New Methods for Developing Collaboration in Environmental Composition

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Ethics Statement

This study was approved by the Bath Spa University Ethics Panel on 19.08.2021. Should you have any concerns regarding ethical matters relating to this study, please contact the Research Support Office at Bath Spa University (researchsupportoffice@bathspa.ac.uk).

Dataset Statement

No new datasets were created during the study.

Abstract

This practice-based PhD research explores the intersections of noise, socially engaged art, and trespass, culminating in the development of an approach to experimental composition termed 'socially curious composition'– an inclusive, collaborative model that fosters creativity. The commentary begins with an exploration into environmental sounds and a critical examination of acoustic ecology, laying the foundation for a study of noise. By challenging the subjectivity in sound categorisation through noise, this work seeks to reconceptualise our understanding of community dynamics and connections within local audible environments.

This research represents a significant transition in my work from traditional composer-performer hierarchies towards a model that emphasises the creative autonomy of all participants. This framework broadens the artistic contributions of everyone involved in the creative process. My methods position performers and audience members as indispensable, and I detail how principles from socially engaged art can enhance these connections. I trace an evolutionary trajectory from initial investigations of acoustic ecology to the present application of socially engaged composition methods, highlighting how this progression enriches experimental composition discourse.

I also undertake an exploration of 'trespass' to confront and transcend the boundaries encountered by a socially curious approach. Trespass is positioned as a mechanism to leverage curiosity in diluting noise as a barrier, suggesting new possibilities for engagement with local environments, and enabling navigation beyond perceived barriers.

This research contributes to the field of experimental composition by focusing on my progression as a composer and its impact on my compositions. Though these insights may not be universally applicable, they offer a unique perspective on the creative process. The concept of 'socially curious composition,' though still in its nascent stages, presents an approach with potential to influence the broader field of experimental composition. This research promotes a process and product-oriented approach, recognising that the subjectivity in evaluating effectiveness allows for the appreciation of diverse outcomes across various social contexts.

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List of Figures

List of Works in Portfolio

This commentary is accompanied by a folder titled 'compositions'. Within this main folder, every submitted composition should have its own individual subfolder.

Each of these subfolders contains two components: the score and a performance of the composition. The performance is either a video file or an audio file.

If the composition has a video performance, it will be labelled as: 'video performance of [composition title]. If the composition has an audio-only performance, it will be labelled as: 'audio-only performance of [composition title].

Each composition score is provided in a PDF format.

Pieces are listed in the order they appear in the commentary discussion

1. *electric guitar, in Southmead*   2018   15'

   Electric guitar
   Written with Ben Jameson
   First performed at Post-Paradise Concert Series
   in the Centrala Gallery
   19 March 2019, Birmingham

2. *With Juliet*   2019   16'

   Soprano voice
   Written with Juliet Fraser

3. *Filtered Reality (location and date)*   2020   6'40"

   Double bass and Ableton
   Written with Daniel Molloy
   Recorded on 29 June 2020, London

4. *Home & Away Chords*   2021-22   18'

   Viola, Voice, and 15 portable speakers
   Written with Caitlin Rowley
   Recorded at Bath Spa University TV studio
   13 July 2022, Bath

5. *Locating and Listening, Playing and Stopping*   2019   9'

   Version 1: four vibraphones
   Version 2: four tuned instruments
   Written for Nebula Percussion Quartet
   First performed at Guildhall School of Music &
   Drama
   16 May 2019, London

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1: Introduction

This commentary is divided into five main chapters, followed by a conclusion. Following this introduction, chapter 2 provides context with a discussion on environmental noise and listening. Then, chapter 3 links my composing to socially engaged art[1] and introduces 'socially curious' composition, an approach that maintains creative autonomy while building relationships with individuals or groups. Chapter 4 focuses on compositions for solo musicians, exploring how compositions can create personal connections between composer, performer, and musical material. It is here that I shape my understanding of curiosity and composer-performer boundaries. Chapter 5 explores ensemble compositions, focusing on the social behaviours that emerge when groups perform together while encountering noise as a form of interference. Finally, chapter 6 explores in depth the theme of trespass as a cultural and musical barrier, presenting a final composition and exploring the ideas of interference, disruption, and barriers – both physical and metaphorical – as well as permission.

1.1   Compositional Background and Motivations

The core drive of my work as a composer stems from my interest in environmental sounds and their potential to reshape our comprehension and perception of our surroundings. An early immersion in the field of acoustic ecology led me to explore field recordings as a creative medium, and a way to engage myself and others in soundscapes. However, upon encountering critiques of acoustic ecology's limited engagement beyond personal value judgements,[2] I felt compelled to shift my approach significantly. Moving away from having myself as the subject of my composing and my subjective experiences of listening to and making field recordings, I turned to the theory of noise. This shift was driven by the realisation that noise, by its very nature, confronts the subjective categorisation of sounds, offering a new perspective to challenge and broaden our relationship with sounds and communities. This curiosity about our relationships to sound and people evolved towards wanting to learn more about others, to share, discuss, and create collaboratively. As this PhD unfolded, a theme of trespass emerged, developing into a critical part of my exploration. The intersections of noise, curiosity, and notions of trespass now stand as integral components of my research, framing my enquiry into how auditory experiences might expand our understanding of how we interact with each other and our surroundings.

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[1] In this project, I align with the definition provided by Tate Modern for socially engaged practice, which is defined as 'art that is collaborative, often participatory and involves people as the medium or material of the work.' Tate Modern, 'Socially Engaged Practice' accessed 5 June 2022, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/s/social-turn.

[2] Marie Suzanne Thompson, "Beyond Unwanted Sound: Noise, Affect and Aesthetic Moralism" (thesis, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 2014), 121.

This commentary explores the relationship between experimental composition[3], socially engaged art, and the composer-performer dynamic. In contemporary music practices, compositions are frequently written with a specific performer, group, or performance in mind. As a result, the composer typically holds the responsibility for the direction of the piece, determining its intention, duration, material choice, design, etc. The performer often serves as a specialist, guiding the composer towards making the piece playable while staying true to the original intentions of the work. However, sometimes the performer's input can drastically alter the course of the composition, leading to something even more wonderful and interesting than the composer initially envisioned. This is what drives my passion for composition - the desire for conversation, sharing, and the development of a socially curious nature that impacts the creative process. In section 3.6.1, I discuss the notion of authorship in this context and what it means to label myself 'the composer' when writing such works.

Throughout this commentary I will investigate what happens when these creative social moments become the reason for writing a composition. In some cases, the person or a conversation may be the inspiration for a work, while in others, a group of musicians enact these conversations in performance. I make the distinction between two types of works: compositions for solo performers and compositions for groups. The distinction is made in this project as it highlights the different approaches and considerations that I take when composing for each respective setting and allows for a deeper exploration of the different elements that shape the compositional process and the resulting performance.

Compositions for solo performers allow for a more personal connection between the composer, performer, and compositional material. This is primarily because the process of creating for a specific performer necessitates a deep understanding of their interpretative approach, personal aspirations, and idiosyncrasies. As the performer's experience and individual style intersect with the intentions of the piece, the compositional material undergoes a complex process of transformation. By focusing more deeply on the connection with individual performers in solo works, I am able to explore private and personal connections that arise during the creative process. Conversely, compositions for groups bring attention to the social behaviours and dynamics that emerge when multiple performers are involved.

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[3] When I refer to 'experimental composition' in this commentary, I align with the ideas presented by Michael Nyman and more recently by Jennie Gottschalk. This approach is also elegantly described by Christian Wolff, as cited in a conversation with Samuel Vriezen: 'These days, the formula that I come up with is that experimental music, quite apart from its actual technical procedures and all that, is a kind of music which suggests to people the possibility of change. That things don't have to be the way they are, to the extent that the way they are is no good.' Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, 2nd ed, (Cambridge; England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Jennie Gottschalk, *Experimental Music Since 1970* (New York: London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016); Samuel Vriezen and Christian Wolff, 'A Transitional Operation: Samuel Vriezen in Conversation with Christian Wolff,' in *Aesthetic Justice: Intersecting Artistic and Moral Perspectives*, ed. Pascal Gielen and Zoe Beloff, Antennae, no. 14 (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2015), 90.

Furthermore, the creative process for group compositions is intended to be more evident for an audience. These pieces are therefore designed to be more transparent, offering a clearer expression of their intention. Throughout my commentary on these pieces, I look to understand the impact of these social interactions on the compositional process. By exploring the relationship between the composer, the performer, and the environment in which the composition is performed, I aim to develop a better understanding of how these interactions shape my creative process.

Although primarily situated within experimental composition, my pieces share certain characteristics with the field of socially engaged art. In this field, practitioners often strive to create meaningful and lasting relationships with the communities they work alongside, often through collaboration, participation, and dialogue outside of traditional art institutions.[4] However, some critics argue that socially engaged art can be difficult to define and may be less rigorous than more traditional art forms. Art historian Claire Bishop, for example, is critical of certain types of socially engaged art that are uncritical of the systems and structures they aim to challenge. She contends that socially engaged art should be held to the same critical standards as other forms of contemporary art and that its political impact should be carefully evaluated.[5] This commentary asserts that, whilst socially engaged art is necessarily important (especially when engaging with participants in local environments), when seeking to bridge the gap between the art world and wider society, the individual experiences of the composer should be given a certain level of autonomy. This allows for the composer to critically engage with the participatory experience and provides a creative space for taking interesting and perhaps daring artistic decisions during the compositional process.

There is a wealth of contemporary composers that have explored participatory processes that foster connections with performers and audiences and produce musical works. In the 1970s, Pauline Oliveros began developing *Deep Listening* pieces that are designed to be forms of guided meditation, and improvisation, through the experience of deep listening among all participants.[6] In Cassandra Miller and Juliet Fraser's *Tracery* (2017), Fraser performs a body scan meditation while mimicking what she hears in her headphones, exploring a deep connection between the body, deep listening, and meditation.[7] In her current compositional practice, Éliane Radigue collaborates with musicians such as Carol Robinson, Dominic Lash, and Julia Eckhardt, moving away from electroacoustic composition towards a more intimate

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[4] Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (New York: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011) 1-3.
[5] See, Claire Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', *October* 110 (October 2004): 51-79, https://doi.org/10.1162/0162287042379810.
[6] Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice* (New York, NY: iUniverse, 2005), 1.
[7] Cassandra Miller, 'Tracery: Lazy, Rocking,' Cassandra Miller, accessed 20 July 2020, https://cassandramiller.wordpress.com/2017/02/07/tracery/.

and private collaboration between composer and performer.[8] Leah Barclay's *River Listening*, a large-scale sound installation and augmented reality experience, invites audiences to actively listen and engage with the sounds of rivers around the world through collaboration with scientists, Indigenous communities, artists, and sound designers.[9] Composers such as Brona Martin continue to explore techniques pioneered by the project in community-focused workshop projects like *Sowing Seeds* (2018), which allows for autonomous work in response to reflections on collaborative processes when engaging with local environments within a community music setting.[10]

1.2 Research Questions

In a conscious departure from making myself the subject of my compositions, I have been seeking a compositional methodology that facilitates a careful approach to collecting and evaluating field recordings, one that is not predominantly influenced by my personal value judgements. This approach aims to present a more connected view of local audible environments, allowing interactions with other people to guide the creative decisions rather than my own subjective experiences. In order to investigate these issues, my research is structured around a series of key questions. These questions revolve around the creative potential of field recordings and their capacity to enhance listeners' engagement with their sonic environments. They look at the integration of socially engaged art and open scored compositions, assessing their ability to forge personal connections to local sounds for composers, performers and listeners. Furthermore, they look into the strategies and methods that can be employed in group compositions to effectively convey the undercurrents of social interaction and to enrich the performance experience for the audience. To articulate these research interests, my questions are the following:

1. How does the use of field recordings, both as a creative starting point in music composition and as an element of interaction with a musician's local environment, contribute to the enhancement of listener's awareness and sensitivity towards their sounding environment?

2. How can incorporating the principles of socially engaged art into open scored compositions enhance performers' engagement through listening to local sounds, and in turn, offer audiences a nuanced observation of this interaction?

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[8] Luke Nickel, 'Occam Notions: Collaboration and the Performer's Perspective in Éliane Radigue's Occam Ocean,' *Tempo* 70, no. 275 (July 2015): 22-35, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0040298215000601.
[9] Leah Barclay, 'Listening to Communities and Environments,' *Contemporary Music Review* 36, no. 3 (April 2017): 148-49, https://doi.org/10.1080/07494467.2017.1395140.
[10] Harry Matthews and Aaron Moorehouse, 'Evaluating Socially Engaged Practices in Art: The Autonomy of Artists and Artworks in Community Collaborations', *Question Essays and Art from the Humanities*, no. 6 (30 June 2021), 22-25, https://doi.org/10.52715/SYQU4741.

3. What strategies and approaches can be used in group compositions that aim to highlight collective behaviours, to effectively communicate the underlying social interactions to the audience and enhance the overall performance experience?

Central to the framework of this investigation is the nuanced role of the listener. In the first question, the performer embodies the listener, engaging in a deeply interactive process with the field recordings. This role is not passive but involves an active, decision-making process where the performer, as listener, interprets and navigates the sonic environment, making choices that shape the live interpretation of the piece.

In the second research question, this concept of the performer as an active listener extends to the broader context of socially engaged art and open scored compositions. Here, while the performer continues to engage as an active listener, making decisions influenced by their interaction with local sounds, there is an attempt to bridge this active listening to the audience. However, the audience's role remains comparatively passive, engaging with the composition from a more traditional listener's standpoint, albeit with an invitation to connect personally and reflectively with the local sounds presented.

The third question shifts focus more on the collective experience and the audience's engagement, but the foundational principle of active listening, as established with performers in the earlier stages, remains a critical underpinning. The distinction made here between the performer's active listening and the audience's more passive engagement is crucial, yet it aims to subtly encourage a shift towards a more involved listening experience for the audience, guided by the strategies and methods employed in group compositions.

1.3 Methodology

This research employs a practice-based methodology that centres on the development and evolution of my own work as a composer, seeking to create a conceptual framework for understanding the intersection of sound, noise, and social engagement within musical composition. Listening plays a foundational role in this framework, serving as both a theoretical lens and a practical approach that guides the development of my compositions.

My research consists of two key interconnected strands. The first focuses on the theoretical exploration and study of key concepts and ideas both from within the field of experimental music and from other fields such as socially engaged art, theories on noise, and trespass. This involves a contextual account of texts by Seth Kim-Cohen, Brandon Labelle, Jonathan Sterne, and Marie Thompson that guide the shifting understanding of sound towards a more socially- and culturally-embedded concept. Moreover, the listening practices of Pauline Oliveros, Michel Chion, Kai Tuuri, and Tuomas Eerola offer insights into how listening can be incorporated into compositions. They enable me to explore how directed listening shapes

diverse interpretations of sound and informs our understanding of the auditory information we perceive.

Simultaneously, ideas from Jacques Attali, Marie Thompson, and Salomé Voegelin inform the understanding of noise in music. Furthermore, concepts from experimental and open score works by composers such as Michael Baldwin, Leah Barclay, Cassandra Miller, Éliane Radigue, Pauline Oliveros, and James Saunders help shape my compositions as I make connections between their work and notions of curiosity. Their use of listening as a critical aspect of both performance and interpretation influences my exploration of soundscapes and the relationship between performers and audiences.

The second strand is a practice-led exploration, where compositions are developed in dialogue with theoretical frameworks. These compositions offer a platform for testing, iterating, and refining the concepts developed in the theoretical strand. Listening is central to this process, guiding each stage of compositional development as an active decision-making practice. It shapes creative decisions during the composition phase by framing listening as a deliberate and interactive act, which, in turn, informs the performance and interpretation of the work. This approach encourages performers and audiences to actively engage with field recordings and compositions focus on different ways of incorporating field recordings and integrating socially engaged methods, with a strong emphasis on the conceptual understanding of curiosity and noise. The compositions vary in their settings, involving solo pieces, group compositions, and a final work positioned more towards audience engagement, thereby creating a broad spectrum for exploration. Throughout this process, the interplay between these two strands serves as a feedback mechanism, with theoretical exploration informing composition, and the outcomes of the compositions, in turn, feeding back into my theoretical understanding.

Finally, I document and analyse in the form of written chapters which outline and explore the evolution of my ideas, the processes and outcomes of the compositions, and the role of noise, social engagement, and trespass in the works. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 provide a reflection and analysis of each compositional process.

This methodology, as a blend of theoretical exploration and practice-based exploration allows for a contextual, in-depth, and nuanced understanding of the relationships between noise, social engagement as a form of curiosity, and trespass in musical composition.

1.4   Structure of the Commentary

In chapter 2, I discuss the evolution of my focus as a composer, starting with my interest in acoustic ecology and how it led to my exploration of the relationship between field recordings and instruments. In section 2.2 (Acoustic Ecology and Early Influences) I provide an overview of my initial inspiration and how key figures in the field informed my understanding of the

distinctions between human and non-human sounds. In section 2.3 (Evolving Perspectives - Critiques of Acoustic Ecology), I discuss how my exposure to certain scholars redirected my understanding of sound, shifting my focus from natural sounds towards a more socially and culturally embedded concept. This leads to section 2.4 (Considering Noise) where I detail the process of finding a way to compose noise, inspired by various perspectives on noise and sound. In section 2.5 (Navigating the Social Aspects of Sound and Noise), I consider how these explorations of noise have become a central theme in my compositions. Finally, in section 2.6 (My Approach to Noise), I demonstrate how my understanding of noise is applied in the portfolio of compositions for this PhD.

In chapter 3, I consider socially engaged art practice within experimental composition. Section 3.2 (Socially Engaged Art) outlines the fundamental aspects of this approach, emphasising its potential for fostering lasting connections among artists, communities, and society as a whole. Section 3.3 (The Critique of Socially Engaged Practices in Art) then discusses Claire Bishop's critique of relational art. In section 3.4 (The 'Collaborative Stories Spiral' as a Socially Engaged Framework), I introduce a non-hierarchical framework for cultivating collective and individual narratives as a means of supporting a socially engaged composition. Building upon this, section 3.5 (Sowing Seeds, by Brona Martin) presents an analysis of Brona Martin's project, examining the composer's contributions and autonomous output within the context of the proposed framework. Finally, in section 3.6 (Arriving at a Socially Curious Approach to Composition), I introduce the concept of 'socially curious' composition and present examples of other composers' pieces that exhibit curiosity in diverse ways. The overarching goal of this chapter is to contextualise my own work within a broader landscape, shedding light on central themes and discussions that have emerged throughout the development of my portfolio.

For chapter 4, I present the compositions for solo performers in my portfolio, each offering insights into my socially curious approach. Section 4.2 (*electric guitar, in Southmead (1m55sec)*) details the first composition in which field recordings serve as a stimulus for musical material, combining text instructions and audio to generate musical responses, highlighting collaboration with guitarist Ben Jameson. Section 4.3 (*With Juliet*) discusses the challenges and importance of establishing a clear starting point for collaboration, drawing from my experience working with Juliet Fraser. Section 4.4 (*Filtered Reality (location and date)*) examines my composition created during a lockdown period, reflecting on the dynamic between myself and double bassist Daniel Molloy and the exploration of a different compositional approach because of the limitations imposed on the creative process. Lastly, section 4.5 (*Home & Away chords*) explores a longer-term creative process with Caitlin Rowley and the significance of understanding the relationship with the collaborator, focusing on revealing the intimate and social dimensions of artistic practice.

In chapter 5, I present the compositions that involve group settings, offering insights into the role of noise more explicitly. Section 5.2 (*Locating and Listening, Playing and Stopping*) introduces noise as a listening challenge between two duos, each following rule-based procedures, highlighting the interplay of shared goals and diverging paths, and incorporating aspects of noise as interference into the sonic environment. Section 5.3 (*Distraction Piece*) responds to the previous composition by exploring noise as a mechanism of interference and disruption in a relatable way. It portrays a musician being disturbed by external factors. Section 5.4 (*Make to Share*) represents a pivot from the exploration of noise, demonstrating how perceived barriers can be dismantled through the creation, sharing, and exchanging of scored parts within an ensemble. This composition explores the social dynamics intrinsic to performance, allowing social behaviours to emerge as an inherent outcome of the performance, fostering interaction and responsiveness among the performers.

In chapter 6, I introduce trespass, as both an activity and a philosophical concept, in relation to my socially curious compositional methodology. Section 6.2 (To Trespass) outlines the key figures and ideas pertaining to trespass and the Right to Roam movement in England. In section 6.3 ('To Enjoy is to Trespass'), I introduce the philosophy of Alenka Zupančič, focusing on her ideas around enjoyment, personal space, and socio-cultural interpretations and how they parallel my curiosity-driven notions. In section 6.4 (To Compose is to Trespass (Against Noise)), I revisit the compositions discussed in chapters 4 and 5, threading them through the lens of trespass as a method to navigate the barriers and interferences associated with the noise concepts highlighted in chapter 2. Section 6.5 (*The Other Side of the Sign*) introduces the last piece in my portfolio, which more overtly incorporates trespass. This section investigates the outcomes of my previous works and the shift in focus onto the audience in this final piece. I then conclude with a discussion of how these elements encounter and manage barriers. This chapter aims to provide an overview of my pieces and add to the dialogue on the role of the composer and the audience within a socially curious compositional setting.

In chapter 7, I conclude the commentary with a reflective analysis of my research and contextualise the broader implications of my work. Finally, I outline possible future directions for my compositional practice, highlighting areas for further exploration, potential improvements and other methodologies that can be applied to continue investigating a socially curious approach to composition.

Chapter 2: Considering Noise

2.1 Introduction

My interests as a composer have largely focused on relationships between field recordings, instruments, and how we listen to our environment. Prior to my PhD study, I found inspiration in the field of acoustic ecology, and was exploring ways of integrating instrumental performance with field recordings paying particular attention to the differences between rural and urban environments. The work of R. Murray Schafer, Barry Traux, Hildegard Westerkamp, Bernie Krause, and Steven Feld, among others, influenced me to explore differences between human-made sounds and non-human-made sounds in my compositions.

As my work progressed, another area of compositional interests was emerging through my engagement with the experimental and open score works of Pauline Oliveros, Jennifer Walshe, Annea Lockwood, Christian Wolff, and James Saunders amongst others. The beauty of their compositions lies in the created spaces that players are invited into, spaces that stimulate interactions with their own social circumstances and contexts. I began to consider the social intricacies that surrounded my work and the limitations of my pairing field recordings and instruments together, without considering the context or social dynamic of the individual or groups playing my pieces. This led to me becoming increasingly aware of the subjective value judgements appearing in my compositions. These personal biases, determining what sounds were 'pleasant' or 'unpleasant', started to influence my work more than I had anticipated, and because of this I began pursuing ideas in my works that looked for more social and personal entanglements.

Simultaneously, I was reading the works of scholars such as Seth Kim-Cohen, Jonathan Sterne, Brandon Labelle, and Marie Thompson. Their critiques of acoustic ecology challenge its tendency to idealise natural sounds, and its often-overlooked neglect of the complex social and cultural contexts that shape and are shaped by sound. Influenced by their perspectives, I began to shift my focus away from value judgements to an understanding that is deeply embedded within our social and cultural realities. As a result, my attention and interest gravitated towards the exploration of noise in sound, challenging the binary divisions between desirable and undesirable sounds.

Through the process of finding a way to compose noise, as opposed to composing with unwanted sounds termed 'noise', I explored the ideas of Luigi Russolo, Jacques Attali, Marie Thompson, and Salomé Voegelin, who all consider noise and sound from different angles. Their perspectives have helped me to formulate an understanding of noise that I now use as a core idea in my compositions.

This chapter details the evolution of my ideas and provides insight into how I now approach the concept of noise in my work. Rather than offering a comprehensive overview of noise in music, it illustrates how my thinking has developed into a framework that I intend to apply across my portfolio of compositions for this PhD. The chapter addresses Research Question 1 by exploring literature that has informed my current thinking, examining how key writings on noise have shaped my approach to listening and field recordings. By integrating noise conceptually and sonically through these theoretical lenses, this chapter demonstrates how listening practices guide both performers and audiences in understanding the diverse influences of noise on their perception of the auditory landscape.

