

Performing Newness and Nowness: Repertoire and improvisation in the Western Australian New Music Archive

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Abstract

New music is an area of creative practice informed both by Western art music tradition and the avant-garde's fluid notions of progress and structural transgression. This paper examines how improvisatory practices in new music repertoire impact the value and interpretation of collection materials contained in the Western Australian New Music Archive, a digital repository for Western Australian new music heritage items. The nature of improvised music practice affects the way that notions of immediacy, relevance and essentiality are performed and articulated in new music works. As a digital collection, the archive mediates these already mediated recordings of tangible performances significantly through its delivery. However, written and improvised approaches to music creation are also tethered to different performative modes that inform the perceived nature of a particular work. From highly conceptual pieces that utilise cutting edge technology and experimental notions of structure and form to push the boundaries of compositional possibility to the spontaneous performativity of improvised sound, new music presents itself as relevant through a set of codified performative structures. As a set of performances contained within a particular collection that is related to a specific community, the Western Australian New Music Archive also presents a mediated version of that community, presented and constructed with the assistance of that community. This paper seeks to highlight the ways in which improvisation and composed repertoire work with, around and against each other in various works contained in the archive. These works point to a range of approaches to new music creation that help to shape both a body that includes a range of works – the archive itself – as well as the musical practice of the composers and performers who have created them.

In music, as in other areas of the performing arts, improvisation is generally defined as a set of performative processes that enable spontaneous creation. As such it is often referred to as giving rise to creation without preparation, or with a lack of premeditation. Derek Bailey suggests that “Improvisation’s responsiveness to its environment puts the performance in a position to be directly

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influenced by the audience.”¹ This therefore positions improvisation as existing in a more direct relationship with an audience than a piece of music that has been predetermined and shaped through the processes of composition and rehearsal. This is not to suggest that improvised performances are unmediated – indeed they are mediated through the specific circumstances of the performance itself – they are mediated by reality. Nonetheless, improvisation presents a particular form of creative practice that differentiates itself from established scored musical repertoire. It strongly tethers itself to notions such as ephemerality originality, spontaneity and essentiality. These concepts as they relate to improvisation are problematic, as we shall attempt to address. However, as models for understanding musical performance, each of these concepts are recalled by particular approaches to musical creation – they relate to various genres in disparate and specific ways, articulated through particular stylistic and performative approaches. It is in relation to ‘new music’ specifically that we are attempting to locate these concepts, identifying and tracking them within specific documentation of new music practice in the Western Australian New Music Archive (WANMA). It is hoped that through discussion of various works featured in this resource we will be able to identify some of the structural and sonic features that identify improvised works created in Western Australia as they relate both to the creative practice of composers and performers featured in the archive, as well as to new music practice more broadly.

It is pertinent to explain what is meant here by ‘new music’, and provide an overview of the project around which this paper is based. New music is a stream of western art music that emerged in the early twentieth century² and continues to the present day.³ Drawing upon established historic classical music practices, it was similarly influenced by modernist notions of progress and the avant-garde’s propensity for structural innovation. ‘New’ in this sense denotes the pursuit of original approaches to musical practice, and innovative ways of thinking about and defining music. It therefore draws upon multiple contemporary strategies to musical creation and form, incorporating new technologies and techniques for composition. It incorporates everything from chamber music to musique concrete, noise, ambient music, and inter-disciplinary musical explorations that draw

¹ Bailey, Derek, 1992. *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music*. Boston: Da Capo Press. p. 44

² Mead, Rita H., 1982. ‘Henry Cowell's New Music Society.’ *The Journal of Musicology*, vol. 1, no. 4 (October): 449-463

³ Yates, Peter, 1967. *Twentieth Century Music: its evolution from the end of the harmonic era into the present era of sound*. New York: Pantheon Books.

upon a myriad of other styles and approaches. It is as broad and wide-reaching as the extremely non-descript moniker of ‘new’ might suggest.

