due regard for the right to speak (and how to say what needs to be said) assumes a high degree of importance. Sometimes this relationship is constrained according to the conventions of the genre in question, in which case it is merely a matter of learning the rules of idiomatically appropriate performance, but often the removal of such constraints can be a means of allowing for the free expression and exchange of ideas.

In the author's experience of introducing novice improvisers to a small number of Soundpainting gestures, the musical results have always been worth the effort, and the way in which Thompson's language frees such improvisers from the ideological constraints of making "mistakes" is very healthy for their development. Simply stated, Soundpainting is fun, and this ludic element, besides being of vital importance in the development of musicking at a fairly basic level, fosters respect for the communicative and collaborative element in improvising.

In philosophical terms, the fluidity and dynamism of a Soundpainting event provide the context for a potentially infinite continuum of relationships between the individual performer and the group. In this manner, respect is fostered for the ultimate enigma of artistic endeavour, in which problems

may be found or solved, but the mystery can never be fully explained. In Rilke's words (as quoted in Clifton 1983:280):

> The artist seems to stand above the wise man. Where the latter endeavours to solve enigmas, the artist has a far greater task, or if you will, a far greater right. The artist's function is—to love the enigma. All art is this: love, which has been poured out over enigmas—and all works of art are enigmas surrounded, adorned, enveloped by love.

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