2.2 Acoustic Ecology and Early Influences

Acoustic ecology places sound as a crucial factor in our perception and understanding of the environment, and our place within it.[11] Central to my early understanding was the work of R. Murray Schafer, Canadian composer and environmentalist, credited as the pioneer of acoustic ecology. Schafer's concept of the soundscape as an 'acoustic environment' underscored the ways in which we might consider our environments as not just visual or tangible but also sonic.[12] Essentially, acoustic ecology's principles focus on identifying imbalances in soundscapes that may have detrimental effects to the health of living organisms, a goal accomplished, in part, through sound classification.[13] Schafer's categorisation of sound into key notes (background sounds often fundamental to our sense of place), signals (foreground sounds that we consciously perceive and often react to), and soundmarks (similar to landmarks, sounds that define a community or environment)[14] were an integral part of my early compositional process during my undergraduate and masters studies, in which I would use captured sounds and identify relationships with the musical instruments playing alongside them. My interest at the time was on connecting and comparing different locations, highlighting the changes between specific environments.

Another influential figure was Barry Truax, who worked with Schafer on the World Soundscape Project (WSP). Truax's work in acoustic communication and his advancements in composing with analogue and digital synthesis shaped my approach towards the integration of natural and synthetic sounds.[15] His emphasis on a listener's perception and contextual interpretation of sound influenced a number of my earlier works, which incorporated a variety of post-production techniques and live sampling. However, this is no longer a defining characteristic

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[11] R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester: Destiny Books, 1993).
[12] Ibid, 7-8.
[13] See chapter 9, Schafer, *The Soundscape*.
[14] Ibid, 9-10.
[15] Barry Truax, *Acoustic Communication*, 2nd ed (Westport, Conn: Ablex, 2001).

of my current compositional process as of this PhD project. I still use post-production techniques to manipulate field recordings to obscure the perceived context of sounds, as I discuss in the commentaries of my pieces in chapters 4, 5 and 6, but this area has not been my primary focus for exploration or innovation.

The work of Hildegard Westerkamp, Bernie Krause, David Dunn, and Steven Feld also contributed significantly to my early interests. Westerkamp's sound walking practice[16] and in particular her composition *Kits Beach Soundwalk* (1989), Krause's focus on soundscape ecology and 'biophony'[17], and Feld's concept of 'acoustemology'[18] collectively contributed to my understanding of the role of sound in connecting organisms to their environment and each other.

In my own compositions, these influences took shape through an awareness of environmental sounds, both non-human and human-made, and their potential as musical material. Whilst, at the time, I valued experimenting with field recordings, capturing the ambient sounds of various locations, and incorporating them into my work, I found this process ultimately limited in its engagement beyond personal value judgements. These early pieces simply strived to echo and compare the acoustic characteristics and categorisations of the places they were sourced from, reflecting the principles of acoustic ecology. However, as my engagement with acoustic ecology deepened, I began to encounter critiques of the field, leading to a change of my perspectives and practices.

2.3   Evolving Perspectives – Critiques of Acoustic Ecology

In *In the Blink of an Ear: Toward a Non-Cochlear Sonic Art*, Seth Kim-Cohen provides a critique of the underpinning philosophies of sound art, including those that are integral to acoustic ecology. Although his critique does not specifically target acoustic ecology, it presents a striking contrast to the field's principles regarding 'natural' soundscapes. Kim-Cohen takes aim at what he terms 'sound-in-itself'. That is, the idea that sounds can be appreciated or understood independently of their cultural, social, and historical contexts.[19] He believes an excessive emphasis on the phenomenological experience of sound comes at the expense of the semiotic dimensions of sonic experience. He argues instead for a more conceptual

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[16] Hildegard Westerkamp 'Soundwalking', in *Autumn Leaves: Sound and the Environment in Artistic Practice*, ed. Angus Carlyle, (Paris, France: Association Double-Entendre in association with CRISAP, 2007), 49.
[17] Bryan C. Pijanowski et al., 'Soundscape Ecology: The Science of Sound in the Landscape,' *BioScience* 61, no. 3 (March 2011): 204, https://doi.org/10.1525/bio.2011.61.3.6.
[18] Steven Feld, 'Acoustemology,' essay, in *Keywords in Sound*, ed. David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny (Duke University Press, 2015), 12-21.
[19] Seth Kim-Cohen, *In the Blink of an Ear: Towards a Non-Cochlear Sonic Art* (New York: Continuum, 2009).

approach that does not necessarily regard the source of a sound as its defining attribute.[20] A notable instance of this view is his examination of Stephen Vitiello's *World Trade Center Recordings* (1999). Kim-Cohen notes that although Vitiello may have initially made these recordings to capture the sounds themselves, their significance lies not just in their auditory content, but in the historical context and meanings they have accrued post-creation. In his words, the *World Trade Center recordings* are 'rewritten by history, while at the same time rewriting history'.[21] This view resonated with my growing interest exploring nuances of sound beyond its source, prompting me to consider not just the context and conceptual implications of sound, but also its capacity for recontextualisation through social and historical meaning.

In *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*, Jonathan Sterne offers another compelling critique. He challenges the idea of a universal hearing experience, arguing that our ways of hearing are culturally and historically constructed. Sterne directly engaged with the concept of 'schizophonia', developed by Truax and Schafer. The term refers to the perceived split between an original sound and its electroacoustic reproduction.[22] Sterne, however, argues that the notion of schizophonia rests on a series of unchallenged assumptions regarding the essential nature of sound, communication, and human experience.[23] In summary, these assumptions include:

1. Face-to-Face Communication as the Norm: Sound reproduction is seen as a lesser form of communication compared to direct, in-person interactions.
2. Disorienting Technologies: Sound reproduction technologies are perceived as disorienting to our senses, implying a prior state of unmediated, holistic bodily experience.
3. Idealised Pre-Technological State: These definitions idealise a pre-technological state of wholeness and coherence in the human body and experience.
4. Technologies as Neutral Conduits: They assume that technologies are neutral tools, ignoring their substantial role in shaping social relationships and the sound itself.[24]

Sterne goes on to examine the prevailing notion that face-to-face communication is the most 'authentic' mode of interaction. He argues that this perspective unfairly diminishes the value of sound reproduction as inauthentic and disorienting due to its alleged decontextualisation of sound from its supposedly rightful interpersonal setting. He further suggests that we do not need definitive answers to the relationship between hearing and seeing, technology and

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[20] Ibid, 13-14, 49, 71-73.
[21] Ibid, 131.
[22] Schafer, *Tuning of the World*, 90-91.
[23] Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 20.
[24] Ibid, 20-21.

sensory orientation, original and copy, or presence and absence in communication. Instead, he recommends considering sound, hearing, and listening as historical constructs rather than unchanging constants.[25]

Sterne's writing shaped my understanding of the potential cultural and contextual significance of digital soundscapes and introduced to me a new way of thinking about the implantation of field recordings into my work - one that establishes a sense of cultural and biographical connection between the composer and performer. This fundamental shift led me to position the social dynamics of listening and collecting to the forefront of my creative process.

Adding another dimension, Brandon Labelle, in *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art*, provides a critique of the soundscape concept as it is presented in acoustic ecology, arguing that it reveals a bias towards idealised natural environments. He points out that the focus of acoustic ecology on balanced and harmonious soundscapes might inadvertently lead to the omission of the diverse range of sounds that emanate from human-made environments.[26] This is a commonly raised critique of acoustic ecology, where the binary classification of sounds into 'good' or 'bad', as proposed by Schafer, is seen as limiting and subjective. This categorisation is something I aim to move beyond with my approach to noise, which I will discuss later in this chapter. Labelle further challenges the role of technology in acoustic ecology, arguing that it is often used merely as a means to replicate sound. He argues that the WSP is based on two key principles: globalising sound through microphones to diversify sound events, and solidifying sound by committing it to tape.[27] Labelle suggests that this act of 'bringing the globe home' could potentially compromise the integrity of the soundscape.[28]

Similarly, Marie Thompson, in her doctoral thesis *Beyond Unwanted Sound: Noise, Affect and Aesthetic Moralism*, provides a substantial critique highlighting the moralistic stance that acoustic ecology tends to take towards certain types of sounds, labelling some as 'noise' while elevating others as 'sound'.[29] Noise, in this context, often corresponds to unwanted, intrusive or disruptive sounds - often associated with human-made or technological sources. This distinction, according to Thompson, imposes a hierarchical structure on the soundscape, suggesting an inherent goodness or badness in different types of sounds.[30]

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[25] Ibid.
[26] Brandon LaBelle, Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art (New York: The Continuum International, 2006), 209.
[27] Ibid, 205.
[28] Ibid, 205.
[29] Marie Suzanne Thompson, "Beyond Unwanted Sound: Noise, Affect and Aesthetic Moralism" (thesis, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 2014), 121.
[30] Ibid, 17-18.

These critiques challenge the foundational principles of acoustic ecology and raise questions about my relationship with making and producing works that use field recordings. They led me to reconsider my earlier emphasis on encapsulating the environment in my work. Instead, I became inquisitive towards the social and contextual implications of making and presenting field recordings.

Furthermore, my desire to reinterpret noise as more than just an unwanted phenomenon, a characterisation Schafer adopts in his book *The Tuning of the World*, grew. I contemplated the potential of noise as a compositional approach. Specifically, I questioned how an interpretation of noise could hold a shared understanding while still being subject to individuals and their experiences. This line of thought steered my research towards understanding noise in relation to my understanding of the social contexts of sound.

2.4 Considering Noise

In my creative process, I primarily use the idea of noise to probe the social dimensions of my work and facilitate a dialogue between divergent personal experiences and interpretations of listening. In this section, therefore, rather than a comprehensive outline of the history of the concept, I will provide an overview of some key thinkers and theories that guide my exploration of noise and sound, culminating in a definition of noise that underpins my compositional approach.

Luigi Russolo, known for his early writings on noise, notably in his manifesto, *The Art of Noises*, advocates for the incorporation of everyday, industrial, and unconventional sounds into musical discourse. Russolo contends that the advent of machinery and of urban life has exponentially broadened our sonic landscape.[31] His perspective on noise, despite being focused on sound and 'unwanted' sounds, underscores the importance of engaging with evolving soundscapes. Furthermore, Russolo's insights call for a heightened societal awareness and understanding of complex sonic environments, which has helped to direct my research away from classifications of sound. My initial entry into the field of acoustic ecology was largely fuelled by my wanting to come to terms with the industrial sounds I would hear most often, and which dominated my personal soundscape. I therefore came to understand that many realisations of noise, for good or bad, manifest in our experiences of urban machinery and will likely always interfere with other ways in which we might perceive and understand noise.

In the seminal *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, Jacques Attali proposes views that have commonalities with Russolo's concept of noise and its relationship to the constant evolution of

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[31] Luigi Russolo, *The Art of Noises*, Monographs in Musicology, no. 6 (New York: Pendragon Press, 1986).

societies and sound production. Attali asserts that music both reflects societal structures and predicts their future transformations. Within this viewpoint, noise signifies both a deviation from the established order and embodies the creative catalyst for emerging new social orders.[32] Attali states that 'a noise is a resonance that interferes with the audition of a message in the process of emission.'[33] Extracted from its original context, this notion of noise as an obstructive element, entwining itself around meaning, distorting or presenting the delivery of a complete message, proved quite thought-provoking for me at the time of reading. Noise, to my understanding, became distinguished from sound, serving a role as a disruptor in an array of processes.

Salomé Voegelin offers a counter-perspective to Russolo's celebration of noise. Voegelin states that where Russolo heard noise as progress, we, as a society, are now left with the effects of that noise. Where noise might once have been considered positive progression, it now signifies the consequences of technological and societal advancements. In Voegelin's words 'noise does not have to be loud, but it has to be exclusive: excluding other sounds, creating in sound a bubble against sounds, destroying sonic signifiers and divorcing listening from sense material external to its noise.'[34] Voegelin then advances the idea that noise demands an immediate, visceral experience, allowing no space for theoretical analysis or linguistic interpretations to interfere. She insists that noise requires us to listen attentively, and in doing so, our body connects with sound, creating its own unique interpretation. This active listening experience is solitary, yet it resonates with other listeners, creating a collective yet individualised experience.[35]

In *Beyond Unwanted Sound*, Thompson introduces what she terms as an 'ethico-affective' approach to defining noise. This concept, while embracing the productive forces discussed by both Russolo and Attali, strays from a dualist approach to noise, advocating instead for a relational viewpoint.[36] Thompson suggests that 'rather than referring to a negative, subjective judgement of sound or a type of sound, noise is understood as a productive, transformative force and a necessary component of material relationships.'[37] In further exploration, Thompson suggests that an 'ethico-affective' approach to noise aims to de-centre the listening subject. Essentially, by disconnecting noise from personal taste, and labels such as 'good' or 'bad', 'unwanted', or 'loud', it ceases to be contingent upon the listener. Removing the subject-

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[32] Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, Theory and History of Literature, v. 16 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).
[33] Ibid, 26.
[34] Salomé Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 43-44.
[35] Ibid, 74-75.
[36] Thompson, *Beyond Unwanted Sound*, 201.
[37] Ibid, 6.

orientated understanding of noise allows for the development of relationships between noise and collectives of listeners.[38]

2.5   Navigating the Social Aspects of Sound and Noise

Encountering the critiques of acoustic ecology by the authors previously discussed in this chapter, I began to pivot from a purely ecological understanding of sounds to a more socially embedded one. I was now questioning my past inclusion of field recordings within the context of my work, with the understanding that I wanted to avoid the idea that sounds exist in an 'artistic' vacuum. I wanted to instead consider their continual interaction with social, cultural and political realities. I wished to move away from labelling certain sounds as good and noises as bad, as extensively discussed in Thompson's writings. My ambition became to explore how sound helps us navigate our social realities, convey messages, shape identities, and comprehend societal tendencies.

Thompson's 'ethico-affective' approach to noise presented an intriguing challenge to my own understanding and usage of noise. As a result, throughout my PhD project, I have sought to decentralise myself as the primary subject in my composing. This redirection in thought brings to mind Roland Barthes' famous argument in *The Death of the Author*. Barthes positions the reception of a text as a multidimensional space, set free from the original intent or authority of the author.[39] In a similar vein, I aimed to establish a method of using noise that extends beyond my own intentionality, encouraging others interacting with my pieces to explore their personal engagements with the concept.

In doing so, I challenge the traditional notion that the composer's perspective, experiences, and ideas are the only factors that contribute to the interpretation and consideration of sounds.[40] I propose, like Barthes, that the act of engaging with a composition – much like the reading of a text – can exist as a liberating process independent of the composer's original purpose. Just as Barthes suggests that the text's meaning lies not in its origin but in its destination,[41] I consider that the value of my compositions may be found in the personal experiences of the listeners, as they interact and engage with noise.

This approach somewhat unsettles the composer-centric perspective, aligning with Marion Botella et al.'s view that introducing creativity as an action or activity, in fact, pivots the focus

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[38] Thompson, 16-9.
[39] Roland Barthes and Stephen Heath, *Image, Music, Text: Essays*, 13. [Dr.] (London: Fontana, 1977)142-48.
[40] Anthony E. Kemp, The Musical Temperament: Psychology and Personality of Musicians, Reprinted (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004), 215-16.
[41] Ibid.

from the individual to the interaction between a work and their environment or society.[42] Although it still preserves a measure of subjectivity, as interpretation remains reliant on the individual or groups engaging in the creative process, this approach allows for a more collaborative art form. This is not merely a case of extending individual preferences from composer to performer and marks a clear departure from my previous work that connects instruments with field recordings, even if subtly nuanced. In my commentary, I delve deeper into the concept and use of noise within the creative process more thoroughly in the group works of chapter 5, where my usage of noise is more clearly defined as a compositional method that can be translated into a performance situation. And subsequently, in chapter 6, I more fully align with Thompson's 'ethico-affective' approach with the concept of trespass, venturing into a potential avenue for dealing with (and confronting) noise as a barrier, physically and metaphorically.

In my search for an alternative to creating music solely based on personal observations through field recordings, I developed an interest in open score compositions and works in which performers are required to participate in creative decision-making. My ensemble, OUT-TAKE, was then frequently performing music by John Cage, Earle Brown, and Christian Wolff and I enjoyed the sense of discovery and social interaction that emerged during our performances. The notion of collective individualism has been a vital influence on my approach to composition, and a concept I find fitting for open scored pieces. Consider, for instance, Earle Brown's *December 1952*, in which his graphic notation presents performers with a range of pathways for interpretation. The score, in this respect, accommodates various interpretations of the same thing. This reveals how interaction with open scores could facilitate the uncovering, interpretation, engagement with, and response to noise in a manner that is both individual and communal.[43]

The freedom for individual interpretations within a collective performance was an important step in addressing the criticisms I have outlined of my own previous work. The group discussions about shaping our performances were transformative for me, steering my interest towards composers like Cassandra Miller, Pauline Oliveros, and James Saunders, among others. I will provide a more detailed art review of these influences in chapter 3 of this commentary and reflect on their impact on my own works in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

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[42] Marion Botella et al., 'How Artists Create: Creative Process and Multivariate Factors', *Learning and Individual Differences* 26 (August 2013): 162, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2013.02.008.

[43] Philip Thomas, 'Determining the Indeterminate', *Contemporary Music Review* 26, no. 2 (April 2007): 137-38, https://doi.org/10.1080/07494460701250866.

2.6   My Approach to Noise

In this project, I propose an approach to noise that is integrated into my compositions. This method aspires to use noise in a way in which it can be understood generally, yet encompasses individuals' personal interpretations, shaped by their own thoughts and bodies. Throughout this commentary, I explore my definition of noise, given below, from both a sonic and conceptual perspective:

> **Noise is a barrier that prevents individuals or groups from establishing a connection with a desired point of attention.**

This approach encapsulates the multiplicity of noise's impacts across a variety of contexts, from individual to group scenarios. The term 'barrier' conveys the disruptive and obtrusive nature of noise, following the notion that noise inhibits or distorts communication, information transfer, or focus on a specific element, be it in a sonic, informational, or conceptual context. In addition, it hints at the subjective and situational aspects of noise. What is considered noise in one situation or by one person might not be seen as noise in a different situation or by a different person. This subjective variability is a fundamental characteristic present in both noise and my compositions. Finally, it suggests that noise is not inherently negative. It is simply an element that alters or interferes with our interaction with our environment or with a particular target of our attention.

Listening plays a pivotal role in this approach, as it enables both performers and audiences to discern and interpret noise within these varied contexts. By understanding noise as a barrier, listeners can actively identify its disruptive qualities and adapt their focus or behaviour accordingly. Through listening, performers are encouraged to consider how their auditory perception influences their creative decisions, as the intentional act of listening allows them to engage with noise in ways that shape the performance. By directing performers to listen in specific ways during performance, I aim to emphasise how noise alters attention, revealing its impact on communication and connection.

Finally, it suggests that noise is not inherently negative. It is simply an element that alters or interferes with our interaction with our environment or with a particular target of our attention. Listening further illuminates this relationship by enabling listeners to perceive how noise shapes their connection with their surroundings and focal points. By inviting performers and audiences to listen in a particular manner, noise becomes a transformative agent that informs their interaction with sonic environments and creative expression.

Chapter 3. Developing a 'Socially Curious' Approach to Composition[44]

3.1 Introduction

Having outlined the role of noise in my work and provided a definition that clarifies the approach that forms the basis of my compositional process, this chapter considers the 'social turn'[45] that has taken place in the visual arts in recent decades and considers how it might be relevant to experimental composition and open score formats. The social turn, an umbrella term for a range of labels such as 'socially engaged art' and 'relational art', reflects a desire to create art and artistic projects that establish meaningful and enduring connections between artists, communities, and society. I also consider critical perspectives on this turn, such as Claire Bishop's critique of relational art,[46] and propose that one response to such criticisms is to adopt what I have termed a more 'socially curious' position.

I consider examples such as the 'collaborative stories spiral,'[47] a non-hierarchical platform for communities to develop collective and individual narratives. Next, I propose a framework for socially engaged composition that considers the issues of autonomy, narrative, and community engagement. I then test the application of this framework through an analysis of Brona Martin's project *Sowing Seeds* and consider the personal reflections and artistic output by the composer. In this analysis, I propose that Martin's composition reflects a socially curious position, which represents a shift in perspective from that of socially engaged work. Building on this analysis I present my own approach to 'socially curious' composition that emphasises curiosity and vulnerability, gathering and sharing, collaboration, social behaviours, and autonomy.

To conclude, I provide other examples of composers who embody a socially curious position and present pieces that explore curiosity in a variety of ways. This chapter seeks to answer my second research question by examining how the principles of socially engaged art can be transferred and integrated into open score design to enhance performers' engagement

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[44] Portions of this section of text previously appeared in Harry Matthews and Aaron Moorehouse, 'Evaluating Socially Engaged Practices in Art: The Autonomy of Artists and Artworks in Community Collaborations', *Question Essays and Art from the Humanities*, no. 6 (30 June 2021), https://doi.org/10.52715/SYQU4741.

[45] Tate Modern, "Social Turn" accessed 10 July 2023, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/s/social-turn.

[46] Bishop, *Relational Aesthetics*.

[47] Paul Gilchrist et al., 'Co-Designing Non-Hierarchical Community Arts Research: The Collaborative Stories Spiral', ed. Professor Kate Pahl and Professor Tarquam Mckenna, *Qualitative Research Journal* 15, no. 4 (9 November 2015): 459-71, https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-06-2015-0036.

through listening to local sounds. This chapter thus contextualises my own work and highlights the key topics and discussions that have arisen throughout the creation of my portfolio.

3.2   Socially Engaged Art

The social turn in contemporary art, whereby outreach programmes, community projects, and participatory works became the new vogue,[48] was arguably predicated on two false dichotomies. The first of these centres on audience behaviour, and the argument that active spectatorship (in which an audience contributes creatively to the form and content of an artwork), is of more value than passive spectatorship (in which an observer encounters an already completed work). Secondly, the social turn is built upon the foundations of conceptual art and its preference for art-processes (situated in time) over art-objects (which are situated in space).[49] Taken together, these inclinations led to an avalanche of artists tumbling out of the galleries and into communities, to facilitate experiences that primarily posited the act of art-making as the artwork, rather than generating material intended for an audience situated outside of these experiences. Additionally, such artworks often hope to effect changes in society at either an individual or community level. For this reason, works of art are often engaged with social ideologies. At the same time, the label of 'socially engaged practices' in art not only refers to these ideologies but also to the specific places or contexts where the artistic action occurs. This raises the question of how to quantify these kinds of engagement, and how they might be analysed in art?

Kim Grant, in her analysis on social processes, highlights a trend that started in the late 1950s and grew in the ensuing decades, where artists began to prioritise the process of creation over the final artistic product. This shift saw artists move away from the technical aspects involved in creating art, instead exploring ways their creative processes could engage wider audiences. A result of this shift was the increasing participation of the viewer in the creation and physical experience of art. Artists such as Joseph Beuys, Hans Haacke, and Mierle Laderman Ukeles, created work that directly engaged with social intervention. This evolution from a product-focused approach to a public-oriented methodology was part of a larger reconsideration of art's societal function.[50]

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[48] Claire Bishop, 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents', Artforum, 44, no. 6 (February 2006): 178.

[49] Artists, however, are generally aware of these oppositions and have problematised these distinctions through their artwork since the early 20th century. Marcel Duchamp, for example, placed a urinal in a fine-art exhibition, eloquently drawing attention to the processes by which an observer actively and imaginatively (if often unconsciously) constructs any experience of art, as well as drawing out the temporal and subjective elements of any such experience.

[50] Kim Grant, *All about Process: The Theory and Discourse of Modern Artistic Labor* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017), 173-74.

As well as accommodating sociological aims, socially engaged practices are often positioned as disrupters of the art market, whereby experience itself is authored to evade the creation of objects which can easily be commodified, reproduced, and sold.[51] In reality, the market subsumes these experiential practices with a dispiriting ease, as noted by the art critic and curator Lucy Lippard with regards to the dematerialisation of the art object in 1960s conceptual art.[52] However, socially engaged practices depart from conceptualism in the artform's approach to collaboration and accessibility. Somewhat counter-intuitively, the proposed solution is for socially engaged artists to reaffirm the authorship of their experiences when working with communities. It is crucial for an artist's subjective reflections on the work to become identifiable in the artwork itself. Otherwise, the artist risks falling into hypocrisy, othering the artwork's participants in a manner which places a troubling tension between the two groups, the artist and the community with which they are working.