Additionally, improvisation in new music differs from that of other genres, for example certain styles of jazz. Whilst more traditional approaches to jazz improvisation generally situate the playing within musical structures such as cohesive rhythms and established melodic modes and scales, freer styles of jazz improvisation also eschew these.⁴ As jazz evolves and expands its stylistic parameters, the term ‘non idomatic’, often applied to all improvisation outside jazz or world music, is no longer as useful. As an extension of free playing, but in contrast to these structures, new music often focuses on extended technique, which innovates methods of playing in order to obtain an expanded range of sounds or timbres. It also often integrates instruments not usually associated with the orchestral repertoire of western art music, and can question the very nature of an ‘instrument’ itself. As such, new music improvisation often attempts to sever itself from the established language of formal musical structure and soundworlds, seeking spontaneous expression through means that are neither premeditated nor anticipated. It is in this pursuit of genuine or even subconscious expression that is both in and of the moment that new music improvisation seeks a kind of authenticity. Authenticity is a loaded term, which carries with it a number of divergent etymologies dependent on the theoretical perspective from which it is being approached. Many musicians and musicologists would understand authenticity to refer to the accurate replication of early music performance practices in contemporary performance and recording. The growth of the recording industry has provided complex articulation of the concept of authenticity central to music formulated by way of improvisation⁵. Davies suggests that authenticity in musical performance relates to a specific iteration being a truthful rendering of a work, suggesting that “a performance is true to a work just in case it meets the requirements for being a correct rendering of that work. What these requirements are ... depends upon what we take the work itself to be.”⁶ Obviously this varies between specific works, and even between different performances of a work, but infers that authenticity is fundamentally tethered to perception. Kivy suggests that authenticity is connected to “aesthetic payoff”⁷, but stresses that there are multiple authenticities that allow the value of a work

⁴ Jenkins, Todd S., 2004. *Free Jazz and Free Improvisation: An Encyclopedia*. Greenwood.

⁵ Auslander, Philip, 2015. ‘Liveness.’ In Caines, Rebecca & Heble, Ajay, *The Improvisation Studies Reader*. London: Routledge. p358

⁶ Davies, David, 2011. *Philosophy of the Performing Arts*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell. p. 73

⁷ Kivy, Peter, 1995. *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

to be judged differently by the composer, the performer, the audience, and those seeking replication of the sonic circumstances under which a work was created or written. Improvised works access these authenticities differently than works of repertoire, due to the circumstances under which they are created. Both engage with notions of immediacy, originality and essentiality as fundamental qualities.

The Western Australian New Music Archive is a project initiated through a partnership between the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts at Edith Cowan University, Tura New Music, the state's premier new music advocacy and promotion agency, the State Library of Western Australia (SLWA), the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the National Library of Australia (NLA). It has seen the development of an online web portal (<http://wanma.org.au>), housing documentation of new music practice and performance in Western Australia, predominantly drawn from Tura's archives, but also incorporating material donated from the ABC and a range of other sources, including the personal collections of new music practitioners and other members of the community of practice that the archive seeks to represent. Collection items are included in the SLWA catalogue and made available via the portal, which links them to profiles of the individuals, ensembles, organisations, locations and events that are represented within them. The collection is predominantly made up of video and audio recordings of new music performances, but also includes photographs and ephemera such as posters, flyers, program notes and scores. As such WANMA positions itself as a repository for the history and heritage of a specific music community, and a community of practice⁸.

The WANMA project is therefore partially about cultural heritage, but like all representations of reality it is inevitably filtered through memory – the archive acts as a conduit for performance as remembrance. Of course in a literal sense the performance of a repertory work is an act of remembering, but the mediated form that these documentary recordings take also summons a specific remembrance – one that has been mediated through the process that begins with the spontaneous nature of its creation, then being captured and held, to be further mediated through the

⁸ Hope, Cat, MacKinney, Lisa, Green, Lelia, Travers, Meghan and Mahoney, Tos, 2015. The Western Australian New Music Archive: performing as remembering. In Amanda Harris, Nick Thieberger, Linda Barwick (Eds.), *Research, Records and Responsibility: Ten Years of PARADISEC*. Sydney: Sydney University Press. P. 215

process of its presentation amongst contextual information, such as the connections that WANMA provides between various entities in the web portal. One of the aims of the WANMA project is that through the access provided by the archive, works can be remembered in a fashion that mediates their existing status – whatever that may be. The recordings will hopefully serve as documentation that might aid future performances and further research into new music practice in the state. Of course the fact that this collection has been captured and archived, and is presented digitally speaks to the mediated nature of that collection. This has implications for the ways in which an actual community of musical practitioners and other participants are depicted through the archive as a mediating mechanism. Recording, or ‘fixing’ these moments demands recognition of the centrality of fluidity as a core characteristic of a tradition⁹, or community of practice.

It can certainly be argued that by mediating the archive materials in this way and placing these specific documents, or documentations together they are forced to create a collection, and this is arguably one of the drawbacks of archives. Titangos suggests that libraries, and by extension their collections, become “guides in the world of information and semantic networking.”¹⁰ By privileging specific connections they also risk creating communities as opposed to representing them. It might be argued that many of these collection items bear connections to other materials not included in this archive, which would provide key context for understanding them on different terms, such as placing them within a specific compositional or performative milieu. By prioritizing their existence within a locational and geographic framework, WANMA certainly draws attention to their contribution to a specific community of practice. Whether this is problematic is arguably up to the artist or individual whose work is represented, and to the users, who also have the opportunity to contribute to the portal. However, we are concerned in this instance with the ways that musical performance responds to and situates itself within notions of originality. In addition we also seek to investigate how various performative modes can respond to various hierarchies of aesthetic and structural choices, which often inform improvisation.

⁹ Hamilton, Carolyn. "Living by Fluidity?: Oral Histories, Material Custodies and the Politics of Archiving." *Refiguring the archive*. Springer Netherlands, 2002. 209-228.

¹⁰ Titangos, Hui-Lan, 2013. *Local Community in the Era of Social Media Technologies: A Global Approach*. Cambridge: Chandos. p. 197

Improvisation and repertoire are both inherently connected to the practice of new music. To clarify, repertoire usually refers to a set of fixed compositions that a performer or ensemble are able or prepared to perform, but in this instance I use it to refer to a number of composed works created or performed in Western Australia, or by Western Australians, many of which are included in WANMA, and many more that it is hoped will be added. It would be misguided to suggest that scored music and improvisation are somehow oppositional forces, or that they exist on polar ends of an axis of musical performance. A more traditional approach to the question is taken by Mazzola who suggests that improvisation is a result of “the perspectives that are opened when classical performance is extended”¹¹ New music practice and theory instead positions improvisation as a mode of musical practice that exists within repertoire, as one of a set of approaches that could be drawn upon when composing. It incorporates many of the structural components that impact upon the performance of composed pieces of music, such as pitch, tempo, texture, dynamic and gesture. Kenny and Gellrich propose three integrated models for how improvisation takes place. These are generative mechanisms, mental processes and learning processes.¹² All three of these processes are of course also utilised in the creation of a composed piece of music, but in improvisation, they occur within the same time and space as the performance. Improvisation therefore pursues notions of originality – positing that a performer is forced to confront the reality of a moment in order to produce something that, depending on how it is received by the audience, may be authentic or not, or may exist on an axis of authenticity. Improvisation is, according to Caines and Heble, “a social activity that cannot readily be scripted, predicted or compelled into orthodoxy”.¹³ But it can inform aspects or orthodoxy and reflect the spontaneous and social nature of live music making.