3.3 The Critique of Socially Engaged Practices in Art

Claire Bishop's well-known article 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents', illustrates how artists working in community contexts often designate 'social events, publications, workshops, or performances' as the products of their artwork.[53] This departure from material form, as Bishop notes, problematises the preconceived link between art and the artmaker. Instead, the resulting 'work' reflects both the process and product of its own socially created environment. Furthermore, these types of artistic output continue to fuel debates concerning the role of the artist, their relationship to their work, and the precedence given to either creative processes or the sociological changes desired by socially engaged practices. Bishop suggests that this art is borne out of a value system that opposes repressive capitalism, and that it often escapes criticism by using community inclusion and political engagement as principal measures of value.[54] Bishop argues that socially engaged art should not be exempt from critical enquiry simply because it is participatory and politically active.

Bishop positions her critique against Nicholas Bourriaud's theorisation of 'relational aesthetics', which can be defined as art that establishes meaning through the relationships it generates between people and societal groups.[55] Relational art often considers its audience to be the community that participates in its creation or realisation, rather than situating the audience outside of these processes. In essence, Bourriaud's concept places enormous significance on the sociological context and the importance of interpersonal relationships in

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[51] Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), vii.
[52] Ibid, vii-xxii.
[53] Bishop, 'The Social Turn' 178.
[54] Ibid, 179-180.
[55] Bishop, *Relational Aesthetics*, 54.

making and understanding of contemporary art. It places the art within the framework of the 'state of encounter', highlighting the potential for fostering discussions and creating a unique sociability that is both a response to, and a critique of, social conditions.[56]

Bishop is dismissive of this approach, instead advocating for transgressive, risky, and even ethically problematic works.[57] She states that art which raises consciousness is of far more value than ultimately ineffectual articulations of exemplary and demonstrative political gestures. For this reason, Bishop implies that even in socially engaged practice, its separation from social praxis is ultimately integral to its pursuit of sociological aims.[58]

Taken together, Bishop and Bourriaud illustrate two contrasting approaches to the evaluation of socially engaged practice. Where Bishop focuses on evaluating an artwork as autonomous, Bourriaud focuses on evaluating the experiences of individuals who participate in such work. However, such a separation between these two approaches is disadvantageous for two reasons. Firstly, art that denies its sociological implications (or its inescapable sociological mediation) likely results in the same political inefficiencies that Bishop criticises, specifically the failure to connect ideology with the reality of social engagement, as she values critical art over ineffectual political gestures. Secondly, collaborative art preoccupied with generating positive experiences for its participants is in many ways indistinguishable from social work, and in these cases, the purpose of a work's artistic designation needs further investigation and artistic intervention. Instead, it is perhaps more appropriate that an artist deals with these contradictions over the course of an artwork's creation, and that these explorations are present in the work's documentation. By these means, an artist may highlight their own experiences of the work in a way that further validates their claim to meaningful art-making processes, whilst also quenching a desire for authorship and validation that lies latent in socially engaged practices.

3.4 The 'Collaborative Stories Spiral' as a Socially Engaged Framework

It is clear that Bishop and Bourriaud have opposing views towards the nature and importance of social engagement in art practice. However, by shifting the attention towards social engagement as a staged process for producing non-hierarchical and meaningful self-evaluated experiences, there are some compatibilities between these previously opposing

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[56] Nicolas Bourriaud, Simon Pleasance, and Fronza Woods, *Relational Aesthetics*, Documents Sur l'art (Dijon: les Presses du réel, 2002), 5-6.

[57] Examples include Bishop's analysis of the work of Graciela Carnevale, who trapped exhibition attendees inside an empty glass chamber which they had to destroy in order to escape. Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 119-120.

[58] Readings were generated from comments written by Matthew Shlomowitz in an internal online discussion group between composition staff and doctoral students at the University of Southampton and Bath Spa University [4 October 2018].

views. The following framework from the community arts, termed the 'collaborative stories spiral' (CSS),[59] outlines a process for how academics and youth workers should work with communities to produce collaborative stories. This framework has been chosen and translated into an art-making context because it focuses on the experiences of community members over arts academics, and its promotion of shared engagements over the individual successes of an artwork.

The framework, authored by Paul Gilchrist, Claire Holmes, Amelia Lee, Niamh Moore, and Neil Ravenscroft demonstrates the importance of pairing non-hierarchical community projects with academic research methodologies, in order to generate self-told narratives authentically.[60] The study, while chiefly aimed at the community arts, is relevant to socially engaged artists (educated in the gallery arts) pursuing similar aims through participatory artworks.

The study grouped two youth workers with three academics as a way of co-producing research. These collaborative projects were developed into a 'co-designed multi-method conceptual framework for organising the generation of data about personal and community narratives[61],[62] The CSS framework seeks to instrumentalise non-hierarchical methods to create academic research that encourages narrative inquiry from communities, avoiding the need for further academic mediation.[63] CSS is made up of four stages:

1. *Situating Stories*
Conducting background research - understanding historical context and how communities produce/experience stories. Conducted by the academic researcher and not involving the community.

2. *Generating Stories*
Involving active participation as central to the narrative-building phase. Completed at either an individual and/or community level, and concerned with the sensitive production of information that may connect multiple actors within a community.

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[59] Gilchrist, 'Co-Designing Arts Research', 459-471.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Narratives here refer to how participants understand and present their own identities and experiences.
[62] Gilchrist, 'Co-Designing Arts Research', 462.
[63] Ibid, 463.

3. *Mediating Stories*

A process of retelling captured narratives to the collective community. A peer-review process whereby participants are encouraged to interpret and dispute narratives, perhaps leading to multiple individual narrative strands.

4. *Remediating Stories*

Formulating each strand into a collective final narrative which is distributed for wider consumption. This process is ongoing and encourages further communication, collaboration, and exchange.[64]

In summary, CSS generates research that is created and owned by those who participate in the project – it is not then added to by academics - and its conceptual four-stage structure could similarly be utilised by artists to present self-generated and socially engaged narratives in participatory art. However, while the CSS makes it necessary to distance any academic remediation, artists can be seen as participants within socially engaged projects. As such the addition of a fifth stage to this framework is deemed necessary. Academic remediation is often continuously present, through blogs, social media, documentation, impact studies, grant applications, job applications, papers, and books, and rather than gloss over this fact, this type of remediation could be highlighted. This fifth stage, therefore, would embed the artist's own reflections on the collaborative process within the artwork, offering artists the opportunity to foreground their own stories and evaluations of the collaborative experience as concrete elements of the work itself. These outputs would take the form of either artworks (sound, installation, film etc.) or publications (possibly in journal format), but most importantly, would be presented in the style and voice that best embodies the artist's own personal narrative. The proposed fifth stage emphasises the importance of experience, but with a fresh, more idiomatic interpretation. Crucially, it puts a spotlight on the evaluation of collaborative and participatory processes, which are fundamental aspects of the experience not only for the artist but also for the community. This focus, in turn, fosters a close relationship between the artist and the community.

3.5 Sowing Seeds, by Brona Martin

Brona Martin's *Sowing Seeds* (2018) illustrates a way by which a platform for community-focused workshops can be created while also providing the opportunity for the artist and participants to create independently produced, autonomous work, in response to their reflections on the collaborative process. Martin's project was commissioned by Seeds Studio and the Vonnegut Collective for MANTIS Festival in Manchester. During my interview with Martin, she explained that her project has two main parts. First, it involves of a variety of

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[64] Ibid, 464-465.

collaborative workshops delivered to members of local Manchester communities. Second, it then directs a response from Martin reflecting on the communal experience by creating an artwork using the compiled narratives from those involved in the workshops.[65]

Martin's work explores narrative principally through electroacoustic musical means - sounds that are recorded and manipulated using digital audio workstations (DAWs). Electroacoustic works are often presented as digital recordings and focus on developing unique connections between studio techniques and their relationship to real-world acoustic sounds or soundscapes.[66] Martin's project offers the opportunity to critique the creative process of engagement alongside individual artistic output, this without either relying upon participatory involvement as the sole predictor of its success, or dismissing these elements entirely. The following case study highlights how the CSS framework's stages align with Martin's project.

Aligning Sowing Seeds with the CSS framework

1. Situating Stories

During workshops, attended by 8-10 participants, the first stage of Martin's project acted as a communication forum in which information was shared between participants about growing up in Manchester. As these personal narratives unfolded, conversations naturally evolved from individual experiences to a collective acknowledgement of the city's changing landscape over time. Themes such as industrialisation and the climate crisis emerged as significant changes affecting the participants' lives.[67] This initial stage of the project aligns somewhat to the first stage of the CSS framework, 'Situating Stories': where researchers grasp an understanding of how communities communicate when engaging with their historical and cultural identities. This approach is used by Martin to understand which aspects of living in Manchester are affecting the participants. However, Martin's process is slightly different, by instead situating what would be the first stage of the CSS within the workshop itself.

2. Generating Stories

The next stage of the workshops focused on outlining a process by which participants could author their own narratives surrounding industrialisation and climate change. In this instance, each participant was provided with sound-recording equipment and asked to capture audio from their environment that contributes to their personal experiences of change.[68] Martin, in

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[65] Brona Martin and Harry Matthews, When Harry Met (Some) Composers: Part 1 - Brona Martin, Interview, 17 January 2019, https://blog.soton.ac.uk/music/2019/01/17/when-harry-met-some-composers-part-1-brona-martin/.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

our conversation, describes how participants were taught how to use them during the workshop itself, and beyond the simple mechanics of operating this technology there was no prior knowledge needed to capture material.[69] This format of narrative-building is neutral in comparison to other forms of story-making, with field recording providing an autonomy and novelty in comparison to the production of literary or visual narratives which are inescapably tied to the weighty traditions of literature and the visual arts. Generating stories using neutral methods is a useful and effective strategy for allowing participants to craft original stylistic presentations of their own narratives, and pursuing this neutrality while using language and image materials may be an interesting point of departure for works that utilise mediums other than field recording. Furthermore, Martin found that although participants used different means of recording sounds (for example, some making instruments, some using found objects to generate sounds, and others recording conversations), when collected and presented together they also generated a collective image of the community and the stories discussed together during the earlier phase of the workshop process.[70]

3. Mediating Stories and 4. Remediating Stories

The final stage of Martin's workshops included the collection of all recorded material, including her own, which was then combined into a shared 'sound library'. These recordings were then distributed to the participants, who were taught elementary electronic music production techniques so they could create their own electroacoustic soundwork using the sounds they had recorded. The recordings became invaluable tools for storytelling. As mentioned above, recordings evolved into indispensable instrumentations for storytelling, opening up novel pathways for works that venture away from more traditional settings using visual or written mediums. Martin suggests that these recordings, whilst giving a necessary formal creative restraint to the nature of the participant's soundworks, are combined, manipulated (using studio techniques), and given a structure that nonetheless presents the unique narrative of each participant.[71] These soundworks were produced over a three-month period, with participants able to request technological support from staff and volunteers at Seed Studio throughout.[72]

Aligning directly with the third and fourth stages of the CSS framework, participants began to mediate and remediate stories with the potential to generate their own narrative strands. Interestingly, rather than these stages becoming a process of live dialogue between

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[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Brona Martin, 'Sowing the Seeds of Community Engagement', *Soundings* (blog), accessed 4 January 2021, https://blog.soton.ac.uk/music/2018/11/08/sowing-the-seeds-of-community-engagement/.

participants, what emerges is a private, creative experience. The combination of both a shared and a private reflective period allows all participants to pursue their own narrative strands, without interference from voices that would have otherwise been more dominant in group contexts. Furthermore, by giving participants the opportunity of continued engagement with the generated material, the process of remediating becomes a self-perpetuating process, a recognised step in stage four of the CSS framework.

5. Fifth Stage Proposition

Finally, during the three-month process where remediation takes place, Martin herself made an electroacoustic work utilising the sound library of recordings. Referring to the previous advocacy for an additional fifth stage to the CSS framework - in which an artist provides their own creative reflections on the collaborative experience - Martin is entering a different reflection process to that of her participants.

Sowing Seeds generates a retelling of Martin's own experiences as an outsider to the community, highlighting the community's attitude towards industrialisation, climate change and social inequalities. Her creative process also utilised the sound library as a creative restraint, with an understanding that this approach avoids a distinction between her output and the work of the participants.[73] This process, while not an ongoing intervention, and more akin to conventional artistic output, is an important aspect of working with communities through collaborative projects as it provides a novel outlet by which such work can be disseminated. Notably, it provides an opportunity for Martin to present her work to an audience of outsiders, allowing space to critically reflect upon the art that is ultimately presented to those situated outside of the experience. This is important in that it gives space for Martin's art to ultimately take risks and push boundaries without the distractions of an eye-catching participatory model, while simultaneously highlighting the social implications uncovered through this participation.

At the core of Bourriard's relational aesthetics, the role and experience of the participant is foregrounded over the aesthetic value of the final art object. The proposed fifth stage should, in this context, be seen as a direct metaphor for the foregrounding of artists' artwork. Although it could be argued that the proposal for a fifth stage consists of the kind of academic (although in this case artistic) remediation that the CSS framework prohibits, this proposed stage raises questions about where researchers draw this line and posit whether an explicit engagement is ultimately more honest. Community collaboration facilitated by an outsider inevitably results in an authored experience, and it is better to recognise and direct this inevitability, rather than denying its implications. This becomes especially pertinent when socially engaged practices

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[73] Martin, *Interview*.

are documented and presented using the same techniques and contexts as the visual arts, as has often been the case in the tradition of socially engaged practices.[74] Furthermore, the democratisation of evaluatory experiences between the artist and participant can be further supported, if careful attention is paid to the ways in which each are allowed the space to reflect, evaluate, share, and ultimately collaborate on meaningful art projects as one single community.

When considering the importance of participant engagement and community engagement, as underscored by Bourriard's relational aesthetics, the proposed fifth stage emerges as a crucial bridge between autonomous and collaborative art. It facilitates a more balanced distribution of evaluator experiences between the artist and participant, raising important questions about the motivations to engage with communities or, as in the context of this doctoral research, with musicians. Is it simply an exploration of interaction, or does it stem from deeper search for shared knowledge and collective experience?

3.6   Arriving at a Socially Curious Approach to Composition

I consider Martin's project to present a form of curiosity. This curiosity is not just an 'interest'; instead, it is a driving force that pushes artists and composers to consider more deeply the complexities and nuances of the creative process. When engaging with others, this curiosity may uncover layers of shared experiences and knowledge, and perhaps lead to a more considered, collaborative, and meaningful output. This observation has produced an approach that I term 'socially curious composition'. Within this, curiosity can be thought of as a guiding principle to enable the integration of the proposed fifth stage into composition. Regardless of whether the collaboration is with communities, individuals, or groups of people, curiosity is instrumental in recognising and navigating the social dimensions of the work.

Throughout this commentary, I use the term 'curiosity' as an elusive yet pertinent concept that underpins the co-creative process when considering how experimental composition might coincide with a socially engaged practice. While refraining from any strict definition of the term, I have found that curiosity possesses a flexible interpretative quality that facilitates its integration into a diverse range of social situations. Compared to the linear, staged framework of the CSS, curiosity embodies the notion of autonomous co-creation, yet remains open-ended, allowing for the exploration of various pathways and the incorporation of social cues into the compositional process. In the context of my compositional practice, curiosity aims to incorporate the principles of the additional fifth stage positioned alongside the four-stage CSS framework, even though my focus is on working with musicians instead of communities. By

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[74] Such as The Battle of Orgreave Archive. Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 34.

doing so, I intend to create a similar social space that allows for the exchange of experiences and knowledge, while affording all participants varying levels of creative autonomy. This approach represents an attempt to transfer community-driven art concepts to my compositional practice, enabling me to engage more meaningfully with the social dimensions of my work.

The focus on curiosity and experimentation within composition also raises questions about the potential of such approaches to inform and enhance the creative process. This could be relevant in the context of writing with performers or communities, where exploring shared experiences can generate individual creative outputs. In this sense, writing with people can be seen as a form of social experimentation, one that prioritises the process over the outcome, and is driven by a curiosity to explore individuals and their experiences, rather than abstract sounds. As such, this approach can provide a valuable way to develop socially and collaboratively informed composition.

Curiosity, as explored in my work, represents the innate desire to understand and share knowledge. It is the driving force behind why I compose and learn. As philosopher Zora Neale Hurston wrote 'research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.'[75] In this context, I perceive curiosity as a process where the acts of creation and learning transition from being solitary activities to communal explorations, offering a glimpse into diverse perspectives. Intricately linked with this drive for shared exploration is the feeling of vulnerability, a notion that has been extensively researched and developed by Brené Brown. Drawing on Brown's work, vulnerability, in essence, can be seen as the birthplace of creativity.[76] It represents a space where uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure come together. According to Brown, this intersection of vulnerability and curiosity is integral to the process of learning and creativity. Being curious means being open to vulnerability since it requires surrendering to uncertainty.[77] By transforming the curiosity-driven vulnerability into a strength, it encourages a culture of exploration and innovation, nurturing creativity, intelligence, and problem-solving, and enabling a broader understanding of the world.[78]

The term 'socially curious composition', therefore, embodies an exploratory approach to socially engaged practice that allows for the gentle inquiry into an individual and their surroundings or groups of people within shared environments, through the act of composition. Curiosity, as highlighted by Brown, necessitates a certain level of uncertainty and vulnerability,[79] which has emerged to be a crucial element in my work. This distinction, from

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[75] Zora Neale Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1996), 143.
[76] Brené Brown, *Rising Strong*, (London: Vermilion, 2015), 35-36.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.

socially engaged art, is significant as it allows for collaboration with performers on ambiguous terms. Rather than adopting a traditional composer-performer or composer-community dynamic where expert knowledge yields authority, positioning oneself as simply curious, during the making and development of a piece, establishes a more neutral foundation to create together.

In pursuing a socially curious composition, it is important to take into account the role and characteristics of open scores in the context of social interaction. Despite open scores often being a way for composers to introduce social interaction into their work, they are not themselves a social act. Grant Kester provides a comprehensive overview of how the success of socially engaged work depends on the ability to develop relationships with communities that allow for the exploration of different perspectives and experiences, while also recognising the importance of time and space for individual and collective autonomy. Kester emphasises the need for artists to consider the ways in which their work can both facilitate and challenge the status quo, and how this can be achieved through careful attention to the temporal and spatial dynamics of socially engaged practice. Furthermore, he also notes the importance of critical self-reflection and the need to constantly question and refine the methods and goals of art.[80]

To integrate the elements of both open score composition and socially engaged art, it is essential to establish a relationship between the composer and the community or individuals being engaged with. This relationship could take various forms, such as collaborative storytelling, mutual exchange of knowledge and ideas, or co-creation of the elements that make the artistic work. This emphasis on building a relationship is crucial to foster a sense of shared ownership in the creative process, as well as to encourage a deeper understanding and appreciation of the social context and issues being addressed. By establishing such relationships, socially curious composition can effectively serve as a bridge between artistic expression and social engagement, creating a space for meaningful dialogue and transformative experiences for both the composer and individuals they engage with.

3.6.1   Authorship

I am aware of the ongoing debates on authorship,[81,82] particularly in light of my self-given position as the composer of this work. The term 'composer', in this case, represents my role as the creator of the projects; it also signifies instigating collaborations and employing specific

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[80] Grant Kester, 'Time, Autonomy, and Criticality in Socially Engaged Art', in *Beyond Critique: Contemporary Art in Theory, Practice and Instruction*, ed. Fraser Pamela and Roger Rothman (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 97-99.

[81] Lauren Redhead and Richard Glover, eds., *Collaborative and Distributed Processes in Contemporary Music-Making* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018).

[82] Juliet Fraser, 'SHARING THE SPOILS OF A SHARED PRACTICE', *Tempo* 73, no. 290 (October 2019): 51-55, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0040298219000573.

skills and methods to develop and implement the projects. While the label of 'composer' can denote a certain hierarchical stance, in my practice it is meant to highlight the initiating and facilitating role I play within the collaborative creative process.

In instances where a piece is written with a specific individual, I will ensure transparency and to acknowledge the collaboration, I will clearly indicate within the programme or any relevant documentation that the piece was composed 'with' that individual. As for group compositions, though they are inherently collaborative, it is typically the case that the piece has been composed 'for' the group rather than 'with' the group. Once again, I hold the title of 'composer', denoting my responsibility in instigating and guiding the work, while recognising the significant contributions from the entire group. In all situations, my primary aim is to respect the collaborative nature of these creative processes while clearly communicating my specific role within them.

Simultaneously, it is crucial to acknowledge that this terminology, and its associated meanings, are subject to critical reflection and potential evolution. The terminology I use is not static and may transform in response to changing contexts, interpretations, and the evolution of my work. Consequently, the title of 'composer' may not be permanent, but it currently serves as the most appropriate descriptor for my role within these projects.

Authorship also has implications both on initial earnings and future royalties, and I recognise the importance of addressing these topics with nuance. In the case of individual collaborations, where a piece is composed 'with' an individual, I intend to split any initial fee for composing the work and list both parties with collection agencies to jointly share any future royalties. For group compositions, due to the fact that these pieces are designed to be performed by multiple different groups, and given the intricate nature of collaborative creativity, this matter may require ongoing dialogue and careful consideration tailored to the specific circumstances of each project. The engagement of all participants in the creative process necessitates a just distribution of any potential benefits, underlining my commitment to an equal split among all those involved. This approach aligns with the core principles of my socially curious composition, emphasising the value of shared experiences and the necessity for just, equitable practices within my composition projects.

3.7   Observing Curiosity in Other Compositions

In this section I discuss a selection of composers whose practices align with my notion of socially curious composition. These composers create in a way where either active involvement in the creative process is fundamental, or performers are tasked with varying degrees of social responsibilities when crafting performance material. Be it in the creation of

the work or in its performance, these composers create an inclusive environment where collaboration and curiosity is encouraged and celebrated.

Through the following examples, I intend to show how composers and performers have come together in exploratory and communal environments and how open scores have been utilised by composers to create social contexts. It is worth re-emphasising, however, that the notion of socially curious composition is not a novel artistic practice per se. Instead, it represents a nuanced approach to socially engaged art, one that embraces ambiguity and uncertainty and emphasises the role of curious exploration in the creative process. Furthermore, this is my framing of the work, which may not necessarily align with the composers' self-perceived intentions or considerations they had while creating their pieces. Through this lens, I introduce the creative practices of Cassandra Miller, Éliane Radigue, Leah Barclay, Pauline Oliveros, Michael Baldwin, and James Saunders. By connecting their works with my own approach to composition, I aim to show how these composers can forge a more intimate connection with the individuals or groups for whom their pieces are written for. In doing so, I hope to shed light on the ways in which my interpretation of a curious approach to composition has impacted my portfolio of compositions presented alongside this commentary.

3.7.1   Collaborative Compositions

Cassandra Miller and Juliet Fraser's *Tracery*

Cassandra Miller has introduced a new strand to her composing since 2016, moving towards placing a greater emphasis on the process of creating and generating musical material. This approach involves actively engaging performers in the generation of musical material, allowing them to play a direct role in the creative process.[83]

One such example of Miller's interest in this approach can be seen in her collaboration with soprano Juliet Fraser on the piece *Tracery* (2017). Instead of a traditional approach to scoring, Miller employs a methodology that involves close collaboration with Fraser. The work uses an audio score that Fraser listens to through headphones. Miller uses different types of source material in her audio scores, from non-notated traditions such as Hardanger fiddle tunes, Ben Johnston's string quartets, punk rock music by the Slits, and conversational dialogue between Robert Ashley and Pauline Oliveros.[84] The audio score serves as a starting point for the creation of new material: Miller introduces Fraser to full body scan meditation as a means of generating vocal responses. The result is a layering of experiences that evolve over time, with

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[83] Juliet Fraser, 'The Voice That Calls the Hand to Write: Exploring the Adventure of Agency and Authorship within Collaborative Partnerships' (Collaboration Is More Refreshing Than New Socks, Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp, 2019), https://www.julietfraser.co.uk/essays/, 10.
[84] Miller, 'Tracery: Lazy, Rocking.'

previous interactions being recorded and fed back into the work, allowing the piece to grow and develop over time.[85]

Through workshops, rehearsals, and preparatory performances, *Tracery* became a modular process layering musical expression over time. Fraser has provided insight into the development of *Tracery*, describing how it began as an introduction to meditation and evolved into a process of 'automatic singing' reminiscent of the 'pure psychic automatism' practised by Surrealists.[86] She reflects on the deeply personal nature of meditation and the emotional responses it can evoke, including moments of vulnerability where she found herself sobbing during rehearsals. These unexpected results challenged both Fraser and Miller, leading to a far more unique and unexpected sound world than initially anticipated.[87]

Fraser emphasises that *Tracery* emerged from a place of shared vulnerability during discussions on their careers, music-making, and what 'good' means for a piece or performance. By embracing the meditative process and allowing for the unexpected to shape the work, Miller and Fraser were able to create something far more nuanced and unconventional than they may have otherwise. As Fraser notes, this approach challenges the very notion of what matters in music-making and results in far stranger outcomes than they initially anticipated.[88]

Miller and Fraser have so far created four versions of the piece, each one building on the last to create a continuously evolving documentation of their close collaboration and shared learning on the transformative nature of mimicry over time. Miller describes the process as 'an amplification of the relationship between her physical impulses and the music being created',[89] and it is this approach that I believe demonstrates a connect with my notion of a socially curious composition. Miller and Fraser's collaboration on *Tracery* emphasises a deep engagement with each other's artistic practices, valuing the building of relationships between collaborators and the exchange of knowledge and experiences. By embracing emotions that may be seen as unwanted or uncomfortable, Fraser and Miller highlight, as Kester notes in his writing on socially engaged art, the importance of self-reflection and the need to constantly question and refine methods and goals of art. By engaging in an ongoing process of exploration and layering, Miller and Fraser cultivate a work that is firmly rooted in their shared experiences and values. They utilise vulnerability as a powerful tool for music-making, embodying Brené Brown's approach to curiosity as a raw, uncertain, and vulnerable means to

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85 Ibid.
86 Fraser, 'The Voice that Calls the Hand to Write,' 10.
87 Ibid, 10-11.
88 Ibid.
89 Miller, 'Tracery: Lazy, Rocking.'

creativity.[90] By eschewing conventional composer-performer hierarchies, which often place emphasis on achieving specific end goals, they prioritise relationship-building and collaborative learning in their music-making practice.

Éliane Radigue's *Occam Ocean*

Éliane Radigue is best known for her contributions to the field of electronic music and her use of long-duration drone techniques and synthesised sounds. However, in Radigue's more recent creative output she has moved away from electronic music towards composing for acoustic instruments and collaborating closely with musicians.

Radigue's *Occam Ocean* (2011-) project features a series compositions consisting of multiple solos that are specifically written for individual musicians and their respective instruments, with the occasional combination of solos to create ensemble works in a modular format. Despite her change in focus towards composing for acoustic instruments, Éliane Radigue's interest in long-duration drones remains a defining characteristic of her work. With that being said, Luke Nickel has observed that her acoustic compositions generally feature shorter durations, typically lasting around 15-30 minutes, as opposed to the extended durations that are a hallmark of her electronic pieces.[91] In a conversation with Nickel, Radigue revealed that this shift in duration is simply a result of changes in her abilities in concentration.[92] These compositions often explore the sonic nuances and timbral complexities of individual instruments, allowing for the unique tonal qualities of the instrument and their idiosyncratic connection with Radigue's musical and non-musical stimuli.

While Miller's work involves a direct engagement with specific sonic material through the use of headphones, Radigue's approach to composition is more conversational in its creative process. In fact, the compositions of Radigue are conveyed exclusively to the performer through a series of dialogues held prior to and during the creative process, without the publication of written scores or other tangible forms of documentation for public consumption. This approach to composition fosters an intimate relationship between Radigue and the musicians, allowing for a personal interpretation to emerge out of each instance. Nickel's research indicates a consistent pattern in the *Occam Ocean* pieces, whereby performers typically initiate a collaboration with Radigue by engaging in various forms of discourse, such as written letters, CD-audio samples, phone calls, and then eventually in-person meetings. The performers meet with Radigue at her home in Paris, where they discuss in-depth the key

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[90] Brown, *Rising Strong*.
[91] Nickel, 'Occam Notions,' 24.
[92] Ibid.

principles of the *Occam Ocean* series, whereby performers attempt to gain an understanding of its conceptual background.[93]

Subsequently, the performers are presented with a water-themed image, which serves as a stimulus for the work's structure and conception.[94] Nickel suggests that collaborations do not invariably result in a completed composition, except in cases where a pre-existing relationship or an apparent performance opportunity is present.[95] Appreciating this subtle aspect of collaboration is crucial to my approach to composition during my doctoral studies, as I look to develop a comprehension of why certain musical creations prove to be successful, whereas others appear to be forced and unbalanced during the creative process. Pinpointing failed artistic ventures or discovering alternative avenues represents a necessary outcome of the inquisitiveness and openness that is apparent in a curious approach to composition. Such outcomes, which stem from creative collaboration, appear equally representative in Radigue's work as they do in my own. This is an area I will draw on more deeply in my composition commentaries in chapters 4 and 5.

Radigue's *Occam Ocean* can be seen as an embodiment of curiosity that necessitates a shared understanding between the composer and performer for the latter to engage with the conceptual meaning of the work. This aspect of curiosity is similarly evident in Miller's collaborations, where the performer demonstrates a willingness to engage with non-musical elements of the work. In order for performers to be engaged with the creative process, their curiosity is equally essential as the composer's. In the case of *Occam Ocean*, the performer is expected to provide the impetus for creation and must be open to vulnerability in the process, including setting aside traditional barriers such as training, private practice, and rehearsal. Furthermore, Radigue's compositions are vulnerable in themselves, with the composer asserting that the performers are the rightful owners of the solo works and are even empowered to decide on their transmission to another performer.[96] The ephemeral quality of each solo piece means that the works are subject to forgetting, reshaping, growth, change and distortion over time, with performers holding ultimate agency over the future of the work. In this context, Radigue's shared work is an exemplar of a pure form of curious vulnerability.

Leah Barclay's *Biosphere Soundscapes*

Leah Barclay, a researcher and artist, focuses primarily on participatory projects that encourage people to engage with natural environments through sound. Her work centres around community engagement and accessibility, and has been informed by the fields of

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[93] Ibid, 25-26.
[94] Ibid, 25.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid, 26.

acoustic ecology and ecoacoustics.[97] Her doctoral research led to the development of the Sonic Ecologies framework, which involves creating site-specific projects in collaboration with communities to inspire environmental awareness.[98] The *Biosphere Soundscapes* project, launched in 2012, uses sound and listening to explore cultural and biological diversity through accessible audio-recording technologies. The project balances scientific and artistic perspectives, using environmental field recordings for biodiversity analysis and as source material for creative works.[99] Barclay's approach to community engagement through field recording offers an accessible and affordable way to connect individuals and communities with listening and environmental awareness. Before beginning my PhD research, I valued field recordings as an essential element in my compositions. I prefer affordable and accessible recording methods, prioritising the process of capturing sound over high-end equipment for pristine audio quality. Throughout my work I have sought to follow Barclay's approach by fostering an accessible and user-friendly means of promoting environmental awareness through sound.

Barclay's approach to creating site-specific sound projects balances ecological knowledge with community engagement. Her projects, such as *Sound Mirrors* and *River Listening,* draw on community perspectives to create work that reflects the environment. Over time, the focus of her work has shifted towards a stronger emphasis on ecological context.[100] In line with Barclay's approach, I similarly prioritise collaborative activities and mutual learning about local environments over teaching about environmental decline. Like Barclay, I believe that shared knowledge and perspectives are crucial in creating a meaningful context that emerges from the collaborative process.

Barclay's *Sonic Ecologies* project, for example, involves interdisciplinary collaborations and partnerships with various organisations such as governments, schools, scientific and conservation groups. According to Barclay, regular community consultation and meetings are critical when ensuring the success of local projects. *Sonic Ecologies* also encourages artists to consider the long-term impact and intentions of the project and importance of community engagement in ensuring the sustainability of long-term projects.[101] For example, Barclay's own composition *Temporal Encounters* features in situ field recordings that explore unheard ecosystems, making use of aquatic recordings as a way of listening to underwater sounds. The piece has been used in scientific presentations to compare recordings over long durations,

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[97] Barclay, "Listening to Communities, 145.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid, 146-7.
[100] Ibid, 148-9.
[101] Ibid, 154.

and they have also been made available to the communities of biosphere reserves for use in local activities and ongoing collaborations.[102]

Barclay's open-access approach to field recordings for artistic purposes is reflected in Martin's *Sowing Seeds,* which as previously discussed also embraces how artists can interact with collected experiences in creative ways, inviting a renegotiation of other artists' work and prompting a shared space for making. This approach emphasises the importance of community engagement, inviting people from different backgrounds and perspectives to collaborate in the creation of something that promotes local individual narratives. By promoting a culture of openness and collaboration, artists like Barclay and Martin are helping to build bridges between individuals and communities, inspiring forms of artistic expression and promoting a more inclusive and socially engaged society.

3.7.2   Open Scored Compositions

Pauline Oliveros' *Ear Piece*

Oliveros' *Ear Piece* (1998) is a text score that is designed to encourage a private interaction between the reader and their audible surroundings. Rather than being intended for performance in front of an audience, the score consists of 13 questions that are ordered numerically, but that offer no further guidance or instruction. The reader is encouraged to reflect on each question, using their inner monologue to consider their present listening habits, engaging with both Oliveros' written material and their current surroundings.

For instance, the first question in Oliveros' score is '1) Are you listening now?', which encourages the reader to actively engage with their environment and initiate an internal dialogue. In his co-authored book 'Word Events', James Saunders argues that although eight of the questions are closed, requiring a yes or no response, they can elicit more nuanced and complex answers that invite further exploration and reflection.[103] The first question of Oliveros' *Ear Piece* may appear deceptively simple, but it carries a nuanced implication that prompts the reader to consider the meaning and context of listening. The subsequent questions build upon this foundation and add layers of complexity to the concept of listening. For example, questions 2 and 3 inquire whether the reader is truly listening to what they are hearing and whether they are capable of hearing while listening. This gradual layering of questioning elegantly encapsulates one of Oliveros' core messages, namely the distinction between hearing and listening, which she explores in her writing on Deep Listening.[104]

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[102] Ibid, 155.
[103] John Lely and James Saunders, "Commentary: Ear Piece," in *Word Events: Perspectives on Verbal Notation* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2012), 290.
[104] Oliveros, *Deep Listening,* xxii.

Oliveros herself suggested that many of her scores, which she terms *Sonic Meditations,* were originally presented as verbal instructions and were only later written down. She believed that the purpose of these instructions is to initiate an attention process within the participant or group, which can deepen over time with repeated experience.[105] This approach bears a resemblance to Radigue's transmission of verbal notation. Nevertheless, the discernible difference between the two lies in Oliveros' intention for her instructions to be universally applicable, rather than tailored towards individual performers. In my work, both approaches possess significant importance to my approach to composition. On one hand, Radigue's approach fosters a boundary-pushing level of collaboration, enabling performers to interact with her ideas in deliberate ways. On the other hand, Oliveros' approach allows for the creation of pieces that present her concepts with lucidity and straightforwardness, making them accessible to all who engage with her work. *Ear Piece's* ability to encourage reflection and exploration without relying on complex theories or technical jargon is an important aspect of the work. By simply asking open-ended questions and encouraging active engagement with one's surroundings, Oliveros creates a space for participants to explore their own listening habits and develop a deeper understanding of the sonic environment around them. The score also highlights the importance of attention and mindfulness in listening practice, and suggests that active engagement with our surroundings can lead to greater understanding and appreciation of the soundscape in which we live.

While *Ear Piece* is intended as private experience, Pauline Oliveros' other works are designed for group performance. In these pieces, such as *Collective Environmental Composition* (1975) and *Environmental Dialogue* (1996 Revision), Oliveros creates a social space for participants to perform with each other through sound and listening. Despite its initially private nature, *Ear Piece* invites a sense of social entanglement as the performer engages with their environment and inner monologue. When I have performed *Ear Piece* in various group settings, from workshops to educational environments, what emerges each time is a profound sense of collective curiosity, a communal exploration of our individual auditory experiences.

Ear Piece presents an intriguing juxtaposition: it is a socially private work that simultaneously allows for meaningful, abstracted engagement with others. The engagement nurtures a deeper understanding of oneself and one's relationship with the surrounding environment. Furthermore, it adopts a curious approach to listening, inviting participants to connect their idiosyncrasies in a way that engenders curiosity. In my experience of performing *Ear Piece,* as part of a group, I found that the piece invited not only introspective exploration, but also a sense of communal curiosity. The way the work continued in conversation among participants beautifully captured our differences in hearing, interpreting, and reacting. Oliveros, through

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[105] Ibid, 29.

Ear Piece, encourages an openness, an inquisitiveness about how to listen and engage with surroundings.

Michael Baldwin's *a kind of nostalgia*

In *a kind of nostalgia* (2014), Michael Baldwin employs physical mimicry instead of the sonic mimicry discussed in Miller's work. In Baldwin's words, 'the piece involves an experienced 'guitarist' playing a simple piece of their choosing from memory, and another 'performer', who may or may not be an experienced guitarist, holding a guitar. The 'performer' is sat across from the' guitarist' in a mirrored position and is read like a score, their physical movements being copied by the guitarist.'[106] This approach results in an intriguing contrast between musical performance and stilted counterpoint, generating a sense of unbalance between the polished performance of the guitarist and their mimicry of the performer.

The performance considers intentional musical and physical movement, and involuntary musical physical movement. For example, in the annotated performance from Diego Castro Magas (guitarist) and Baldwin (performer), Baldwin notes that he attempts to imitate Magas unintentional eyebrow movement.[107] This involuntary movement, or perhaps expressive movement, becomes incorporated into the piece, blurring the boundary between the guitarist guiding the player, and the player shaping their own interpretation of the performance.

Baldwin often employs the concept of recontextualising emotions, whereby one can transform a gesture or sound through another's perception. As Tim Rutherford-Johnson notes, he takes this idea even further with his later composition *Affective… hopes of being moved to feel… Ripples,* which is designed to be played before a concert begins and continue throughout the evening, layering over the other pieces being performed. The musicians wear earpieces that emit sounds linked to different emotions.[108] Baldwin states that the composition is intended to evoke a particular emotional response from the audience, saying:

> Affective Ripples is composed to alter, expand, and sensitise the emotional tenor of a concert before and during the event by turning programme notes into a performed, scripted, and embodied activity, and distributing shared emotional cues across multiple musicians whilst performing and listening to programmed pieces made by myself and other music-makers.[109]

Baldwin's *A Kind Of Nostalgia* distinguishes itself from the other examples in this chapter by focusing on the physical, non-sonic elements of performance, setting it apart from the emphasis on sonification and knowledge-sharing. Despite this departure, the composition

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[106] Michael Baldwin, 'a kind of nostalgia,' Michael Baldwin, accessed 16 September 2021, https://michaelbaldwin.online/compositions/#nostalgia.
[107] Michael Baldwin, 'a kind of nostalgia', Vibby.com, accessed 16 September 2021, https://www.vibby.com/watch?vib=XyZB_rjQJM.
[108] Tim Rutherford-Johnson, 'Unsettling Scores,' *The Wire*, September 2017, 32.
[109] Baldwin, 'a kind of nostalgia.'

effectively conveys its intentions to the audience, as evidenced by the visible act of mimicry in its performance. While not an obvious connection to the translation of emotive performance, the composition's simplicity evokes a sense of real-time expression that is recognisable and visually stimulating. The curious focus on non-sonic elements and its ability to captivate audiences through its oddity highlight the significance of conveying performative and non-sonic ideas in a straightforward way. This idea resonates in my own work, as I strive to connect performative and non-sonic ideas within my compositions in a way that is both accessible and engaging to performers and audiences alike.

James Saunders' *all voices are heard*

In James Saunders' *all voices are heard* (2015), he explores a method of collective decision-making. The piece aims to achieve group consensus by having all players play a statement in unison, reaching agreement on its uniformity. Unlike Baldwin's work, where one player makes decisions on whether to copy, mimic, or enhance the actions of another, Saunders' piece asks all performers to make quick and successive decisions while playing, using heuristics. As Saunders cites in his article on heuristics, Gerd Gigerenzer and Wolfgang Gaissmaier define heuristics as 'strategies that ignore part of the information to make decisions more quickly, frugally, and accurately than more complex methods.'[110] Using this principle, Saunders develops a system where performers can choose to consent, stand aside, or block phrases presented by other members of the group. These actions mirror the 'search rules', 'stopping rules', and 'decision rules' proposed by Gigerenzer and Gaissmaier.[111] Saunders uses heuristics to allow both the performers and audiences to hear the decision-making process in real-time, where the resulting statements become increasingly linked as the piece progresses.

The use of heuristics in open-form group pieces, such as *all voices are heard,* creates an environment in which varying behaviours can emerge from collective, yet individual, decision making. The performers, required to listen and respond in real-time, must be mindful of their individual contributions to the sequence. The decisions made by one performer can have a ripple effect throughout the group, ultimately affecting the direction and outcome of the piece. This type of open score composition encourages performances that are not predetermined, but rather emerge in the moment. This can lead to a sense of shared ownership of the piece, as well as a sense of unpredictability for both the performers and the audience. Saunders' work, in this context, presents a live social performance, contrasting to other examples in this chapter such as Miller/Fraser and Radigue's work, as it requires little preparatory work for

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[110] James Saunders, 'Heuristic Models for Decision Making in Rule-Based Compositions', in *Proceedings of the Ninth Triennial Conference of the European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music*, 2015, 715.
[111] Ibid, 715-18.

performance and heavily relies on listening rather than sharing ideas, concepts or knowledge. The piece presents faults and challenges in performance, where mistakes are welcomed as part of the playing process.

From my experience performing this piece, I observed interesting social behaviours that emerged during the performance. Notably, I noticed that members of the group who had previously performed Saunders' works had a more significant influence on the sequence's outcome, with their elements present through the work and in the final iteration. This aspect of the performance intrigued me, leading me to question how a composition could address live decision-making tasks where previous musical experiences have less of an impact on the performance. Such a piece could prevent hierarchies from emerging due to other factors disrupting the performance, making experienced and novice performers encounter similar challenges. Saunders' work has been a significant influence on the compositions featured in chapter 5, where I present three pieces that disrupt the playing experience through a range of methods. These include individual and micro-group tasks, the introduction of noise to the playing experience, and the incorporation of non-musical interruptions and social situations during performance. By implementing these disruptive elements in the composition purposely, I look to create unexpected situations where performers have to react instinctively. This results in a form of socially curious composition where all performers are fully responsive to the immediate context of the performance.

3.8   Conclusions

In conclusion, this chapter has proposed the notion of 'curiosity' within the context of socially engaged art practices and experimental composition. While the CSS framework provides a useful guide for socially engaged art practices, the open-ended and exploratory nature of curiosity allows for greater flexibility and responsiveness to social contexts and individuals involved. Curiosity can facilitate the creation of a social space that encourages exchange of experiences and knowledge, while providing all participants with varying levels of creative autonomy. This approach, which transfers community-driven art concepts to compositional practice, provides a means to engage more meaningfully with the social dimensions of my work.

As explored in the composition examples in this chapter, curiosity can be thought of as an important aspect of collaboration between composer and performer. The emphasis on building relationships and fostering a sense of sharing in the creative process is crucial to the success of applying a socially curious approach to my compositions. By establishing such relationships, socially curious composition can serve as a bridge between artistic expression and social engagement, creating a space for meaningful dialogue and transformative experiences for both the composer and the individuals or groups that engage with the work. Ultimately, the

incorporation of curiosity in compositional practice represents a shift towards a more open and collaborative approach, which acknowledges and embraces the exchange of ideas, experiences and perspectives within social contexts. In this chapter, I have suggested the significance of a shared understanding between the composer and performer, as well as the necessity for both parties to engage with the conceptual meaning of the work, in particular, through the commentaries of Miller/Fraser and Radigue. However, as will be explored in the following chapters, my approach to curious composition has encountered barriers, leading to a valuable discovery rooted in the notion of trespass. This finding will be comprehensively examined and analysed in chapter 6 of this commentary.

Chapter 4. Compositions for Solo Performer

4.1   Introduction

This chapter outlines and interrogates my compositional approach in the solo pieces within my submitted portfolio. A core motivation underpinning this approach was to create a collaborative environment tailored to each performer. Prior to my doctoral study, my compositional methods usually resulted in the private development of pieces, with little engagement from outside sources other than my teachers and composer colleagues. There was very rarely any engagement or interaction with performers until the rehearsal period. While my compositions considered individual playing abilities and preferences for traditional musical notation or more experimental methods, performers were nonetheless excluded from the main phase of the creative process. The emphasis tended to lean towards a successful workshop or performance, allowing little room for extended collaborations or iterative reconfigurations of the composition.

My earlier works, then, were largely created within the conventional classical music model of a composer who does their creative work in advance. While this paradigm has obviously led to a great deal of wonderful music that I value and enjoy as a listener and performer, during this PhD I have moved away from this model. One frustration I had with the traditional model is the limited time the composer and performer share together. Another was that I wanted to make work that asked performers to go beyond the traditional scope of being interpreters. With a motivation akin to proponents of socially engaged art, I wanted to make compositions that were meaningful participatory experiences for performers.

I began to feel that I wanted to unpack my creative decisions and intentions more thoroughly. This was especially true when I was working on pieces that I thought had potential for being co-developed with the performer(s).[112] I had become even more interested in this idea of creative engagement by my encounter with works such as Jennifer Walshe's *THIS IS WHY PEOPLE O.D. ON PILLS/AND JUMP FROM THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE* (2004) and Alvin Lucier's *(Hartford) Memory Space* (1970). These pieces necessitate the performers to immerse themselves actively in the creative fabric of the work. Walshe's score, for instance,

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[112] However, I am fully aware that expecting such an engagement from performers during workshop settings is not realistic, nor is it fair. Rather than substituting one creative process for another, my intention is to create pieces that are suited to either a workshop environment or a more collaborative scenario, as the situation demands. This way, each piece can be shaped to either setting.

requires the performer to experience the world of skateboarding prior to playing the piece,[113] whereas Lucier's instructions ask performers collect sounds, using any method the performer wishes (including memory, field recording, written notes, etc.) before recreating the sounds from memory using only their voices and instruments.[114] These compositions highlighted for me the impact of early engagement in shaping the final artistic outcome.

A central element underpinning my new compositional approach in these solo pieces is the emphasis on listening as a collaborative and creative practice. By focusing on how performers actively listen to their local environments and to the sounds collected through field recordings, I try to deepen their involvement in the creative process. Listening becomes not just a passive act but a formative one, as it shapes performers' interpretations and decisions within each composition. Engaging with field recordings encourages performers to listen intentionally, drawing connections between the auditory environment and their own creative expression.

This chapter presents four compositions, each revolving around the involvement of specific performers and their local environments, employing field recordings as a way of connecting with environments producing a common thread among my pieces. The commentary follows a chronological path, presenting the process and collaborative relationships that informed each piece. By focusing on how field recordings are used as a creative starting point and as a means of interaction with musicians' local environments, this chapter explores the first research question by demonstrating how these recordings contribute to enhancing the listener's awareness and sensitivity toward their sonic surroundings. Furthermore, this chapter examines the second research question by showing how incorporating the principles of socially engaged art into these compositions encourages performers to engage deeply with local sounds through listening, thereby providing the audience with a nuanced observation of this interaction. After the commentary on each composition, I provide a short summary of the outcomes of each piece. This method serves as a constructive mirror to my creative process, enabling me to reflect on both the successes and questions that have arisen from my pieces.

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[113] Walshe goes far beyond the superficial aspects of skateboarding. She prompts performers to delve into the multi-layered experience of skateboarding, encouraging them to contemplate how their bodies interact with the skateboard and the environment around them. She invites performers to meditate, learn tricks, and become acutely aware of the surfaces they skateboard over. She urges them to visit skateboard parks and immerse themselves fully in the world of skateboarding, to imagine the path they might take on their board. Jennifer Walshe, *THIS IS WHY PEOPLE O.D. ON PILLS/AND JUMP FROM THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE*, 2004. https://www.cmc.ie/music/why-people-od-pillsand-jump-golden-gate-bridge.
[114] Alvin Lucier and Douglas Simon, *Chambers* (Middletown (CT): Wesleyan University press, 1980), 43.