Improvisation carries with it the notion that a musical experience created in the moment cuts through to the concept of originality and authenticity as pure or unmediated far more than something that has been structured or written in a more traditional, premeditated fashion. This posits improvisation as a sort of game where both audience and performer are continually searching for a moment or moments of truth – moments that cut through both performative and musical

¹¹ Mazzola, Guerino, 2011. *Musical Performance – A Comprehensive Approach: Theory, Analytical Tools, and Case Studies*. Heidelberg: Springer Science & Business Media. p. 163

¹² Kenny, B.J., & Gellrich, M., 2002. ‘Improvisation.’ In R. Parncutt & G. E. McPherson (eds.), *The science and psychology of music performance: Creative strategies for teaching and learning*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 117-134.

¹³ Caines, Rebecca & Heble, Ajay, 2015. ‘Prologue: Spontaneous Acts.’ In Caines, Rebecca & Heble, Ajay, *The Improvisation Studies Reader*. London: Routledge. p2

discourse to offer up transcendence, or which summon the sublime. It might be argued that in this game they are playing both together and individually, and that the rules and rewards for each can differ significantly. As Daniel Fischlin points out, “Improvisation does not occur in a sonic, or for that matter, social vacuum”¹⁴ and it offers up a different thread of communication between musicians and audiences.

Oppositional perspectives to improvisation, which are certainly to be found within western art music practice, but are often more readily embraced outside of new music, suggest that improvisation might be considered an exercise in futility. Indeed, for those who have witnessed improvisations that don't gel with their particular tastes, the entire exercise can become irredeemable. But here we're talking about subjectivity, and the entire premise of improvisation hinges on the discomfort between subjective experience and learned musical languages. Improvisation's position within repertoire – indeed within the language and formal structures of musical education suggests that a definitive position on what comprises acceptable or even a “quality” improvisation is possible.

Of course the subjective experience of these moments, let alone of an entire performance is still always going to lead to multiple subjective readings of an improvised piece of music, just as differing interpretations of various compositional structures and techniques can and has been debated by musicologists. Nonetheless, it might be argued that whilst improvisation seeks the sublime, perhaps some audiences may find it in those moments that more closely recall others that they have already experienced. These moments that have an aesthetic or structural precedent for the audience and therefore work in opposition of the central premise of new music, which is the pursuit of that which has been previously unimagined, and which breaks with the established language of musical expression. Of course the same quandary can be directed towards repertoire works as well, which perhaps points to one of the ways in which these approaches are so interconnected. Indeed, Richard Dudas refers to the notion of “comprovisation” – a composite of the terms “composition” and “improvisation”, which he suggests describes works that include both a “composed element” as well as “a large degree of spontaneity and freedom”¹⁵. Some of the works discussed later arguably fit into

¹⁴ Fischlin, Daniel, 2015. *Improvised Responsibility: Opening Statements (Call and) Responsibility: Improvisation, Ethics, Co-creation.* In Caines, Rebecca & Heble, Ajay, *The Improvisation Studies Reader*. London: Routledge. p290

¹⁵ Dudas, Richard, 2010. *Comprovisation: The Various Facets of Composed Improvisation within Interactive Performance Systems.* *Leonardo Music Journal*, 20, *Improvisation*. p. 29

this categorisation, which borrows from both improvised and structured musical modes. Although Dudas uses the term to refer to works that include elements of electronic programming or pre-recorded playback, it is arguably broad-ranging enough to include any work that straddles the line between improvisation and composition.

There is a great diversity to the kinds of performances that are collected in WANMA. These encompass as wide a range of stylistic approaches to musical performance as are included in the broad definition of new music, including everything from chamber music and traditional western art music through jazz and non-western influenced musics, as well as experimental forms of rock and electronic music, noise. The specific performances collected within the archive often relate to the nature of the piece being performed, and also to the nature and circumstances of the performance itself. Variations in different performances of a work shift its relationship with its audience, and with our conception of the work itself, both in terms of its relationship to an authentic or definitive “version” of a work, as well as to its fundamental nature in terms of form and structure. Which is the definitive performance of a work? Does there have to be one? These are the kinds of questions that are regularly asked of western art music, and they are questions that are at the core of the WANMA project.