4.2 *electric guitar, in Southmead* (*1m55sec*) (2018)

The first composition to feature in my portfolio was written with guitarist Ben Jameson, titled *electric guitar, in Southmead*. It is the first instance in which I have used field recordings as a stimulus for making musical material, using text instructions combined with audio to generate musical responses. The composition features a binaural field recording that was selected from joint soundwalking excursions that Ben and I made together in Southmead, Bristol.[115] The chosen recording, lasting 1 minute and 55 seconds, acts as a frame for musical interpretation, which takes place throughout the performance.

Initially driven by my interest in collecting field recordings and exploring different ways of listening to environmental sounds, this project focused on aspects of Ben's local environment that he would normally choose to ignore. Instead of focusing solely on tranquil and picturesque locations, we shifted our attention to the sounds that Ben encountered in his daily routine but often overlooked. I realised that areas of relative quietude did not provide significant opportunity for engagement, so we turned our focus to places where Ben was exposed to a high volume of sounds but tended to tune them out during his everyday activities. Our explorations led us to capture the sounds experienced during Ben's regular walk to work, including the noises of cars, planes, and pedestrians.

During the process of making this piece, Ben and I had been performing together as part of a piano and guitar duo. In our previous projects, we had always used some form of musical notation. Although we had experimented with various forms of open scores, our focus was mainly on interpreting notes rather than text. Therefore, I was curious to see how Ben would react to a combination of audio and written text. To explore this, I decided to select only one short recording that encompassed the sounds that we captured and discussed during our soundwalking excursion. The use of a single recording allowed me to encourage Ben to listen more closely and intensely, offering me the opportunity to explore how text instructions might push Ben's listening and performing into a space where he was perhaps less comfortable.

The objective of my text instructions was to highlight different areas of the recording and ask Ben to respond to them by imitating, echoing, or mapping the sounds he heard. This approach takes into consideration Michel Chion's three listening modes: causal listening (identifying sound sources), semantic listening (sociocultural interpretation of signs and messages), and reduced listening (sound as a purely sonorous phenomenon).[116] For the performance aspect

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[115] I have found making field recordings, especially when using my binaural setup in which the microphones resemble headphones, lends itself to a less imposing way of capturing environmental sounds.

[116] Michel Chion, Claudia Gorbman, and Walter Murch, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 25-33.

of this work, I was mainly interested in incorporating the reduced listening mode, diverging from external associations or meanings in favour of directing Ben's attention towards the sounds themselves. While this approach may seem somewhat predictable, we practised causal listening during our recording session, and semantic listening occurred in our conversations surrounding Ben's decisions about when to listen and when to block out sounds. As the piece moved into a performance orientated direction, it felt appropriate to explore further into the sonic qualities of these sounds, activating Ben's attentive listening; much like the sonic meditation compositions by Oliveros, the deep listening practice and pieces she creates aim to amplify and broaden sound consciousness across as many different dimensions of awareness as possible. This ongoing process of re-engaging, fine-tuning, and thinking about sounds, I believe, taps into the parallel concepts that Oliveros unravels through her meditation connections. She specifically aligns her practice with the act of focusing attention and widening consciousness, which ties to her premise that 'humans have ideas. Ideas drive consciousness forward to new perceptions and perspectives.'[117]

electric guitar, in Southmead features six sections, each of which incorporates one playthrough of the same field recording. The field recording is 1'55'' in length, although in the final section it extends to 2'35''. The recording is framed by the sound of a plane moving from the left side to the right side of the stereo field, followed by various real-world sounds including cars, dogs, and pedestrians, and abruptly ends with the sound of a car passing by and hitting a speed hump, creating a jarring halt to the section.

The first section of the piece does not feature an obvious start to the performance, as the direction prompts Ben to place the guitar on his lap and listen with the audience. I opted to have Ben physically lower the guitar in order to shift the audience's focus towards the presented field recording. The recording begins with three beeps, which signify the beginning and return of the field recording in each section of the piece. However, during the later sections of the work the field recording is not heard by the audience. Only Ben can now hear and respond to what is heard in his headphones. Instead, the audience can hear the opening beeps that start each section and the passing car that marks the end of each section. These two sounds provide a clear frame for each section and offer a subtle insight into what the performer might be hearing through the headphones. Each section changes the way Ben interacts with the source of the recording, as shown below:

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[117] Oliveros, *Deep Listening,* xxiii-iv.

Figure 4.1: Section outline for *electric guitar, in Southmead*

Section:	Source:	Technique:
2	Aeroplane	Mapping aeroplane volume - this technique involves Ben continually adjusting his volume based on the perceived volume of an aeroplane. The given instruction prompts Ben to remain slightly below the volume of the plane, following its fluctuations as accurately as possible. This technique leads to exaggerated volume changes, particularly when the performer becomes too loud and quickly drops in volume to try and reposition their sound against that of the aeroplane.
3	Dog Barking	Echoing the sound of dogs barking through harmonics - this technique requires the performer to carefully sift through the recording to pick up on distant sounds of dogs barking. Unlike other techniques that aim for accurate representation, the echo technique grants the performer creative freedom in their response to the sounds
4	Human Activity	An open response to nearby human activity - this section provides Ben with the freedom to choose how he interprets the sounds present. In this case, Ben opted to recreate the jangling keys heard at the beginning of the field recording. To achieve this, he used a slide high up in the register and imitated the sound of the keys. He then removed the guitar lead from the jack socket to imitate the sound of the door opening.
5	Passing Car	Imitation of a passing car - this technique focuses primarily on the imitation of the gestural and timbral qualities of a passing car. The given direction provides some references, such as the use of a distortion pedal to achieve the desired effect. While not explicitly stated in the score, Ben and I were interested to recreate the impatient car driver during the recording, attempting to replicate the aggressive and hurried nature of the car passing.

The final section of the piece culminates in a display of all the previous sections, highlighting moments from each section. The field recording is also reintroduced for the audience, at this point making a clear connection between the first section and the following sections where Ben was listening through headphones. My intention was to weave together these two disparate performance zones, while also providing a satisfying explanation to the audience members. As a result, they hopefully gain a deeper understanding of how the piece works and receive answers to any lingering questions about what Ben might have been listening to.

As an early exploration of my socially curious approach to composition, this work provided an important starting point for collaborative pieces, due to the pre-existing professional relationship I shared with Ben. Through the creation of specific readings, I was able to deliberately challenge Ben's listening process, allowing for the composition to explore autonomous decision-making, curiosity-driven conversations, and interesting sonic outcomes. While initially tailored for someone I know well, I believe the process and structure for this work

can be readily adapted for future projects. In fact, I could see it as a text score, where the performer is tasked with creating a short recording and asked to employ similar methods to magnify and deconstruct the field recording through repetitive exploration. The inherent structure of this piece lends itself to such abstraction and opens possibilities for further projects to unfold as a result of the work.

One potential issue that I think arises from this work, particularly as piece which is likely to be consumed as an ordinary performance work, is that the context and aspects of performer autonomy are not well translated to an audience. While joint decision-making and private deliberation were necessary for the successful completion of the work, it does raise questions about the role of individual contributions in a socially curious composition and how that role is presented openly. While this may not have been a primary focus of this piece, it is nonetheless an important consideration for the future development of socially curious compositions, as individual contributions play a crucial role in generating a meaningful and engaging creative output, whether this is openly clear for an audience or solely for the individual performer themselves.

4.2.1   Outcomes (*electric guitar, in Southmead* (*1m55sec*))

Shared creative understanding:

A shared creative understanding was readily facilitated by our prior professional relationship, which provided a pre-existing foundation of familiarity. Consequently, the establishment of common ground and effective communication was achieved with relative ease at an early stage of our collaboration. Joint soundwalking excursions provided a space for discussions to unfold organically during the activity, thereby offering a more natural and unforced exchange of ideas. The sounding excursions also served as an integral focal point for the composition, as they provided a shared source of inspiration and creative material.

While the benefits of having a pre-existing professional relationship certainly aided the successful development of the project, it is important to consider the potential limitations of this familiarity. In particular, the ease with which the process unfolded may have been influenced by previous collaborative experiences. This raises a crucial question regarding the application of this same process to performers with whom I have not previously collaborated with. In essence, what challenges and ideas might arise from working with an unfamiliar performer, and how might these factors shape and influence the compositional process and outcome?

Clear structure, unclear context:

The use of a clear and focused structure enabled the composition to effectively separate and explore various listening styles for the performer, with an emphasis on the reduced listening mode. This approach offered diverse results from a limited stimulus, creating a hyper-exaggerated and focused response. While this composition offered a valuable opportunity to explore the creative process through its structure, the lack of information regarding the context and method of the field recordings may leave the curiosity that generated the piece confined solely to the composer and performer. This absence of context has prompted some considerations regarding how future compositions might explore and incorporate the process of generating field recordings.

Noise as a clear and audible feature:

The implementation of noise as a feature in this composition was largely confined to subtle instances that were likely only perceptible to the performer. One such instance occurred during the 'mapping aeroplane volume' technique, where the guitar sound occasionally became too loud due to the need to adjust to the volume of the aeroplane. This resulted in an exaggerated performance style that is probably imperceptible to an audience. While noise was not a primary focus in this solo piece, this nonetheless raises important questions and considerations for future compositions. Namely, how to effectively incorporate noise as an element of the composition so that it is clear to an audience.

4.3   *With Juliet* (2019)

My next project looked to build upon the collaborative thread established in *electric guitar, in Southmead*, through explorations collecting field recordings related to local environments. However, a critical aspect of this project involved working with a performer with whom I had no prior collaborative experience. As such, it was necessary to establish an initial creative process, dialogue, and conceptual understanding of the work before moving into the development stage. Although this was a critical and necessary step, as I will discuss in this commentary, it became apparent that there was much to learn in creating a clear and straightforward starting point for a socially curious approach in this manner.

To this end, I had the opportunity to work alongside soprano Juliet Fraser at the University of Southampton's Get Together, an annual composition event that offers a platform for guests to engage in discussion on recent topics and provides an opportunity for PhD students to collaborate with performers. The aim of this collaboration was to develop a work that explored

Juliet's local environment, employing my approach to composition in a way that foregrounded Juliet's engagement with the sonic materials of her surroundings.

Through individual conversations with Juliet, it became apparent that the same processes employed in my previous work for guitar would not be appropriate. This was primarily due to Juliet's other commitments and shared obligations to other pieces during the residency, making it difficult to spend time observing and discussing her environment. As a result, I had to decide the best way to engage Juliet with her local environment before embarking on the composition process. After a short period of discussion with Juliet, we decided I would make solo soundwalking excursions and collect field recordings without further consultation.

This approach resulted in a method whereby I engaged with Juliet's local environment, prompting her to make creative decisions based on the outcomes. In our collaborative work, we intentionally avoided discussing the visual context. However, through our ongoing dialogue, we picked up on references to specific places giving a general idea of where some of the recordings took place. This allowed Juliet to offer informed observations on the sounds she heard, drawing connections and parallels to the sounds she personally encounters during her daily activities. Cohen et al.'s study on auditory and visual recognition provides further insight into this. Their investigation aimed to determine whether a robust auditory memory, similar to visual memory, exists. The results showed that auditory memory is systematically inferior to visual memory, suggesting a fundamental difference between auditory and visual stimuli or an asymmetry between auditory and visual processing.[118] By allowing Juliet to connect the auditory stimuli with her visual memory, more purposeful and tangible connections were made, highlighting the importance of considering both auditory and visual aspects in this work.

As a result, *With Juliet* (2019) is a performance documentation that presents a formalised discussion focusing on Juliet's local environment. The piece aims to show how collaborative dialogue and creative process were involved in the development of the composition. After collecting the initial field recordings, I presented Juliet with four tracks and asked her to respond to them, which formed the basis for the material used in generating the piece. Throughout the piece and through Juliet's dialogue, the context behind the work is carefully unpacked, shedding light on the interaction between the two of us and unravelling the structured nature of the piece. The performance captures a blend of scripted material that appears as natural conversation and authentic, unscripted dialogue, providing a glimpse into our genuine interaction and offering further insights into the creative process at work.

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[118]Michael A. Cohen, Todd S. Horowitz, and Jeremy M. Wolfe, 'Auditory Recognition Memory Is Inferior to Visual Recognition Memory', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 106, no. 14 (7 April 2009): 6008–10, https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0811884106.

While the piece was initially intended to be a live performance work, it was ultimately developed into a fixed media piece. The use of multiple camera angles allowed for the capture and delivery of the different ways in which Juliet engaged with the field recording stimulus, providing an interesting perspective on the creative process. In addition, by recording the individual tasks that served as the foundation for the piece, the studio edit facilitated greater creative potential. It allowed for simultaneous playback of different aspects of Juliet's performance, resulting in a more complex interweaving of the various dialogues that transpired during the creation of the piece.

To present the richness of Juliet's interaction with the sounds provided, the studio edit featured three different camera angles represented separating the screen into three areas: left, middle, and right. This allowed for the display of the different ways in which Juliet engaged with the sounds. The middle section captured Juliet simply listening to Tracks 1-3 of the field recordings, with the recordings also audible to the audience/listener. Meanwhile, the left segment featured Juliet's conversation, initially scripted during a video call, which developed into an improvisational monologue where she described her surroundings and reacted to the sounds presented to her in various ways. I provided Juliet with specific questions to guide her responses to the field recordings, using Kai Turri and Tuomas Eerola's article 'Formulating a Revised Taxonomy for Modes of Listening'[119] as a source of inspiration. This article proposes a revised taxonomy of listening modes that highlights the importance of embodied cognition in the meaning-creation process of listening. Their taxonomy divides listening modes into experiential, denotative, and reflective modes, emphasising the relationship between the subject and the environment.[120] From each of the three modes, I specifically featured: connotative from the experiential mode, functional listening from the denotative mode, and reduced listening from the reflective mode. However, the first question linked to Track 1 asked what the most dominant sounds were, which does not fall under any of the modes in Turri and Eerola's taxonomy. The question linked to Track 2 asked what the purpose of the sound was, directly relating to functional listening.[121] For Track 3, I asked Juliet to make freely formed associations from what she heard, asking for the connotative mode of listening to be evoked.[122]

In the piece, Juliet describes the materiality of sound on the right panel. Instead of describing the properties of the sound, Juliet attempts to sing and imitate the sounds she hears. To achieve this, I asked Juliet to describe the sounds she heard in Track 4 using the reduced mode of listening and then scored her answers before presenting them to be sung. I also

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[119] Kai Tuuri and Tuomas Eerola, 'Formulating a Revised Taxonomy for Modes of Listening', *Journal of New Music Research* 41, no. 2 (June 2012): 149, https://doi.org/10.1080/09298215.2011.614951.
[120] Ibid, 143.
[121] Ibid, 142.
[122] Ibid, 141.

incorporated a new element to this reduced singing part by featuring snippets of Carlo Gesualdo's madrigal *Languisce al fin*, which develops throughout the piece. During the workshop phase of this piece, Juliet and I learned of an interesting overlap in our activities. On the day I had earmarked for making recordings for the piece, Juliet was in a recording session performing this madrigal with Exaudi, the vocal ensemble she co-founded. This discovery provided an opportunity for connecting these two parallel activities, combining our separate practices into a shared musical experience. Within the composition, we incorporated the soprano part of the madrigal, performed by Juliet. This element features after a closing statement from the left panel.

In the final section of the performance, I focused on presenting the connection between the collected field recordings and Gesualdo's madrigal. Juliet, now performing in the centre of the screen, sings the soprano part of *Languisce al fin*. I incorporate genuine conversations between Juliet and myself, contrasting them with the previously observed 'fake' natural performance, to highlight the difference between these two interactions. Additionally, I include interruptions encountered during the recording process, showing how these moments impacted our session. Importantly, I hope to show that these interruptions were not disruptive in a negative sense but rather serve as enjoyable connections to the material being discussed.

These interruptions serve as a moment for me to also introduce my own artificial noise into the piece. During Juliet's performance, I manipulate the field recordings and reintroduce them into the composition. In post-production, I used techniques such as filtering, repetition, panning, and changes in dynamic to disrupt and destabilise the hearing of the solo madrigal. Throughout the final performance, I aimed to envelop Juliet's singing, and by doing so create a connection to how she described the sounds in her previous dialogue. This allowed me to explore the relationship between the two sound worlds and how they might have coexisted in her local environment had she been there. Additionally, the field recordings somewhat distort the 'genuine conversation outtakes' that are being fed into the piece. By delivering the information within a noisy environment, I intended to create an element of strain in attaining the information, which more accurately represented some of the processes that were discovered during the making of the work. Rather than simply providing clear answers that unlock the connection between the two sound worlds, I deliberately chose to distort them, imbuing the work with aspects of noise.

On page 54, I have documented the structure of the work, including the originally written dialogue, each camera angle, and the camera effects, which are simply the fade in and out of each panel. This table serves as a template to show how the piece came together in its final edit. I do not think of it as a score, but rather as a director's tool for managing a documentary-like process that occurred naturally behind the scenes. The submitted score shows three parts

of our dialogue and process that led to the creation of the studio edit. The only part of the score that does not feature in the final edit table is the letter I sent Juliet after our initial conversations once I had collected the field recordings. The script that follows (part two of the score) acts as an improvisational stimulus for the final work. During the workshop process, Juliet found it more useful to memorise the general points discussed during our interview as a means of more naturally generating the same material. This allowed for a conversational style to emerge, while reducing the number of filler words that might otherwise accompany or overtake her speaking. By the time we created our studio performance, the script had become a memory aid for me and Juliet, as we had developed a strong familiarity with material and were less reliant on its specific wording.

Additionally, this table also demonstrates the structure of the work. Although some initial timings were established before the production of the piece, I soon realised that strictly adhering to them during the dialogue section resulted in a more rigid performance. Therefore, the timings were written after Juliet and I had recorded the work. Initial timings only proved useful for the scored parts in the right channel, making it easier to sync the score and audio recording together. The improvised additions, including genuine conversations, rehearsals, my explanations of the piece, and interruptions, were added after the piece was made and do not appear in the final score of the work. Whilst I find both the score that features in my portfolio and the accompanying table to my project helpful, I believe that the performance of this work represents the truest form of the final project. In this form, delivery of the creative process and the context surrounding the work exist simultaneously.
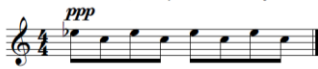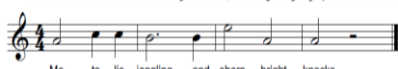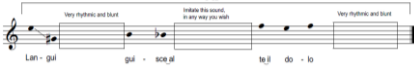
Establishing a connection between Juliet's auditory understanding and the context behind the making of the recordings was a crucial aspect of the composition's presentation, which was achieved by essentially staging a previous conversation. It was important to avoid making assumptions about Juliet's ability to understand the information she had gleaned from the recordings through just listening without any further discussion or context. This connection helped to establish a relationship between the information provided and the creative process, resulting in a more nuanced representation of her local environment.

Figure 4.2: *With Juliet* structure outline

Time	Camera angle 1: conversational dialogue	Camera 2: Listening to field recordings	Camera 3: Imitative singing	Camera operation
0:00	*(Spoken in a natural, improvised and spontaneous way)* *Opening Dialogue* The sounds in my environment make me feel tense. It's too noisy. When I'm inside, I mostly hear traffic, alarms and sirens and I find these sounds quite intrusive. I can't hear the bird song from inside, a sound I've always associated with joy. I find the sirens most disruptive. I live near Mile End hospital, so I'm constantly exposed to sirens from ambulances and police cars. I often hear their helicopters above me and that noise resonates around my apartment. I also hear a surprising amount of fireworks from the Bangladeshi wedding celebrations. On Thursday evenings, you can hear the church bells from St Dunstan Church. The church has 10 bells. They run a social group for those interested in learning to become bell ringers. Practice usual takes place from 7.30pm to 9.30pm each week. Unlike the other sounds that penetrate my walls, I have fond memories of these bells. I remember when I first moved into my apartment, they came as a surprise one evening. It was comforting to sit back and listen to them.	(off)	(off)	C1 Fade in C2+3 Off C1 Fade out
2:45	(off)	*Track 1 starts:* Sitting, listening with headphones. Relaxed body language	(off)	C2 Fade in C2 Fade out
4:18	*Description mode 1: Most dominant sounds* The footsteps and voices coming from different directions immediately catch my attention. It made me think of Stepney Green tube station. Although this is very noticeable in this recording, I don't mind the sound. Out of everything I can hear, these sounds are the most pleasant ones. It was nice to hear that exchange between the two ladies, which reminded me of the strong community around where I live. The sound of the trucks going past made me feel a bit dirty. The footsteps and voices feel comparatively much less dark. The trucks make me think about pollution. The recording makes me feel like I'm standing near that big truck, and I don't want to be standing there. The engines release foul things into our atmosphere, and they are so loud. A lot of trucks go through Mile End Road, so I think that's where this recording was taken from.	(off)	(off)	C1 Fade in C1 Fade out

5:58	(off)	(off)	*To be sung, presented as a solo recital alongside track 4 0:00-0:09*	C3 Fade in C3 Fade out
6:08	The motorbike is actually quite a nice sound, sonically. It's making that purring sound like it's waiting at a traffic light, but you can tell that it's going to screech off somewhere soon. Out of all these sounds, the trucks are the most dominant. Not only are they the loudest source of sound, but I also think they're the most harmful.	(off)	(off)	C1 Fade in
6:36	(off)	(off)	*Track 4* Listening to field recording like you would during a solo accompaniment section	C3 Fade in C3 Fade out
6:47	(off)	Track 2 starts: Sitting, listening with headphones. Relaxed body language	(off)	C2 Fade in C3 Fade in
7:02			*Track 4 0:09-0:24* *To be spoken with articulated rhythmical gestures, continuation of solo performance* 'High-pitched tapping against a hard surface. Sometimes aligning and sometimes syncopated. Some of the louder tapping has a wooden quality, and it cancels out the quieter taps when they align.'	C3 Fade out
7:17			(off)	C2 fade out
8:05	*Description mode 2: The sounds function* I hear sirens which imply a sense of urgency. The intent behind it is to alert members of the public and tell them to move out of the way. I don't think this sound is supposed to be threatening. I also hear bird song, but I will never know what their intentions are. I personally associate it with joy, but I suppose that's just anthropomorphism. For me, it's really nice that this sound doesn't have a function.	(off)	(off)	C1 Fade in
8:42			*Track 4* Listening to field recording like you would during a solo accompaniment section	C3 Fade in C3 Fade out
8:52	There is passing car going quite fast, probably trying to get from A to B. There is a sense of impatience – or dare I say… testosterone.		(off)	C1 Fade out
9:13	(off)	(off)	*To be sung, presented as a solo recital alongside track 4 0:24-0:30*	C3 fade in C3 Fade out
9:19	Continuation of description 2 The honking horns is another sign of impatience. Probably someone stuck at a traffic light telling the person in front of them to move.	(off)	(off)	C1 fade in

9:36	(off)	(off)	*To be sung, presented as a solo recital alongside* *Track 4 0:30-0:34* 	
	(off)	(off)	*Track 4 0:34-0:40* 	
9:53	*Description mode 3: Freely formed association* This recording made me think about the relationship between industry and nature, and all the problematic associations that come whilst thinking about mankind's imprint on our environment. I found the bird song wonderful. But I've been reading recently about the catastrophic decimation of bird numbers in the UK which isn't being talked about very much. I noticed while travelling in January to other cities, that they have a far richer bird population, even in urban areas. So there is something sad hearing this bird tenaciously singing against the ever-present drone sound.	*Track 3 starts:* Sitting, listening with headphones. Relaxed body language	(off)	C1 + 2 Fade in C2 Fade out C3 Fade in
11:02		(off)	*Track 4 0:40-0:48* 	C1 Fade out
11:09	*Closing statement:* On the day these recordings took place, I was recording the soprano part of Carlo Gesualdo's Madrigals with vocal group EXAUDI.	(off)	*Track 4 0:48-0:58* 	C3 Fade out C1 Fade out
11:44	*Sporadically introducing edits and moments of conversation between Harry and Juliet during the recording process.*	*Performance of Carlo Gesualdo's Languisce al fin (c.1561-1613)* At **12:55** field recordings enter again, this time manipulated in post.	*Sporadically introducing edits and moments of rehearsal between Harry and Juliet during the recording process.*	C2 Fades in Other cameras fade in and out
15:46	*Insert interruption cut seen, full screen*			
15:59	END	END	END	Fade out

4.3.1   Outcomes (*With Juliet*)

Understanding Roles and Setting Clear Expectations in Socially Curious Composition:

The most valuable lesson from this project was recognising the importance of establishing a social approach from the outset and aligning creative processes. For socially curious compositions, it is crucial to understand the performer's role, especially when there is no prior familiarity with the type of work. Setting clear expectations and ensuring the performer is not being expected to commit more time and resources than are realistic before embarking on the creative journey is key to ensuring its success. Even though creative inputs may evolve, it is also important to ensure the desired outcomes are feasible. Additionally, the question arises of how to effectively introduce the concept of socially curious composition to a new collaborator. Striking a balance between inviting collaboration and allowing creative roles to naturally emerge is essential.

Fostering Dialogue and Collaboration in Artistic Process:

The incorporation of dialogue as a means of generating context provided a positive avenue for introducing social context within the creative process. This allowed the process to become the artwork itself and, in a way, expedited the collaborative experience, reducing the need for a burdensome commitment from the performer. Furthermore, involving the performer in specific roles, participating in pre-creative interviews/conversations, can foster a collaborative atmosphere and enable the exploration of artistic contributions throughout the creative process.

Adapting to Constraints and Effectively Conveying the Creative Journey:

Choosing to present a studio edit as the final documentation of the process, instead of a live performance piece, proved to be a more effective approach in conveying context and capturing the essence of the creative journey. By artistically engaging with previous social interactions, a method was employed to present the accumulated experiences, allowing for a more nuanced reflection of the interplay between artistic interpretation and real social dynamics. When commitment levels and schedules vary, it is crucial to explore alternative collaborative methods and create a flexible plan. Adapting the approach and finding creative solutions within constraints can still yield meaningful work.

4.4 *Filtered Reality (location and date)* (2020)[123]

Filtered Reality (location and date) stands out among my pieces as the only composition created and completed during a period of lockdown enforced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This work reflects a degree of separation between myself and double bassist Daniel Molloy, a dynamic not present in my other compositions for solo performer.[124] The creative process for *Filtered Reality* began with an opportunity provided by the University of Southampton, which paired composers with performers whose scheduled performances had been cancelled. This presented a chance for me to explore a different compositional approach to my previous pieces while writing specifically for solo performer.

Given the limitations imposed by the lockdown, it was not feasible for me to personally gather field recordings that reflected Dan's local environment. Therefore, I proposed the idea of Dan creating his own field recordings, which I would then incorporate into a time-spaced notation score for him to perform at home. This approach led me to introduce musical rules that generate noise during performance. Although initially conceived for group pieces, I saw this as a chance to experiment with creating noise through Dan's interaction with his field recordings. As a result, *Filtered Reality* became a listening exercise prompting Dan's engagement with his audible environment. Over the course of seven minutes, *Filtered Reality* investigates some available frequencies in a given environment. Using a DAW to take Dan's recording and, at specific moments during a performance, filters the captured sound to highlight a single frequency.

During the development of this piece, my initial intention was to incorporate a live feed from Dan's field recording equipment, using a DAW for real-time filtering. However, logistical challenges arose due to Dan's limited access to technology during the production phase. As a result, we reached a compromise where Dan would send me his field recordings for

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[123] Portions of this section of text previously appeared in Sabrin Hasbun, Rachel Carney, Harry Matthews, Catherine Cartwright, Gareth Osborne, Julika Gittner, and Agnes Villette. 'The Application of Creative Practice as a Means of Disrupting or Re-Defining the Dynamics of Power in, with or for Different Communities.' *Journal for Artistic Research*, 28 October 2022. https://doi.org/10.22501/jar.1264307.

[124] This period posed significant challenges for my compositional process. As a composer primarily engaged with field recordings and their connection to noise and environmental themes, I encountered a dilemma. Continuing to create pieces that centred around noise in connection with the environment felt somewhat contrived given the context of the situation. I was apprehensive that the outcome would simply convey a message saying, 'Listen to how quiet and pleasant it is now that everyone is at home,' while disregarding the reality that people were staying at home to protect themselves and their loved ones from a severe virus.

Consequently, I made the decision to temporarily step back from the environmental dialogue aspect of my work. Instead, I chose to explore the relationship between musical notation and field recordings. By focusing on this aspect, I sought to delve deeper into the potential interactions and connections between these two distinct elements within my compositions. This shift in approach allowed me to explore new creative avenues while addressing my concerns regarding the appropriateness of emphasising the context around listening to environmental sounds during the pandemic.

processing and subsequent return. To maintain the spontaneous nature of the performance, we agreed that the returned recordings would not be rehearsed before a performance. This approach aimed to capture the essence of a live feed experience, where the interplay between the processed field recordings and the live performance would produce improvised results.

The score, shown in figure 4.3, offers three directions for Dan to follow, as indicated by the dashed lines moving between each system. I asked Dan to consider the relationship between his instrument's pitch and the filtered frequency of the field recording and, within seven seconds, decide which system he wished to continue playing. His decision is made based on the audibility of the two pitches (one pitch from the double bass, and one pitch filtered from the live recording). During performances of the work, Dan navigated different routes through the piece, responding to the changes in audibility from the locally captured sounds. By choosing multiple routes, Dan plays a part in directing each instance of the piece. This decision not only allowed him to navigate and interact with the local soundscape during each performance, but also fostered the development of new relationships between his playing and the surrounding sonic environment. Our discussions revealed that this creative approach provided Dan with a greater sense of control over his performance. It offered him a space for self-reflection, enabling personal contributions to shape the composition and furthering a deeper engagement with his own artistic expression within the context of the work.[125] The relatively simple task of taking a field recording, removing it from the original source material, and giving it back to Dan embedded within a musical composition allowed me to redirect his attention towards other sonic qualities that may be glossed over during everyday listening.

Figure 4.3: *Filtered Reality (location and date)* opening section showing dashed lines

This piece's structure is largely based on ascending and descending lines. This is something I had been similarly exploring in my ensemble compositions at the time. To achieve this, I used the harmonic series in relation to the double bass open strings E, A, and D. These fundamental

notes serve as the starting points for each system within the composition. In systems one and three, the double bass ascends the harmonic series, while in system two, it descends. Additionally, the interval material in the composition comprises of 12 intervals that also derive from the harmonic series of E. These intervals gradually descend over the course of the piece, creating a melodic trajectory that can be seen in figure 4.4 To construct these intervals, I used a simple approach of pairing two adjacent notes from the harmonic series and following this pattern downwards until reaching the fundamental note and its octave above. I aimed to explore the overarching arc of the harmonic series rather than providing precise cents and instead approximated the nearest quarter tone intervals. Because the primary goal was to establish a connection between Dan's performance and the accompanying field recordings, we jointly decided it unnecessary to include cent deviations that would likely go unnoticed by an audience or listener, especially during passages featuring glissandi. Introducing such precise cent requirements would have added unnecessary complexity and potentially detract from the overall performance, especially during the interval moments. Instead, we prioritised Dan's engagement with the field recordings and aimed for a seamless integration of his playing within the sonic environment.

Figure 4.4: *Filtered Reality (location and date)* intervals from harmonic series in E

As discussed, the intervals in the composition are divided between the double bass and the field recordings. The double bass performs the higher pitch of each interval shown in figure 4.4 while the lower pitch is derived from the filtered field recording. In my DAW, I used an EQ filter to emphasise and isolate the corresponding frequency for each pitch. This is achieved by boosting the relevant pitch to create a 'peak', rather than completely removing other sounds. The resulting sound resembles something similar to when you place a shell to your ear, where most frequencies are attenuated leaving a distinct set of isolated pitches. Consequently, depending on the available pitches in the field recording, the resulting pitch can vary from being prominent and present to being more distant and less audible, creating a flatter tonal

quality. It is this dynamic that determines Dan's movement between the three systems. His perception of the pitch relationship between his playing and the filtered sound dictates his choice. Weather he discerns a clear interval or observes no distinct tonal centre in the filtered sound guides his movement within the composition. Initially, I intended to assign specific movements in the score based on his decisions. However, after several practice sessions, Dan and I agreed that this approach was overly prescriptive, as there were numerous interesting relationships that could influence his decision. While the score suggests certain ways for Dan to listen to the recordings and his own playing, ultimately, I ask him to make decisions about his movements during his performance.

After presenting this work during an online session to composition staff and graduate students, I received feedback that led to a significant structural change to some of the filtered moments having a profound impact on the overall composition. I introduced moments when the filtering gets stuck after the interval is played. This alteration occurs twice during the piece: first, after the fourth interval, when the filtering continues for one minute, and second, after the ninth interval, with a duration of 40 seconds. The intentional 'stuck' moments serve multiple purposes. Firstly, they allow both Dan and an audience listener to observe the fluctuations in tone over an extended period, facilitating an enhanced perception of the highlighted frequencies during moments of increased activity in the field recording. Secondly, they create a solo moment for the field recordings themselves. Throughout the piece, the double bass and field recordings are in constant motion together, with the double bass material being more active. As a result, the listener's attention naturally gravitates towards the double bass sound. By introducing these 'stuck' moments, the field recordings are given an opportunity to take centre stage for a moment providing a moment for their subtleties to come through.

The filtering aspect of this work serves as a deliberate incorporation of noise, which is a technique I have explored in more subtle ways in my solo compositions and addressed more concretely in my ensemble compositions. In this piece, noise takes on a more prominent role in the mechanism of the work. When I ask Dan to listen and make decisions based on the intervals he hears, any elements that hinder his connection with the notion of intervals can be considered interference, akin to my initial view of noise. For instance, positioning the intervals at the extreme ends of the double bass range presents a physical challenge for Dan, requiring him to navigate the entire instrument depending on the system he chooses to play. This physicality further highlights the presence of noise as an element that can disrupt and hinder the decision-making process.

Furthermore, the incorporation of filtered recordings can be seen as a manifestation of noise for several reasons. On one hand, these recordings lack a clear and distinct pitch association. While the filtering process accentuates specific desired pitches within the intervals, the

presence of numerous unpitched sounds within the recording hinders the immediate perception and connection of the intended interval. On the other hand, the act of filtering alters the original recording to the extent that its original context becomes, effectively stripping away the original information it contained. As a result, this aspect of noise proves to be advantageous as it removes extraneous information, enabling Dan to focus more directly on the pitch relationships within the composition. This compositional technique exemplifies the type of listening that I think is important when challenging the functions and compatibilities of sound sources, as it offers us an opportunity to listen to real-world sounds artistically rather than instinctively. In other words, the very important responsibility our brain has of locating the sound of a car so that we do not collide with it changes in a performance space: there is the freedom to focus on its sonic properties whilst also developing an understanding of how these instincts might be affecting our cognitive abilities.

4.4.1   Outcomes (*Filtered Reality* (*location and date*))

Establishing and Adapting Methodologies in Socially Curious Composition:

This project has successfully implemented a streamlined methodology that blends socially curious composition with more conventional compositional practices. The process begins with the performer, who generates material through field recordings. These recordings are then forwarded to the composer, whose role is to recontextualise the performer's input into an interactive musical score.

Unforeseen global issues necessitated a re-evaluation of my approach to socially curious composition. This piece confirms that my proposed method can adapt to challenges and constraints. Despite limited availability and significant separation during the creative process, we were able to make effective contributions, proving that the quality of the work can be maintained even under difficult circumstances.

Balancing Techniques in Composition

Socially curious composition has the flexibility to incorporate written notation alongside open scores/text instructions. This composition considers the utility of musical notation in generating intentional noise for performers, especially within the context of solo performance. However, this raises the question of audience perception. While the noise process, in which players experience aspects of noise as part of the performance mechanism, is vital to this piece, it is predominantly only perceptible to the performer. Without a written explanation, concepts such as disruption and interference do not transfer to an audience. Thus, while this query primarily pertains to group pieces, finding ways to convey this kind of noise in my compositions remains a keen area of interest.

Incorporating Context and Field Recordings into Future Compositions:

A significant consideration is the incorporation of the composition's mechanism, its design, and the engagement requirements for performers whilst also illuminating the context of the work. It has become clear that embedding the context of the piece into its realisation, whether subtly or overtly, is a crucial factor in socially curious composition. I have realised that aspects of a socially curious approach can apply even to pieces that are intrinsically less collaborative, due to the degree of separation inherent in our creative process.

Prior solo compositions have typically explored relatively brief periods of gathering field recordings. However, a question arises of how the creative approach might shift when an expanded volume of field recordings, collected over a longer period, is used instead. This exploration could lead to fresh dimensions in future works, offering new avenues for the creative process.

4.5   *Home & Away Chords* (2021-22)

For my final composition written with a solo performer to feature in my portfolio, I collaborated with friend and colleague, Caitlin Rowley. For this work, I wanted to explore a creative process that unfolded over a longer period, rather than relying on the short field recording sessions that had been a feature of my previous pieces. Although I had not worked with Caitlin before, we were familiar with each other's work through our attendance and presentations at Bath Spa's Open Score Lab. This shared context gave us a starting point for a collaborative project, while also providing a general understanding of our respective levels of commitment. I have come to realise that understanding my relationship with my collaborator is crucial in determining the type of creative process to initiate, whether the performer takes an active role in the creation of field recordings and their part in the development process that leads to the final work. Before approaching Caitlin, I was intrigued by the number of short trips she was doing with her ensemble, Bastard Assignments, and I became curious about the idea of her capturing moments from each of her trips. Moreover, Caitlin's research explores the intersection of private creative processes and public performance, shedding light on the hidden aspects of a composer's studio.[126] This shared interest in revealing the intimate and social dimensions of artistic practice made our collaboration a great fit, as we both aimed to illuminate the connections between personal creation and public presentation.

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[126] Caitlin Rowley, 'Caitlin Rowley', About Caitlin (blog), accessed 12 January 2024, https://caitlinrowley.com/about/.

After some initial discussions, Caitlin expressed an interest in pursuing a longer-form creative project. We shifted our focus to her already established habitual process of documenting her travels, allowing us to explore different locations and perspectives over time, and resulting in a richer and more complex sonic world than in my other compositions. Our collaborative approach involved Caitlin making pairs of recordings, one while away and the other upon her return home. I also asked Caitlin to engage with her surroundings, contributing her voice for the 'away recordings' and her viola for the 'home recordings.' As we were gathering a larger amount of recorded material than in my previous pieces, I wanted to ensure that we captured the types of engagement I had dealt with before. For the away recordings, I asked Caitlin to find a note she could tune to and sing a single short pitch equivalent to a natural breath, connecting with her environment. This allowed us to reflect her breathing and activity level, such as whether she was on the move or stationery when making her recordings. For home recordings, I asked Caitlin to make a recording from inside her house and play a single bowed note from her viola, without re-tuning her instrument. By not re-tuning her instrument, each performance was able to reflect and echo the tuning that her instrument naturally settled into after her travels, resulting in a homage to either her previous performance or the natural detuning of her instrument over a short period of time.

To facilitate the collaborative process, Caitlin and I established a shared online folder where she could upload her recordings as she made them. Through communication on WhatsApp, Caitlin informed me of new additions to the folder, allowing for an ongoing dialogue between her creations and my experimentation in the studio. This open and communicative approach fostered a sense of friendship through our collaboration, similar to the dynamic in my initial project with Ben, and enabled the project to evolve naturally over time. Over a year from June 2021 to June 2022, Caitlin produced 42 recordings, including 26 away recordings and 16 home recordings. Caitlin's intuitive decision to make multiple away recordings, each reflecting a different location or part of her trip, was an approach we both agreed made sense. Rather than pairing each recording, we opted for a single home recording to reflect her return home. This approach allowed for a greater focus on capturing parts of her travels without forcing a pairing with only one away recording, resulting in an imbalance between the number of away and home recordings that influenced creative decisions during the electroacoustic composition and workshop process.

In exploring these creative possibilities, I began by making multiple individual tracks with different iterations of Caitlin's recordings. I shortened the away recordings to highlight Caitlin's sung notes, resulting in an evolving chordal texture that regularly oscillated between consonance and dissonance when multiple tracks were played simultaneously. Because Caitlin was tuning pitches to her environment, moments of interesting beating occurred

between parts as a result, which neatly connected with the sound world I had established in my previous work for double bass. For the home recordings, I let them play out in full, resulting in fewer viola notes. This approach allowed for the sung and viola parts to gradually and occasionally align, resulting in a fragmented accompaniment. By the time of Caitlin's performance, I had ended up with 10 tracks featuring away recordings and five featuring home recordings.

During the workshop process, we found that the dense vocal texture in the electroacoustic part of the piece naturally led us to focus primarily on Caitlin's viola performance, with occasional responses through her voice. This allowed us to subvert the roles of both her voice and instrument, and create a new perspective on her viola playing, now highlighting the viola as a feature of away performance. Initially, I had intended to create a score for the work, directing Caitlin's performance in a similar way to *electric guitar, in Southmead*. However, after some experimentation, we found that Caitlin's improvisational and conversational approach to the speaker sounds worked well, inspired by her revisiting of recordings and accompanying them. Caitlin primarily performed on the open strings of her viola, using the tuning F E A G, which closely matched the notes commonly heard in the home recordings. To capture some of the white noise aspects of the recordings, Caitlin would occasionally bow behind the bridge of the viola, creating a less tonally clear sound (as can be heard at 7m20sec in the performance accompanying this project). In addition to this idea, at moments throughout the performance, Caitlin would use her voice to latch onto and imitate sounds that were heard in the recordings (as can be heard at 12m40sec). Her improvisational approach involved wandering through the material and lingering on certain moments, resulting in a merging of pre-recorded and live sounds. This was especially apparent in her vocal performance, where it was visually challenging to discern the source of the sound until the recording shifted, revealing the live note Caitlin was singing in relation to the pre-recorded material. This approach allowed for a more fluid and expressive interpretation of the sonic material, which further emphasised the collaborative and exploratory nature of our compositional process.

For the performance, I used 15 miniature speakers, each with an SD card containing one of the 15 individual tracks.[127] By opting for small outputs instead of stereo amplification, the stage evolved into an installation-style performance space, with the speakers distributed throughout. Five speakers containing the home recording tracks were placed in the centre of the stage on the floor, while the other 10 speakers with the away recordings were spread out across the stage on plinths of varying heights. At the beginning of the performance, all speakers were turned off, and Caitlin began by gradually and intentionally turning each speaker on. She

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[127] The exact speaker I used is called the Anker Soundcore Mini 1, unfortunately the latest generation of the Soundcore no longer features a Micro SD card reader.

moves each speaker from the centre of the stage to its designated location one at a time, using coloured stickers to identify whether a speaker featured a home or away recording. Additionally, I used two different colours for the away recordings to show the order of their turning on. The performance began with five away speakers turned on in any order, followed by the five home recordings, and the final wave of speakers featured the remaining away recordings. This approach allowed for some variety in each performance while ensuring that the speakers ended roughly at the same time. As the process of turning on all the speakers took almost five minutes, it was crucial to establish a specific order so that the piece's ending was consistent. A gradual and pleasant arch of diminishing speakers was maintained, resulting in a natural decaying of sound rather than an abrupt end with perhaps one or two lingering speakers left on.

The performance features only one planned moment at roughly 11 minutes, when the home recordings subside, leaving only the away recordings. Although difficult to time precisely, Caitlin delivers a slow melodic statement that glissandos gently between notes, lasting almost exactly one minute before the home recordings return. Rather than assigning specific pitches, we worked on the possible shape of the melody, allowing Caitlin's performance to adapt to each occasion's tuning (see figure 4.5 a sketch of the melodic shape below). Initially, I contemplated reworking this melody sketch to present as part of this commentary. However, upon consideration, it felt prudent to present the original sketch as it was shared with Caitlin. This melodic sketch reflects the relaxed nature of our collaboration showing how the focus was on capturing the essence of the melody rather than trying to create a stimulating graphic. At this stage, our shared understanding allowed me to convey the intended musical direction through our conversation and this sketch served simply as a visual aid and provided a reference for Caitlin's personal practice. While this sketch may not possess the polished appearance of a formally published score, its inclusion holds significance in showing the collaborative process that evolved through our conversational approach to developing the work. This moment also turned out to be quite musically important, given the repetitive soundworld that unfolds during the performance. It provides a stylistic bridge between our two performance interpretations, adding a shared quality to the piece. I view it as a structural decision, dividing the work into two parts and enabling me, as 'the composer', to make more informed decisions. For instance, I suggested Caitlin begin vocal imitations of the field recordings after the melodic section ended.

Figure 4.5: *Home & Away Chords* melody sketch
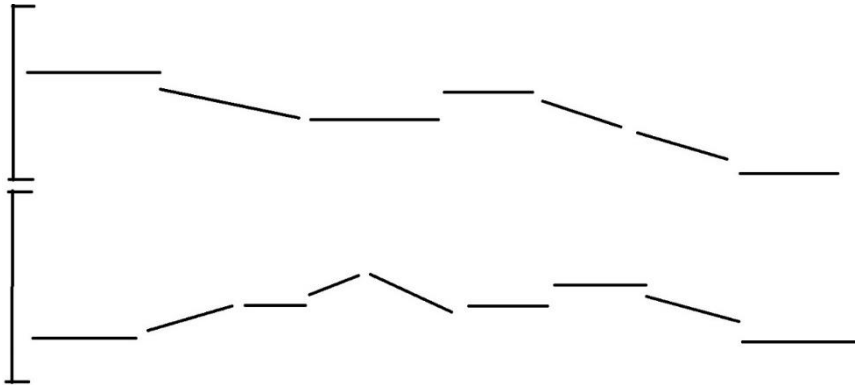
Noise emerges as a significant feature resulting from the introduction of melodic material and the utilisation of a multitude of sound sources with an indeterminate ordering. The overlapping and constant timbre of the speakers creates a state of continuous search for the memories associated with the field recordings, particularly as they have been edited to emphasise Caitlin's sung contributions. As a result, Caitlin is constantly having to adjust and reaffirm her connection with the recordings. The indeterminacy inherent in the activation of the speakers adds to the noise by obscuring any discernible patterns, necessitating Caitlin to rely on her own sense of time. In the absence of a stopwatch to guide her performance, navigating the entry of the melodic material becomes a challenging task. Notably, the ambiguity arising from the absence of clear contrast and tonal language, along with the indeterminate repetition of the field recordings, contributes to the manifestation of noise by obscuring the underlying structure of the work.

To document the installation-style presentation of the performance, we sought to capture a perspective that would convey Caitlin's experience of the work, rather than providing a static view from a stationary audience's standpoint. We used a binaural microphone that could effectively capture the expansive layout of the stage and the directionality of each speaker in relation to Caitlin's performance. The microphone was affixed to the camera, as shown in the image below, and expertly operated by Fred Reed.[128] The resulting tracking shot videography shows an almost balletic portrayal of the performance, with the camera fluidly moving in and out of Caitlin's performance to reveal her intricate connection with the speakers and her intense focus on both listening and performing. The documentation of the performance is of

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[128] Fred and I spent some time devising the optimal method for recording Caitlin's performance. Initial attempts involved using a gimbal for filming, aimed at reducing Fred's physical strain. However, this approach did not capture the desired personal 'balletic' quality we had hoped for. Consequently, Fred agreed to hand-hold the camera, and we had the binaural 3Dio microphone attached atop. I am very appreciative of Fred's effort, given the considerable arm strain he must have endured during the filming of Caitlin's performance.

high personal and professional quality, accurately reflecting the intimate and carefully choreographed performance by Caitlin and Fred.

Figure 4.6: Demonstrating the binaural camera setup for *Home & Away Chords*

Overall, Caitlin's personal interest in field recordings played a significant role in the success of our collaborative project. As a composer and artist who often works with found sounds, Caitlin's approach to field recordings naturally aligned with the goals of the project. This connection was strengthened by the fact that Caitlin used some of the recordings in her own creative projects, such as her duo with Edward Henderson, an offshoot of her group Bastard Assignments. The duo featured one of Caitlin's recordings, in their piece titled *Exquisite Bells (Cologne)* (2022-3),[129] with Edward playing the piano and Caitlin playing the ROLI Seaboard. In discussing the project, Caitlin expressed the importance of keeping the sung parts of the recording in their final piece.[130] Her willingness to exchange recordings between different projects reflects the shared nature of our creative process. This sense of shared ownership is a crucial aspect of my socially curious approach to composition. The subtle connections and contributions made through field recordings have helped bridge artistic expression and social engagement, ultimately deepening our understanding and appreciation of the social contexts that inform our work.

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[129] Caitlin Rowley and Edward Henderson, *Exquisite Bells (Cologne)*, 2022-23, http://caitlinrowley.com/music/exquisite-bells-cologne/.