As an example, the archive includes five recordings of the piece ‘Asp’ (2006) composed by Iain Grandage, performed by Grandage’s ensemble Wood on a tour of the Kimberley region of north-western Australia in 2006. This is a highly structured piece of chamber music in the form of a tango for percussionist and four cellists, with individual parts written for each of the musicians. However, the performance of the piece varies considerably between each of these recordings, which take place in different locations and circumstances. Some of these circumstances include performances for predominantly adult audiences at formal events presenting the music as a programmed recital, for audiences comprised almost exclusively of school children at schools and with an educational focus, and for audiences including both demographics, performed as semi-formal free public performances for the members of specific indigenous communities. For example, the piece is performed for predominantly adult audiences at two performances in Broome. During these performances

Grandage prefaces the music with a story about the song's origin, indicating that the piece has a programmatic connection to this story.¹⁶

He tells the tale of a man who is killed by a strangulating python that he has captured and is showing off to his village somewhere in South America – a story he came across when viewing the Darwin Awards website¹⁷, which details with humour the misfortunes of those who have died through acts of stupidity. The ensemble then perform the piece as written, and all of the musical performances, aside from a few subtle differences, are performed identically to one another, in the same tempo, with the same affect and tonal qualities. However, during a performance to school children at the One Arm Point Remote Community School, Grandage instead provides a simplified introduction to the piece, eschewing his mention of the Darwin Awards, presumably for the benefit of his young audience, and instead narrates over sections of the piece throughout, explaining the actions in the story taking place at key points in the piece as they are performed by the ensemble. In this instance the specific performance being depicted provides an additional layer of exposition, with the narrative to which the work relates being elucidated over the musical performance for the benefit of a specific audience – a detail which is arguably considered extraneous and unnecessary for an adult audience, but which provides a further conceptual hook for audiences of school-aged children. During another performance at the Djarindjin/Lombadina Christ the King Catholic School, during which the ensemble are clearly competing with crowd-noise and a gaggle of children moving around immediately in front of them, Grandage provides another protracted introduction and this time abstains from a narration over the piece altogether, perhaps as a reaction to what might be interpreted as a distracted or disengaged audience.

It's worthwhile to note the various ways in which a programmatic piece of music with a written score can still be subject to a form of unplanned improvisation, brought to bear by the nature of the performance circumstances, somewhat related to Christopher Small's concept of "musicking"¹⁸. In this instance the improvisation in question is still performative – and relevant to the structure of the

¹⁶ Program music is a genre of music where the musical material and structure are taken from other material, such as a painting, story, or play.

¹⁷ The Darwin Awards. <http://www.darwinawards.com/> (Accessed 20/02/2017)

¹⁸ Small, Christopher. 1998. *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. Hanover: University Press of New England

performance, even if it is not musical in nature. Nonetheless, these variations impact the performance considerably and shift the work's relationship with its audience, and with our conception of the work's fundamental or definitive form, again summoning questions around what that form might be. This case provides an example of how improvisation often works in service of these questions.

Lindsay Vickery is another Western Australian composer from a similar era to Grandage, and is well represented within the archive. He has been composing new music works since the 1980s, and dozens of audio and video performances of his pieces are accessible via the WANMA web portal. The archive includes a recording of a performance of Vickery's 2003 piece 'Exit Points' conducted by Vickery and performed by his new music ensemble Grit at Tura New Music's regular experimental music night Club Zoo. As Vickery points out, the piece "grew out of a period developing new methods of using improvisation to examine musical material"¹⁹ 'Exit Points' is based around a nine-beat melodic cycle, which includes every beat subdivision from a single beat to a quintuplet, in which five notes are played in the time of one. The melodic cycle provides a platform from which players are able to exit and re-enter, using a different tempo each time.