[130] Readings were generated from various conversations with Caitlin during our PhD writing sessions.

4.5.1   Outcomes (*Home & Away Chords*)

The Role of Sharing in Creative Processes

A prominent outcome from this piece, among all my PhD submissions, is the fusion of creative processes between composer and performer. Continuous dialogue via WhatsApp uncovered mutual interests in recording, documentation, and arts/crafts such as textiles. These shared passions became integral to the work, demonstrating how the alignment of creative interests can yield fruitful results.

This composition also emphasised the importance of embracing the messier aspects of collaboration. Although not a major part of this project, our openness about the early drafts and informal discussions that shaped the piece was crucial to illustrating the creative journey. This experience emphasises the value of presenting the authentic, human aspects of the creative process, particularly when employing a socially curious approach to composition. Often, the pressure to present only polished and 'finished' material can overshadow these raw elements, but this experience highlighted their inherent value.

Evaluating Success in Field Recordings and Harmonic Relationships:

Among all the pieces included in this portfolio, *Home & Away* is perhaps the most successful. It presents a profound engagement with field recordings and complex harmonic relationships, incorporates contributions from both the performer and composer, and utilises a documentation process that offers a genuine and personal account of the performance.

However, while this piece effectively portrays an interaction with field recordings (notably without relying on dialogue to connect these concepts) certain limitations are acknowledged. Elements such as the introduction of noise, disruptive components, and the unfolding compositional process could be more explicitly communicated to audiences.

4.5.2   Chapter Outcome - Seeking Clarity in Noise and Composition Processes for Audiences:

In the four previous pieces discussed in this commentary, the main focus was on developing my socially curious approach to composition that aims to connect with performers and their surroundings. Through field recordings, I sought to incorporate their local environments into these works, putting their interactions with ideas and material at the forefront. However, I acknowledge that this approach does not clearly demonstrate the processes that have happened during the creation of the piece. While I believe that these works stand on their own as artistic pieces, I also think it is important to refine an approach that simultaneously exhibits the interactions that can happen within my socially curious approach.

One potential way to achieve this is to introduce noise more directly as a disruptive factor in group works. With this in mind, the central question that remains after the presentation of these four solo performance pieces is: How can I develop compositional strategies that effectively illustrate noise as a disruption while rendering the underlying compositional process transparent to an audience observing the performance?

This question forms a critical enquiry that will undoubtedly guide my future explorations in this area. As I progress in my research, these considerations will become increasingly integrated within my creative practice. The aim is to design compositions that both maintain a level of transparency, inviting the audience to consider the piece's inner workings, but also to encapsulate the complex notion of noise as a barrier to desired points of attention.

Chapter 5. Compositions for Groups

5.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the principles underpinning my compositions for group settings, specifically focusing on how I integrate my conceptual understanding of noise within these socially curious compositions. Rather than emphasising the personal and individual connections between the composer and the performer as in my previous compositions, these pieces are designed to generate social dialogue, behaviours, and adaptations in response to a given stimulus presented in the score. In further contrast to my compositions discussed in the previous chapter, these pieces aim to express the concepts at the centre of the work in a manner that is more immediately apprehensible to an audience. The core ideas are distilled into a simpler form and are communicated through both sound and visual means, with the intention of revealing the creative process in some capacity.

In these group compositions, listening becomes the primary method through which the work develops rather than a reflective act guiding interpretation. Listening is pivotal in shaping the outcomes of the composition, as it directly influences decision-making processes. The group's outcomes are dictated by what the performers can hear and interpret, creating a dynamic where listening drives the progression of the piece. By asking performers to listen intentionally, these compositions demonstrate how noise can clearly be felt and understood as a barrier. Listening tasks become increasingly challenging, exposing how noise disrupts communication and complicates the performers' attempts to engage with their environment. This emphasises the role of noise as a hindrance, distraction, and barrier to access, while allowing performers and audiences alike to appreciate how collective listening can lead to creative adaptation and engagement.

Moreover, my exploration of the concept of noise adopts distinct perspectives in each piece. The first piece presents noise as a hindrance to communication among players, necessitating collective adaptation for the ensemble to function together. The second piece frames noise as a form of distraction, translating diverse individual experiences of being distracted into strategies for disrupting a solo musician's performance. The final piece in this chapter presents noise as a physical and metaphorical barrier to access. This composition contemplates the positive outcomes that follow when restrictions are lifted, promoting the benefits of social inclusion and the collective consideration of individual, personal ideas and experiences.

This chapter addresses Research Question 1 by demonstrating how field recordings, used as both a creative catalyst and a means for engaging with local environments, enhance listeners' awareness and sensitivity to their sonic surroundings. Additionally, it responds to Research

Question 3 by exploring effective strategies and approaches in group compositions that highlight collective behaviours and facilitate the communication of underlying social interactions to the audience.

5.2 *Locating and Listening, Playing and Stopping* (2019)

In *Locating and Listening, Playing and Stopping*, noise takes the form of a listening challenge set between two duos, each following the same rule-based procedures. The piece is conceived as two concurrent, but fundamentally separate, performances, thus illustrating the interplay of shared goals constrained by diverging paths. As each duo navigates the performance, their task is complicated by the simultaneous and corresponding actions of the other pair. A performance by just a single duo would allow for clearer communication, but the incorporation of two duos increases the complexity and challenge, thereby introducing aspects of noise as interference into the sonic environment.

The direction of this composition draws inspiration from one of Arthur Bull's text pieces in *From 25 Scores* (1994):

> In the evening, find a pond or bog filled with singing frogs. Approach the pond, noting how the peepers get quieter as you get nearer, until there are only trios, duets or solos. Then walk away until the full chorus resumes. Repeat several times, until you and they have established a macro-rhythmic form of their piece.[131]

This concept, emphasising the impact of one's presence on the communicative dynamics of other living beings, resonated with how I wished to represent noise in my pieces. My goal was to illustrate how noise could manifest through someone's presence, resulting in a barrier to other processes at work. I was drawn to the idea of approaching the singing frogs, altering the rhythm and harmony of their chorus. In particular, understanding the effect that this has on transforming and manipulating the sounds, made me further consider noise also to mean presence as interference. This idea is similarly explored in Marie Thompson's writing, exploring the idea of Claude Shannon's general model of communication. Thompson discusses the notion that noise can be considered as both interference and perturbation, not a judgement or a type of sound. Here, Thompson wishes to further disrupt the identification of noise with, 'unwantedness,' or 'badness', by moving away from what noise 'is' to what noise 'does,' breaking the binary oppositions commonly associated with noise. In doing so, she reframes noise from a linguistic-structural understanding to a more materialist perspective.[132]

Drawing on this concept, the piece explores how such interactions are negotiated, modified and sustained by the players. The duos, each trying to communicate through their

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[131] See Arthur Bull's text piece in John Lely and James Saunders, *Word Events: Perspectives on Verbal Notation* (London; New York: Continuum, 2012), 136.
[132] Thompson, *Unwanted Sound*, 47.

performance, must contest with the noise created by the presence of the other duo. The task of listening, usually a communal experience, becomes a challenge, as players negotiate their space sonically while dealing with the disruption caused by the other pair. The piece becomes an exploration of interference and adaptation, mirroring the process Bull describes. Just as the frogs modify their songs in response to human presence, the musicians in the composition alter their performance to deal with the noise introduced by the other duo. The piece, therefore, becomes a dynamic conversation about how to adapt a performance to maintain cohesion amid perceived noise.

The piece begins with a field recording sounding through the players' headphones and a PA system, the latter intended to provide the audience a taste of the recording that the players are navigating. After a brief introduction, the PA system stops sounding, marking the start of the active participation from the players. Their task, as outlined on the 'Headphone Interaction' page, is to mirror a sound source from the field recording, The mirroring process is designed to be improvisatory and flexible, lasting for as long as the chosen sound remains audible to the player. The seemingly simple task is layered with opportunities for noise to occur as interference. Noise can arise from both the field recording and the other performers.

In the field recording, noise could occur if:

- Other sound sources overpower the chosen sound.
- The chosen sound is receding and becomes too faint to discern.
- The chosen sound abruptly stops.
- Another sound distracts the performer, momentarily disrupting their focus.

In the other players' performances, noise can manifest when:

- The other players' volume obscures the chosen sound.
- Another player mirrors the same sound, potentially causing confusion.
- A non-sounding engagement with the other duo member diverts the player's focus.

These instances of noise contribute to the performance's sonic complexity and push performers to adapt to a shifting sonic landscape. The use of a 'pairing rule' structures the group into duos, creating an interplay between performers that moves noise beyond just a sonic feature to a disruptor and transformer. As the duos separate, one member transitions to the 'Live Interaction' page, performing an ascending one-octave diatonic scale only when their partner is visibly and audibly engaged in mirroring a sound source. Their performance ceases once their partner stops mirroring. A 'swapping rule' introduces another layer of complexity, swapping roles after the 'Live' performer completes a scale. This additional noise layer

requires performers to remain auditorily alert to their partner's progress, dividing their attention further.

In this case, where the player's attention is divided, a correlation emerges between the types of noise and interference discussed by Thompson and Voegelin, and the concept known as the Cocktail Party Effect. This effect, coined by Colin Cherry in 1953, illustrates our brain's capacity to concentrate on a specific auditory stimulus while simultaneously filtering out other stimuli, much like a partygoer's ability to focus on one conversation amidst the noise of a crowded room. However, as soon as the listener attempts to split their attention between two conversations, comprehension significantly drops.[133] Similarly, in *Locating and Listening, Playing and Stopping*, the player's efforts to split their attention between mirroring the field recording and attending to their partner's playing can lead to a similar drop in comprehension or accuracy, effectively increasing the 'noise' they experience.

As a result of this difficult task, players have to strategise effectively to fulfil their tasks concurrently. The layout of the players in the performance space became a critical aspect of this coordination during rehearsals. For instance, OUT-TAKE Ensemble decided on a layout where each duo faced each other, yet were also orientated away from the opposing duo. The intention behind this arrangement was twofold: firstly, to allow the duos to visually communicate internally, and secondly, to preserve a level of auditory challenge by maintaining a shared performance space, thus intensifying the sonic interaction between duos. The strategy of using both auditory and visual cues draws parallels to practices observed in communication studies, which emphasise the benefits of positioning oneself to optimise these dual sensory inputs. For instance, a study by Mikko Sams and colleagues posits that in noisy environments or in circumstances of impaired hearing, the ability to observe a speaker's lip movements can prove beneficial. These visual cues can also aid in distinguishing specific sounds that need precise spectral and temporal resolution for audible identification.[134]

Each player's subjective balance between their live contribution and the headphone material also played a significant role in rehearsals. For instance, members of OUT-TAKE opted for different volume levels for their headphone material, leading to individualised experiences of the 'Live' and 'Headphone' interactions. This meant that non-verbal communication emerged as a key element to the performance's success. Players on the 'Headphone' page faced a more arduous task, so their partners on the 'Live' page assumed the responsibility of clearly

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[133] Adelbert W. Bronkhorst, 'The Cocktail-Party Problem Revisited: Early Processing and Selection of Multi-Talker Speech', *Attention, Perception, & Psychophysics* 77, no. 5 (July 2015): 1465-66, https://doi.org/10.3758/s13414-015-0882-9.

[134] Mikko Sams et al., 'Seeing Speech: Visual Information from Lip Movements Modifies Activity in the Human Auditory Cortex', *Neuroscience Letters* 127, no. 1 (June 1991): 141-45, https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-3940(91)90914-F.

signalling the completion of their scales. The gestures and musicality of their performance needed to unambiguously indicate the end of their scales to differentiate their scales from any played concurrently by the other duo. This non-verbal communication was also essential for the Nebula Percussion Quartet who performed the piece entirely on vibraphones. With the uniformity of timbre afforded by this instrumentation, inadvertent mimicry sometimes introduced additional noise, making the players rely even more on their physical gestures like eye contact, nods, and stepping away from their instrument or raising their hands and sticks in the air. The performers found themselves using their entire body and transforming traditional performative techniques to navigate the established noise as interference.

5.2.1   Outcomes (*Locating and Listening, Playing and Stopping*)

Proof of concept:

Overall, this composition establishes that by creating a mechanism requiring each performer to interact with one another while effectively managing divided attention, I can create a system that reframes noise. Here, noise is not merely perceived as 'unwanted' sound but as an element that disrupts processes. The piece calls for the performers to adapt and problem-solve in response to the challenges presented. This necessitates not only the contemplation of how their own performance impacts the ensemble, but also the clear articulation of their individual needs. This mutual understanding and communication are crucial for the piece to operate as a cohesive whole.

Audible Processes:

Up until this stage in my composition output, the specifics of how my compositional process operated remained largely within the composer-performer dynamic. However, in this piece, the connection between the performers' actions and the mechanics of the work is more clearly evident. An attentive audience member could discern the direct correlation between the duos actively collaborating when the pairing rule takes place. Likewise, an association between a performer completing a full-octave scale and the subsequent swapping of parts could be linked.

Nevertheless, I do acknowledge that this setup arguably imposes a significant degree of expectation on the audience to discern these links. I would optimistically anticipate some degree of connection being perceived due to the physical arrangement of the duos, who face each other and visibly communicate. However, the idea that these duos are undertaking a complex auditory task and grappling with elements of noise as a barrier to information is undeniably difficult to fully grasp without prior knowledge of the work.

Developing a Sense of Relatability:

Building on my previous point, I believe that to effectively convey these nuances of 'noise', it is crucial to factor in the audience's interpretative scope and personal experiences concerning the concept of noise. In this context, a piece that lucidly associates the emergence of noise with a universally relatable experience may prove to connect audiences with the idea more clearly. Such a piece would resonate with audiences, allowing them to form personal connections, irrespective of whether their experiences exactly align with what is being presented. This shift towards creating a universally resonating experience is a vital transition from a 'proof of concept' stage to a performance that encapsulates the impact and manifestations of noise.

5.3 *Distraction Piece* (2022)

Distraction Piece was made in part as a response to *Locating and Listening, Playing and Stopping*. Both compositions explore the concept of noise as a mechanism of interference and disruption, but *Distraction Piece* aims to articulate this process to the audience in a more relatable way. Essentially, the work portrays a commonly recognisable scenario - a musician reading musical material, disturbed by external factors. I believe that the distractions apparent to the audience mirror familiar instances of distraction in our own lives.

This piece intentionally highlights the beauty, humour, and playfulness inherent to distraction and noise as interferences. It is a vital addition to my portfolio because, while many of my other pieces primarily delve into the challenge posed by interacting with noise, *Distraction Piece* embraces the delight and communal bonds that can emerge from these shared moments of distraction. Thus, it simultaneously offers an analysis of noise's disruptive power and a celebration of the unexpected joy and human connections it can foster. This concept of performative disruption can also be seen in Vito Acconci's *Two Track* (1971). In this piece, one performer reads aloud while Acconci echoes each spoken word. However, the smooth flow of this mimicry is periodically interrupted when Acconci is posed with a question related to another performer, who is concurrently reading aloud in the performance. For instance, at 1'53'' into the cited video, we witness such a disruption.[135] This form of deliberate interruption in order to split attention and distract the performer from their primary task echoes the theme of distraction and disruption as employed in my own work.

As discussed in chapter 3 regarding Baldwin's *A Kind Of Nostalgia,* a piece that blends physical and audible elements in its creative process. *Distraction Piece* similarly uses a

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[135] Vito Acconci, *Two Track*, accessed 17 July 2022, https://ubu.com/film/acconci_two-track.html/.

combination of physical and audible elements to demonstrate the creative process. Both compositions share a focus on the physicality of the players and use it as a fundamental part of the piece, demonstrating a connection between music making and physical interpretation/manipulation. In *Distraction Piece*, this approach is taken further by making distractions, both visual and auditory, the central theme. Just as Baldwin's piece incorporates unintentional movements into the performance, *Distraction Piece* also embraces the natural mishaps that can occur in live performance, making them an integral and desired part of the composition. This approach emphasises the human element in performances, making them feel more relatable to everyday experiences. It highlights the performers' adaptability and their ability to deal with unexpected situations, echoing real-life situations where we have to navigate around distractions and unforeseen circumstances.

Distraction Piece leverages hyper-exaggerated, intentionally incorporated distractions to craft a shared experience that encourages participants and viewers to draw parallels with their own personal experiences of distraction. This aspect of the work echoes the ethos of Allan Kaprow's *Happenings* (1950s-1960s). Despite their name suggesting spontaneity, Kaprow's works were, as Kirstie Beaven discusses, meticulously organised and planned, with due consideration given to audience participation.[136] Though *Distraction Piece* does not involve direct audience interaction, it shares with Kaprow's works the aim to create an impression of spontaneity, despite there being a degree of planning, albeit still within the realms of improvisation. The development of *Distraction Piece* was a gradual, collaborative process involving a series of rehearsals and dialogues with the original performers, Elliot Simpson (soloist), Caitlin Rowley (distractor), James Saunders (distractor), and myself (distractor). This gave rise to a performance that, despite appearing highly improvisational, was loosely guided by an underlying structure and shared understanding of the piece's general format. Crucially, however, the conversations between the players tasked with distracting the soloist were conducted privately, preserving an element of surprise for Elliot, the soloist sight-reader, which helped maintain the work's overall spontaneity.

The creative process that led towards the final rendition of the piece was also an interesting evolution of the initial idea. Initially, I intended to incorporate more structured and layered distractions, but I quickly realised that such an approach diminished the integral elements of humour and spontaneity. Consequently, we shifted towards semi-improvised distractions discussed and developed over several rehearsals rather than strictly prescribed ones. This shift enabled the distractors to respond to each other's actions during live performance, react to the extent of the distraction unfolding, and collectively shape what I describe as an 'arc of

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[136] Kirstie Beaven, 'Performance Art: The Happening,' accessed 18 July 2022, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/h/happening/happening.

distraction'. The result was a performance in which all the participants were able to respond to each other's actions, rather than an overwhelming bombardment of distractions. For instance, the performance accompanying my composition portfolio unfolded in the following manner:

Figure 5.1: *Distraction Piece* performance structure

Phase 1	Soloist Introduction: The soloist is presented with previously unseen sight-reading material, initiating the performance without any distractions.
Phase 2	Musical interference: The distractors, one by one, join the performance, attempting to mimic the soloist's work but in a deliberately poor manner.
Phase 3	Integration of Objects and Conversations: Objects are introduced, a feature that continues throughout the performance. Simultaneously, conversational disruptions commence, and mental agility tests are conducted.
Phase 4	Tempo Disturbance: The musical distractors begin to interfere with the performance's tempo.
Phase 5	Physical Disturbances: Physical disruptions begin to emerge, hinting at an element of absurdity.
Phase 6	Interlude: A brief period of respite for the soloist.
Phase 7	Absurd and conversational distractions: Absurd disruptions return in full swing, complemented by ongoing conversational distractions.
Phase 8	Instrumental and Physical Interference: Physical manipulation of the soloist's instrument and further physical disturbances are introduced.
Phase 9	Tempo Disturbance Reprise: The tempo distractions return.
Phase 10	Duet and Physical Obstruction: A moment of duet appears, followed by an instrument change and introduction of physical obstructions.
Phase 11	Clean-Up and Culmination: The stage is cleared of distractions, leading to the final solo performance by the soloist.

The structure of the performance navigates a rising arc of escalating intensity, as it integrates a variety of distractions into an initially serene solo recital. The opening act is devoid of distractions, setting the scene for a traditional solo concert. However, the introduction of imitative distractions (for example, during phase 2) subtly undermines the anticipated course of the performance, perhaps surprising the audience with the divergence from their initial expectations. These unexpected shifts serve to heighten the audience's engagement, as they grapple with these elements of disruption alongside the performer.

The introduction of objects and conversational distractions marks a tipping point, as what were once low-level interruptions evolve into complete distractions. These unexpected and absurd interventions, delivered in a humorous manner, prime the audience to anticipate further unusual distractions. In the interest of engaging the audience beyond humour, it became important to present sonically intriguing distractions. This led to the introduction of tempo disturbances using multiple metronomes, challenging Elliot musically for the first time rather than simply diverting his attention. The challenge intensifies with the introduction of physical disruptions by way of touching and even playing Elliot's guitar, further stretching his performing adaptabilities.

Following this phase, a momentary interlude offers respite before ushering in the final, more absurd distractions. Post-interlude, the distractions resume with amplified effectiveness and intensity, catapulting the performance into its final, frenetic act. The performance culminates in a planned duet between Elliot and Caitlin, where all other distractions are ceased, and Caitlin starts to gently pluck the strings on the head of the guitar while Elliot his performance. This moment also provides a cue for the other distractors to prepare for the performance's ending. Once the duet concludes, the stage is cleared of distractions, allowing Elliot to complete his performance in relative stillness.

5.3.1 Outcomes (*Distraction Piece*)

Translation of ideas:

A significant aspect of the compositional idea was the intention to convey the essence of the work to an audience in clear and simple terms. In relation to the performance included in the portfolio, the deliberate introduction of distractions, in a variety of forms tied to the theme of disturbance, came across well. Informally, post-performance discussions revealed that viewers were able to draw parallels between the variety of distractions staged and their personal experiences. The employment of humour and strategic staging played a pivotal role in redefining the notion of distraction, transforming it from potentially negative interference to a light-hearted juggling act. The performers' collaboration in deciding engaging and stimulating disturbances was fundamental to the piece's success. These distractions were not intended to create distress or tension, but instead served to revel in the idea of noise as a form of playful interference.

In future interpretations of this piece, I could imagine numerous ways to cause distraction. These could include elements such as impromptu, unscripted interruptions from the audience, introducing a participatory aspect. Utilising technology to cause disruptions, such as randomly timed lighting changes or audio interferences. Exploring different forms of art such as dance

or visual arts to interrupt the flow of the piece could create a more multi-sensory disturbance. Additionally, drawing from external influences such as current events or pop culture could create interruptions that are both unexpected and relatable to the audience.

Simplicity in design (concept and score):

Many of my previous rule-based compositions incorporated considerable amounts of text into their scores. This required players to invest significant effort in understanding the process of the work, as well as ensuring their performance accurately engaged with the piece's mechanisms. In contrast, the simplicity of this work's concept and score allows for easy comprehension, while still providing substantial scope for creativity. A critical takeaway from this piece was the value of minimising pre-performance planning when delivering a mechanism centred around noise. Setting the stage for noise to naturally occur and allowing players to explore and experiment meant that a more authentic interaction and a clearer representation of noise was achieved. Notably, this approach has produced a more discernible sense of noise for the audience compared to my previous compositions.

Overt usage of distraction as noise:

This work effectively presents the concept of noise through the tangible and focused lens of social interaction and distraction. While this is clearly a reductionist approach, it was intentionally designed to explore a specific facet of noise in a clear and comprehensible way. Recognising that noise can be understood in broader, more complex terms, this piece offers an exploration of noise as distraction within the performance space. The straightforward nature of *Distraction Piece* serves to engage both performers and audience in a shared experience of disruption, demonstrating the potency of this particular interpretation of noise. While the primary object of this work was to contextualise the concept of noise within a social space, it could also inadvertently narrow the intricate socio-political and conceptual dimensions of noise as outlined by authors like Thompson and Voegelin. Therefore, it was critical to adopt a consideration of noise in my next composition that encapsulates greater conceptual depth while still fostering a translatable and performative practice.

5.4 *Make to Share* (2022)

Pivoting from my prior exploration of noise, the final composition discussed in this chapter – *Make to Share* – presents a different perspective on noise by demonstrating how perceived barriers can be dismantled through the creation, sharing, and exchanging of scored parts within an ensemble. This composition explores the social dynamics intrinsic to performance, a thread that follows on from the pieces for individuals explored in the previous chapter. While

the previous group compositions used social interaction as a critical performance mechanism, *Make to Share* extends this concept further by allowing social behaviours to emerge as an inherent outcome of its performance. In essence, it creates a situation where performers do not just interact in a prescribed manner, but are also influenced by and responsive to each other.