In 'Exit Points' the elements of improvisation are forced into contrast and commune with that of structured material. Whilst it's possible that two separate performances of 'Exit Points' could be performed identically, the point of the piece is that they don't have to be – that the piece is able to expand beyond and shift around the parameters of what is written. Obviously, the musicians make choices that are dependent on the specific performative circumstances that they find themselves in at a particular moment, and during a particular performance. Each performance is likely to involve different choices and interactions with the scored material. This shifts and locates the final form of each performance within its own context, and of course leaves the actuality of the piece as a constantly moving entity with its own life outside of, but also because of the score.

Graphic scores are an area of musical notation that the ensemble Decibel, to which Vickery is a founding member, have explored significantly, having commissioned numerous graphic scores and developed a graphic score reader as an application for tablet computers, the Decibel ScorePlayer.

¹⁹ Vickery, Lindsay, 2012. *exit points [2003] from interXection: chamber music VI [2002-2003]*. <http://lindsayvickery.bandcamp.com/track/exit-points-2003> (Accessed 27/07/2016)

Defined as the representation of music through the use of visual symbols outside the what would normally be expected in traditional Western Art music notation²⁰, graphic scores can present a range of freedoms for performers not usually afforded by more common practice notations. As Nathan Thompson suggests, “graphic scores form a relationship with sound which can evolve and adapt through use”²¹, and thus provide an opportunity to avoid a constant semiotic interpretation. Many graphic scores can be interpreted differently by each individual performer, it as well as variations being possible in each successive performance of the piece by the same performer. Graphic scores offer a large range of possible interpretations, from very free to quite controlled. The important difference between them and improvisation is that the composer, distinct from the performer, has some degree of conception in the work. Graphic notations offer up a much wider range of choices for the performer than traditional notations, which often – but not always – include elements of improvisation, or some degree of choice.

What follows are two examples of graphic notation that engage with improvisation in different ways: ‘ForeverAloneTogetherOr’ (2012), a composition by Chris Cobilis commissioned by Decibel, and ‘Flock’ (2016) by Eduardo Cossio.

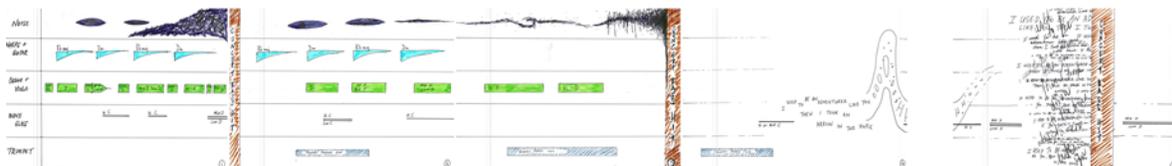


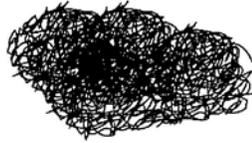
Figure 1. Score for Chris Cobilis’ ‘ForeverAloneTogetherOr’ (2012)

20 Pryer, Anthony. ‘Graphic Notation. In Alison Latham (ed).’The Oxford Companion to Music. Ed. Alison Latham. Oxford Music Online.

21 Thompson, Nathan, 2009. ‘Navigation – Graphic directions in sound’. *Scope (Art & Design)*, Issue 4. p. 9

Flock (2016)
Eduardo Cossio

I. Drone: blend of soft, indistinct sounds. From a great distance.



III. Zooming in: introduce articulation, play with others



II. Introduce a sudden jerk in your sound. Sparseness dominates.



IV. Very short section: gather impulse and take off with a big wide gesture



Figure 2. Score for Eduardo Cossio's 'Flock' (2016)

In the Cobilis work, the progression of the piece in time can be tracked along the horizontal axis, and the coordination of the performers through this is facilitated by the ensemble's ScorePlayer application. The Score Player provides a 'performance point' for every moment of the piece, by sweeping a vertical line across the piece at a constant and fixed tempo for the entire piece, not unlike a tape head over tape²². While the instrumentation and duration of the work is fixed, and some pitches are provided as a guide, many other elements, such as texture, attack and dynamics, are free. The score evolved from an audio recording of an improvisation, which was then 'described' by the improviser into the score, for others to perform. In this instance the score exists as a representation or depiction of an idealised performance, and successive performances aim not necessarily to replicate it, but to use the score as a conduit for commenting upon or interpreting the original, albeit by performers who may not necessarily be aware of it. Cobilis' work then, exists as an exercise in

²² Hope, Cat, Wyatt, Aaron and Vickery, Lindsay, 2015. 'The Decibel ScorePlayer - A digital tool for reading graphic notation'. In *Proceedings of TENOR, First International Conference on Technologies for Music Notation and Representation*. Institut de Recherche en Musicologie, IReMus Paris, France, May 2015 p 60

tracing the ephemeral nature of improvisation, of the supposed idealised nature of that which has escaped our reach, which is somehow beyond recall and exists only in the realm of memory. Cossio's work however, was written before any kind of performance had taken place. It comprises four distinct movements with no designated length for each, and the instrumentation, approach to instrumentation, length of each movement and length of the piece itself are all open within the structure of the piece, and for each performance. With no means of tracking the work against a specific timeframe the piece is capable of expanding or protracting around the preferences of the performers, and with only a single diagram and simple text instruction for each movement, the score is 'read' differently to a piece which exists upon a temporal axis. Each of these pieces enables a performance with a range of choices for the performers, creating ephemeral qualities, but the nature and extent of that ephemerality is different for each.

The limits of a piece are bound to the moment in which it is being performed. And it follows that each recording captures this different 'version' of the piece as it was played by that ensemble at that date and time. Nonetheless, these pieces could be considered repertory works, which exist with their own codified language of temporality and tangibility. Their existence within this archive creates the possibility for particular versions to become definitive or more relevant than other versions outside the archive, but also offers the opportunity for this to shift and change. This recalls Lessig's assertion that in the digital realm a definitive version can and will never exist²³. Importantly, their inclusion within the archive mediates their status as works of repertoire. Unlike the Grandage example earlier, the different versions do not refer back the score as a definitive version. Each performance is in itself a definitive version, and the scores enable and indeed encourage this view. This recalls both Benjamin's work on the ways in which reproduction mediates works²⁴, as well as Adorno's theory of philosophical and aesthetic truth, which posits that truth is produced when performances mediate or interfere with consciousness.²⁵ These performances are not decorated versions, adapted to respond to different audience conditions. Their shaping by performers is an

²³ Lessig, Lawrence, 2004. *Free Culture: How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity*. New York: Penguin

²⁴ Benjamin, Walter, 2010. *The work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility [first version]*. *Grey Room*, (39), pp.11-37.

²⁵ Adorno, Theodor, 1984. *Aesthetic theory*. Edited by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann. Translated by C. Lenhardt. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

integral part of the works' aims. The different versions are a direct result and intention of the method of scoring, and as such, the recordings have radically different relationships to that score.

The WANMA project has included the curation of a performance series aimed at both adding new material to the archive, as well as activating spaces in the State Library of Western Australia building bringing performance into the library. This has required a negotiation of several elements, including the ways in which musical performance 'fits' into a space that was not acoustically designed to support music, and the relationships between public audiences and the codified language of art music performance. The relationships of creating, archiving, performing and experiencing are interrogated and reshaped, creating new content for the archive. In this way, the library is thus repositioned as a subject within the collection that it also houses, posing an interesting reinterpretation of the role of archives, and providing the performances themselves with an additional layer of context. In one particular program, 'Sounding Space | Space Sounding' performed by a collective of Perth improvising musicians, a selection of pieces, both written and wholly improvised were performed in various public spaces around the library simultaneously over the course of an hour, with small improvising ensembles and solo performances taking place across the library's four floors, and all members convening to performed several scored pieces at the performance's conclusion. These performances reconfigured the purpose for the structure of the building and its inhabitants. The performers used the multi-level space as both a generative mechanism and a cue for improvisation, making it a fundamental element of this performance and thus of this "version" of the pieces being performed.

'Kinabuhi | Kamatayon' (2016) by Stuart James is a piece that has been performed by James himself on electronics with Louise Devenish on percussion both in the state library, and elsewhere. This piece combines scored and improvised elements, and exemplifies the diverse potential of such repertoire to influence the nature of performance. The piece is for Indonesian gamelan gongs and electronics, with the gamelan part fully notated, with some sections leaving the tempo up to the performer. However, the electronics part in three of the five sections is almost completely improvised, and relies on the electronics performer to choose how to process the live sampling of the gamelan instruments. The electronics intentionally incorporate the acoustic qualities of the room in which the piece is being performed to create a feedback loop that is then processed in a way

chosen by the computer musician, and played back. The part therefore changes according to the size and shape of the room in which the piece is being played, even if the processing technique used was the same, and aspects such as the positioning of microphones in respect to the gamelan change the electronic processing radically. Whilst some sampling cues do exist in order to capture specific performance cues of the gamelan part in these sections, they are left open ended in terms of their duration.

In a recording of the piece being performed at the Astor Lounge, a small cinema space with acoustically treated walls in the suburbs of Perth, the gamelan instruments present a clear and stable timbre. However, in a recording of the performance made at SLWA there is a significantly different timbre to the sound of the acoustic instruments, which are tinnier and more resonant. This sonic difference also translates to the accompanying live processed electronic part. Here the space itself mediates the performance, with the nature of the acoustic space shaping the sonic quality of the electronic part significantly, as well as acting as a receptacle for the physical and sonic containment of the work. Whilst this is the case for all performance spaces, and all works, this work in particular attempts to draw this interaction between sonic phenomena and acoustic space out, emphasise it, and enable it as an element that can be emphasised in an improvised manner, allowing improvisation to occur in response to the sound of a room.

These various works all operate around improvisation as a means of engaging with structured musical repertoire and pushing its limits outside of the established language of musical expression. This takes place across a range of structural means, from scores that promote and encourage the use of extended performance technique to the use of chance, to scores that provide impressionistic instructions that are open to individual interpretation as opposed to rigidly structured notation. The interplay between repertoire and improvisation in new musical works proposes a number of shifts in considering musical language. These include the ways in which the performance of that language relates to a work as a conceptual ideal, and to the relationship between a musical work and the temporal and physical space in which it is being performed. These are the kinds of authenticities that new music strives to reconceptualise.

The nature of improvised music practice affects the way that notions of tangibility and authenticity are performed and articulated in new music works. As a digital collection, WANMA adds another

layer of mediation to these already mediated recordings of real performances significantly through its digital delivery. In collecting and curating documentation of new music activity, and drawing attention to connections between these documents, the WANMA web portal adds contextual layers that shift the way in which these items are able to be experienced. As a result this mediation impacts the documented performances, allowing them to be filtered through these layers of context. However, written and improvised approaches to music creation are also tethered to different performative approaches that inform both the immediacy of a particular work, as well as perception of a definitive version of it. New music presents itself as relevant through a set of codified structures that are indelibly linked to performance theory. Resources such as WANMA allow us the reflexivity to understand how once captured and mediated, these works offer a particular notion of what the performative realities of new music might be, and how we can reconcile different modes of performance as embodied in an archive. However, it is perhaps also worthwhile to emphasise that living archives such as WANMA are also an exciting tool for providing access to and facilitating research and broader discussion in and around the communities of practice that they seek to represent.

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