In her writing about noise, Thompson refers to Jacqueline Waldock's research, found in 'The urban domestic soundscape and the community: a new perspective.' Thompson uses this research to explore how urban and domestic soundscapes can foster a sense of community.[137] Contrasting with acoustic ecology's tenet that categorises noise as universally negative, Waldock's work presents a more nuanced perspective. Waldock found that some participants derived a sense of comfort and community from hearing their neighbours, a sentiment at odds with the notion of noise as simply disruptive.[138] Thompson remarks on the implications of the 'Housing Market Renewal' initiative, which introduced a compulsory purchase order to buy residents' homes and rehouse them in newer modern houses, which among other features included thicker walls. However, this enhancement ironically made some residents feel disconnected from their neighbours.[139] These divergent responses show the fact that perceptions of noise vary greatly, and not all societies or individuals share the same appreciation for quiet or noisy environments. Not all sounds are heard equally amongst different societies and groups.[140]

Thompson also reflects on the theory of habituation proposed by Truax, which suggests that listeners become acclimated to noise over time. This process might be interpreted as a form of adaptation to the sonic environment. However, Thompson emphasises that these sounds are more than just tolerated background noise; they are regarded as meaningful signals that tie individuals into a broader community.[141] In this context, I argue that when these connections are obstructed by the introduction of thicker walls in homes, the walls themselves become a form of noise. They serve as barriers that block off access to aural information, muddying the connection to one's surroundings. In this case, walls transform into noise not through the sound they generate, but through the sounds they prevent from being heard.

With this in mind, *Make to Share* aims to rapidly exchange creative reactions to auditory stimuli among a group of performers. The instructions laid out in the score facilitate an interactive, spontaneous music making generated by performers' responses to an audio file. To begin the piece in performance, players listen to an audio file through their headphones and react to it

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137 Thompson, *Unwanted Sound,* 153-59.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid,161.
140 Ibid,161-62.
141 Ibid,162-63.

by producing 'scores'. These player-made scores can take many forms, and although on my score it suggests using paper it would be quite appropriate for players to find other ways of making and producing scores. The audio file acts as a catalyst for making, yet it is not necessary for the scores to directly reflect the sounds heard. While I suggest in my score that participants could allow memories elicited by the audio to guide their creativity, this is only one of many possibilities. The idea lies in the fact that the creation of these scores should not be confined to transcribing the audio - they should instead offer their own unique and individual interpretations.

Upon completion, each score is handed over to another performer for interpretation and performance, in essence opening the ensemble's creative production and allowing access to each member's creations. I drew inspiration from the concept of a thick wall - both physical and metaphorical - as a symbol of the barriers encountered in artistic and musical production. This piece has the aim of contriving a system that minimises these barriers and optimises accessibility to creative material. Immediately following their creation, the scores are shared, disseminated, and interpreted.

Furthermore, the dissemination of scores encourages players to engage in introspection, noting similarities and disparities between their own creations and those of their peers. My objective here is to cultivate a shared space, one that encourages an understanding and appreciation of varying creative interpretations conceived from a single activity. I sought to challenge the dualist concept of noise (good or bad), emphasising the multitude of unique and novel ideas that can arise from individual experiences in both responding to and creating sounds. Each player brings to the table a unique amalgamation of personal reactions and worldly encounters. Their interpretations, when accumulated, create a complex and diverse portfolio of creative output. The concept of noise here arises in the piece's position against the idea of a centralised, restricted, and top-down approach to access of materials.

The following is a compilation of scores taken from Decibel Ensemble's performance of *Make to Share* at the Michael Tippett Centre. This small selection of scores exhibits the broad range of methods used by the players to encapsulate and convey their interpretation of the field recording to their fellow ensemble members. As evident from the samples, there is a wide variety of graphic notation, written text, and musical notation, as well as both musical and metaphorical instructions. In addition, the scores show a blending of diverse notation styles, reflecting individual interpretative choices. Interestingly, there is also a correlation between the ensemble's interests in graphic notation and the scores they produced during performance.

Figure 5.2: Score parts generated from Decibel Ensemble's performance of *Make to Share* at the Michael Tippet Centre on Monday 21 November 2022.[142]

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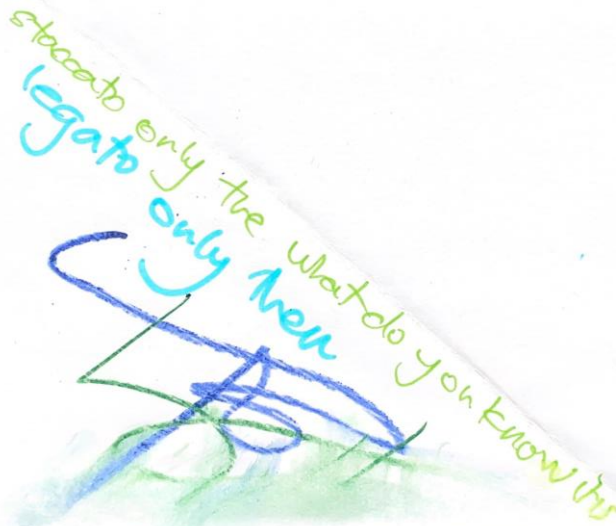
[142] To avoid confusion, I recycled some postcards I had left over from a previous project with the National Trust.

sound two actions simultaneously

for a while

and again

staccato only the what do you know this

legato only then

Clouds

National Trust

'trill' with the person nearest you. just a little.

listen
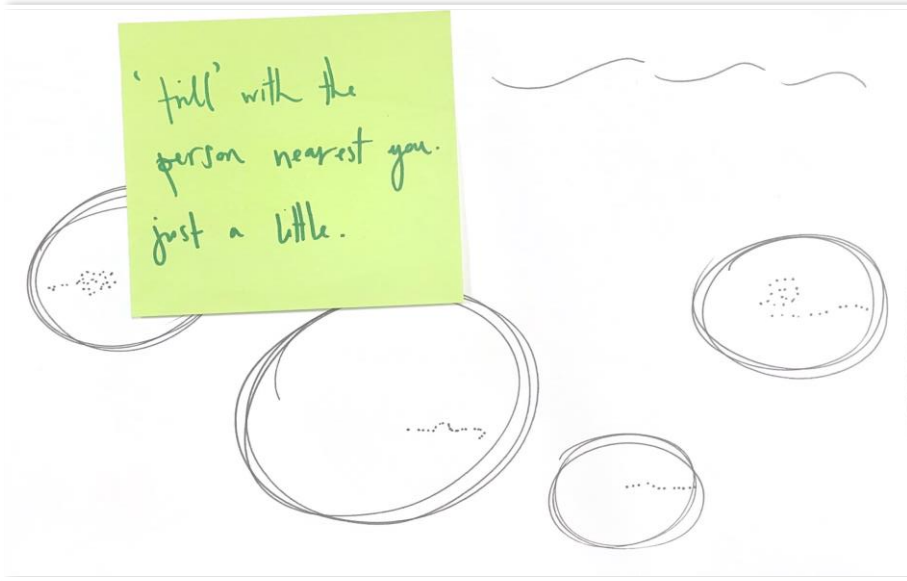
The exploration of individual and group behaviours in the context of Decibel Ensemble's performance can be considered through the lens of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's writing on creativity and flow. The variety in the ensemble's notations and the blending of different forms reflect the diverse paths towards achieving the creative outputs of each player.[143] As Csikszentmihalyi asserts, creativity involves the production of novelty, often driven by the clarity of goals. He argues that creative pursuits are frequently driven by clear goals that guide and motivate individuals in their work,[144] and that 'novelty' in relation to creativity refers to the production of new ideas or solutions.[145] In the context of Decibel's performance, these goals

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[143] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*, 1st ed (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), 107-9.
[144] Ibid 109-10,
[145] Ibid, 113.

might take the form of the individual players' intent to translate their interpretation of the field recording into a score that communicates their ideas effectively to the other players. For others, the goal could be more exploratory, responding to their own questions in interpretation and pushing the boundaries of traditional notation.

The notable correlation between the ensemble's interest in graphic notation[146] and the scores they produced may also be seen as a manifestation of what Csikszentmihalyi refers to as 'discovered problems', or creative challenges that are not easily defined.[147] He continues:

> For artists the goal of the activity is not so easily found. In fact, the more creative the problem, the less clear it is what needs to be done. Discovered problems, the ones that generate the greatest changes in the domain, are also the most difficult to enjoy working on because of their elusiveness. In such cases, the creative person somehow must develop an unconscious mechanism that tells him or her what to do.[148]

In the case of *Make to Share,* the creative prompts encourage the players to consider and use their pre-existing musical knowledge and personal experiences with composition and notation. By utilising these experiences, they can bypass the complexities of novel creative decision-making and quickly adapt using their ingrained skillset. This forms an important part of *Make to Share* as it aligns with the idea of individual creative moments surfacing during the performance of the piece. This dynamic resonates with my goal of decentralising my personal interpretations and ideas about the sounds I provide. Instead, I am to create a setting where groups can express their unique perspectives and ideas. This culminates in a collaborative environment where individual novelties are shared, interpreted, and celebrated among the collective. It is not just about presenting creativity; it is about nurturing a dialogue of creativity based on the individual ideas and experiences of each player in the group.

5.4.1   Outcomes (*Make to Share*)

Autonomous creativity and collective social performance:

I consider this piece to most accurately reflect my understanding of noise as a barrier, while simultaneously incorporating aspects of socially curious composition in its performance. Here, individual creativity is afforded autonomy yet simultaneously shared equally by design. The work echoes the essence of Brona Martin's *Sowing Seeds*, where a repository of creative outputs provides a platform for mutual exploration, interpretation, and performance. This approach combines the social practices at the core of my solo works with the broader goal of

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[146] Decibel Ensemble frequently commission pieces that use graphic notation and have been developing the 'Decibel Score Creator Macintosh Application' that turns scored images, audio files, and various other parameters into digital and video scores.
[147] Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity*, 114.
[148] Ibid, 114.

dismantling noise as interfering with information sharing and access to materials. It takes into account the personal, artistic, and societal aspects within the work.

Simple design and conceptual ideas:

This piece, similar to *Distraction Piece*, is designed with simplicity and accessibility in mind, negating the need for intricate instructions and complicated mechanisms. While this work does make use of a more complex design than *Distraction Piece*, both Decibel Ensemble and OUT-TAKE Ensemble's workshops and performances of the piece suggest that its core ideas can be efficiently translated into an engaging performance.

I perceive the conceptual design of this piece to be much more stimulating than those of my previous noise-themed pieces. The premise of generating and sharing score materials to produce sounds moves away from types of disruptive noise explored in my prior compositions. In this regard, it was a useful experience to conceive a work that breaks free from the conventional use of noise as interference, and instead investigates what transpires when a performance mechanism intentionally thwarts this notion of noise. Conceptually, this was a pivotal point in my exploration of the interplay between curiosity and noise, with respect to the concept of trespass as a way of manoeuvring against noise for positive social change. This approach, which most accurately represents my current thinking, will be the focus of the following chapter's discussion.

5.4.2 Chapter Outcomes - Absence of a central audience role:

A final observation from the pieces in this chapter, which also ties back to the previous chapter, is that the audience's role in my compositions has been consistently passive. At no point in my creative process have I made the audience a central element in the experiential aspect of the work. While I have no qualms with this traditional setup, I have been contemplating how to activate the role of the audience more centrally to the experience of the work. In other words, instead of simply observing musicians performing concepts around social curiosity and noise, I am interested in creating a situation where the audience is task with this active listening experience. This shift of focus would place the audience member in a role that is typically reserved for the performers, giving them a direct, immersive encounter with the themes I am exploring in my compositions.

Chapter 6: To Compose is to Trespass

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I aim to present a connection between trespass, as an activity and a philosophical concept, and its emergence through my socially curious compositional methodology introduced in chapter 3. My initial focus will be on introducing some of the key authors and proponents of trespass associated with the Right to Roam movement that has gained traction in England. Then, I introduce the philosophy of 'To Enjoy is to Trespass', through the work of Alenka Zupančič, carefully comparing my curiosity-driven notions with her fundamental ideas around enjoyment, personal space and feelings, as well as socio-cultural interpretations.

Thereafter, I return to my compositions, previously discussed in chapters 4 and 5. My intention here is to link my earlier pieces, tracing the emergence of trespass as a process of navigating the barriers and interferences connected with the noise concepts highlighted in chapter 2. My aim is to map out the key principles around my compositions, offering a better understanding of my socially curious processes and the need to manage noise through trespass-related notions. As I found out, curiosity often confronts obstacles, and the ways in which these obstacles are acknowledged within a trespass context contribute to defining the relationship between curiosity and its potential to dilute noise.

Subsequently, I present and discuss *The Other Side of the Sign* as the final piece in my portfolio, exploring how trespass is examined more overtly compared to my other compositions. This exploration brings into focus the results of my prior pieces, predominantly highlighting curiosity and noise in relation to the players interacting with my compositions. However, *The Other Side of the Sign* also summarises my compositional output for this project and narrates the process of reconciling with my role as a composer in these pieces, impacting how the audience perceives the work.

This chapter aims to answer Research Questions 2 and 3 by exploring the principles of my socially curious compositional methodology in relation to trespass as both an activity and a philosophical concept. By linking the notion of trespass with curiosity and noise, the chapter examines how these ideas can enhance performers' engagement through socially engaged, open score compositions, ultimately offering the audience a more nuanced observation of this interaction. The final composition, *The Other Side of the Sign*, serves to further this exploration by focusing on the audience, placing them as integral participants within the piece and providing insight into how collective behaviours and social interactions can be effectively communicated through a group compositional setting. In this way, the chapter maps out key

principles, strategies, and approaches for navigating barriers and generating social dialogue through noise, trespass, and curiosity, illustrating how these concepts can combine to impact the overall performance experience.

This chapter, therefore, serves as an exploration of curiosity, noise and trespass, both as standalone concepts and as interconnected facets of my compositional output. I show how my pieces bring to light the ways in which curiosity encounters barriers, how these barriers can be managed through the concept of trespass, and how all these components can come together to create an engaging and meaningful audience experience. My aim is to both provide an overview of my pieces and contribute to the conversation about the role of the composer and the audience within a socially curious compositional setting.

6.2   To Trespass

Throughout my doctoral studies, I have maintained a keen interest in the intersection of environmental crisis journalism and activism. This has found its way into my work in various forms, stemming initially from my exploration of acoustic and soundscape ecology, and progressively towards a focus on the societal implications of noise. As a part of my personal creative methodology, walking and making field recordings have always been a fundamental part of my creative process. Growing up in a small English town within the New Forest, I have been fortunate to experience an environment that, albeit meticulously manicured, has been a great source of inspiration. As my interest in exploring and observing my environment grew, I simultaneously started facing obstacles preventing a more in-depth understanding of it. From the explicit 'No Trespassing' signs and physically obstructive measures such as deliberately overgrown footpaths, bulls, and locked gates, to the more abstract impediments like societal compliance to imposed rules - all these elements hindered my connection with these spaces and impeded my ability to make field recordings. Consequently, due to these barriers, I, like many individuals, was faced with the dilemma: to refrain from exploring environments, or to persist in explorations, fully aware that I am engaging in acts of trespass.

It is important to note, however, that my aspiration is not to control, manipulate, or exploit environments. Rather, the aim is to witness, understand, learn, and relay what is discovered. I believe this intention is an important and critical distinction when engaging with the concept of trespass. Despite its transgressive implications, the pursuit of greater access to natural environments springs from the gentlest of intentions. The objective is not about usurping or claiming new ownership; it is a challenge to the very notion of ownership as a mechanism to conceal information.[149]

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[149] It is important to add that these concepts are primarily pertinent to the 'Right to Roam' campaigns in England. It is vital to recognise that trespass, while still a heavily charged term in England, carries a

The trespass movement has long been a form of protest against the privatisation of land and natural spaces, and the exclusionary practices that come with it. This movement is rooted in the belief that access to nature should not be an exclusive right but rather a shared privilege for all.[150] A significant historical event that greatly inspired the trespass movement was the 1932 mass trespass on Kinder Scout, a moorland plateau in the Peak District of Derbyshire.[151] For those interested in the history of trespass activism, this mass trespass is often lauded as a crucial turning point. It is regarded as a significant moment in the narrative around access to land in the journey leading to the constitutional success of the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, a landmark piece of legislation which underscored the right of all to access nature.[152]

Activists such as Nick Hayes and Guy Shrubsole have emerged as central figures in the trespass movement. Hayes is a renowned illustrator and writer who uses his art to champion the right to roam. His books *The Book of Trespass: Crossing the Lines that Divide Us*[153] and *The Trespasser's Companion*[154] narrate his experiences trespassing on private land and also look into the history and politics of land ownership in the UK. Hayes is a passionate advocate for the right to roam, a principle upheld in Scottish law, and argues for its adoption in England. His work encourages us to scrutinise and contest barriers to access, and reconceptualise trespassing not as a defiant act, but rather as an essential mechanism for democratic participation and social equality.[155] Guy Shrubsole, on the other hand, is known for his investigative work and activism surrounding land rights. His book *Who Owns England?: How We Lost Our Land and How to Take It Back* reveals the secretive and concentrated nature of land ownership in England and advocates for transparency and reform.[156] His activism often involves organising and participating in mass trespasses, which serve as both a form of protest and a method of raising awareness about the issues concerning land use and ownership.[157]

Recently, debate has emerged over potential legislation that would criminalise trespassing in the UK, shifting the act of trespassing from a civil issue to a criminal offence. George Monbiot noted in the Guardian, that these proposed changes not only threaten the rights of

spectrum of interpretations and consequences globally. My exploration of trespass as an activity is decidedly limited in scope. Instead, I aim to establish a link between the notion of trespass, seen as a manifestation of curiosity, and the concept noise as applied to my work. Integrating trespass and activism in relationship to art and music is an important, yet distinct, research project.

[150] Nick Hayes, *The Book of Trespass: Crossing the Lines That Divide Us* (London ; New York: Bloomsbury Circus, 2020).

[151] Ibid, 1-3.

[152] Ibid, 19-21.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Nick Hayes, *The Trespasser's Companion* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022).

[155] See Hayes, *Book of Trespass*.

[156] See Guy Shrubsole, *Who Owns England? How We Lost Our Green and Pleasant Land, and How to Take It Back* (London: William Collins, 2020).

[157] Shrubsole regularly shares his activism online, using social media platforms such as Twitter.

marginalised travelling communities; they would also have far-reaching implications for the general public's access to various lands.[158] In reaction to this proposed legislation, activists have organised numerous mass trespass events, aiming to expose the misuse and exploitation of rural lands. One notable example involved Shrubsole and the Right to Roam campaign organising a trespass on the Duke of Somerset's land. Their exploration led to the discovery of a mass grave filled with the corpses of pheasants, mixed with fly-tipping waste and barbed wire.[159] This distressing scene showed the brutality and excess of bird shooting sports in the UK, bringing their environmental impact into sharp focus.[160]

Discoveries like this one highlight the critical role of activism in unveiling the ways our natural environments are being mishandled. The restrictions and barriers that prevent most people from accessing these rural areas enable the continuation of such harmful practices. These practices persist, largely unchallenged, as they remain out of sight and, thus, out of the public's understanding. This serves as a stark reminder of the urgency to question and challenge such legislation that might further restrict our access and knowledge about what happens in our countryside.[161]

6.3 'To Enjoy is to Trespass'

Building upon the idea of trespass as a physically transgressive act within environmental movements, the concept has also been explored as a metaphor for how we interact as a society. Specifically, Alenka Zupančič, in her 2018 lecture 'To Enjoy is to Trespass', investigates the concepts of trespass and 'the Other' within the framework of Lacanian psychoanalysis and symbolic order.[162] Zupančič broaches the subject of enjoyment, contemplating its implications for understanding human feelings and reactions. She begins her discussion with the introduction of Lacan's idea of 'symbolic order'. This refers to the structure of language and societal laws that we use to interpret our reality. The symbolic order is more than just a mediator of our comprehension of reality; it is a constituent part of reality itself,

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[158] George Monbiot, 'The Trespass Trap: This New Law Could Make Us Strangers In Our Own Land', *The Guardian*, 15 January 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jan/15/tresspass-trap-law-land-travelling-people-rights.

[159] Guy Shrubsole (@guyshrubsole), 'On our Mass Trespass of the Duke of Somerset's pheasant shoot woods, we've discovered a mass grave of scores of discarded pheasants, wire mesh fencing, & fly-tipped rubbish. We're here to draw back the veil of secrecy that hides how landowners - not ramblers - trash nature,' *Twitter,* 8 May 2022, https://twitter.com/guyshrubsole/status/1523316776964087811.

[160] Eliza Egret, 'Mass Grave of Pheasants Found on Duke of Somerset's Land,' *Protect the Wild*, 22 May 2022, https://protectthewild.org.uk/news/mass-grave-of-pheasants-found-on-duke-of-somersets-land/.

[161] It could be argued that, in this instance, the legislation put forward by the UK government is a form of noise.

[162] Alenka Zupančič, 'To Enjoy is to Trespass,' *YouTube,* 11 January 2019, video, 52:57, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBK1My2T1u0&t=312s.

facilitating our ability to communicate and experience emotions.[163] Zupančič elaborates on this by explaining how our feelings can be affected, or 'hurt', by elements of symbolic order, such as speech. This leads to a consideration of the connection between physical pain, like injuring your leg, and symbolically induced pain, such as being labelled clumsy.[164]

Drawing upon Lacan's theories, Zupančič discusses the discordance within a sequence of events that could suggest the existence of a cause. She introduces the notion of 'interspace', a domain in which the cause resides in the relationship between two levels but cannot be fully reduced to either of them.[165] Broadly, Zupančič posits that while there is a cause when our feelings are hurt, a single, clear-cut culprit responsible for the hurt is not always present. This is because much transpires within the interspace, a realm not entirely ruled by physical or symbolic laws. Consequently, the interspace is a domain that necessitates negotiation and understanding.[166]

Zupančič goes further into the concept of interspace, examining it through the lens of enjoyment, which is characterised as a form of trespass. As an illustration, she suggests that instances of enjoyment often transpire at the expense of another.[167] She provides examples where this could manifest, such as the aroma of a neighbour's meal permeating into another person's living space, or the implications of passive smoking.[168] In these scenarios, enjoyment is viewed as a form of intrusion or trespassing, yet Zupančič stresses that this form of trespassing is not radically or overtly transgressive. Instead, it can be considered trespassing because it encroaches on the personal space or comfort of others.[169]

Subsequently, Zupančič suggests that enjoyment can often feel displaced or out of context – it does not seem to have a clear-cut designated place within societal norms or personal boundaries. She argues that enjoyment emerges from an intersection, specifically between the individual (the subject) and the external world or others (the other).[170] Given its inherent fluidity and its emergence from this interspace, enjoyment can often be perceived as an intrusion, making its presence felt in spaces where it was not explicitly invited or expected.[171] By considering enjoyment in this way, Zupančič's has redirected my notions of personal space, shared experiences, and how the pursuit of enjoyment can subtly or not so subtly disrupt these

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[163] Ibid. 01:24.
[164] Ibid, 02:23.
[165] Ibid. 16:09.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid, 18:40.
[168] Ibid, 24:19.
[169] Ibid, 25:02.
[170] Ibid, 26:37.
[171] Ibid, 27:13.

boundaries. Enjoyment, according to Zupančič, is not neatly confined, but instead seeps into the interspace, thereby trespassing on the lives of others.[172]

6.3.1 Curiosity in Trespass

In essence, Zupančič's concept of enjoyment as trespass, framed through Lacanian psychoanalysis, suggests that enjoyment is inherently intrusive and often occurs at the intersection of the self and the other. Our enjoyment is often implicated in, or influenced by, our interactions and relationships with others, as well as our societal norms.[173]

I return now to my methodology for a socially curious approach to composition, which can be considered as a gentle inquiry into the audible surroundings of individuals and groups, interactions within social contexts, and the subtle dynamics between individuals and groups when making creative work. Curiosity is linked primarily with the act of creative process, producing narratives and allowing for autonomy in interpreting and experiencing local environments. It was largely built on the enjoyment of wanting to engage with other's individual experiences and perspectives, to share ideas and decisions, and appreciate the complex social dynamics that occur when collaborating on artistic projects.

To make a connection between these two concepts, I argue that social curiosity acts as a vehicle through which the trespass of enjoyment takes place. That is, the curiosity about others – their creative interpretations, motivations, and experiences – can lead to an engagement that infringes upon boundaries, and in the process revealing the underlying layers of complexity that occur during shared creative experiences. This is relevant when curiosity leads to challenging the more typical ways in which we might engage in writing with and for other people. By showing interest in others' lives and experiences – and the possibility of trespassing into their personal space, metaphorically speaking – engagements in deploying a socially curious process can encroach on the boundaries of others, which can be seen as a form of enjoyment in Zupančič's framework.

A deeper understanding of this process requires an exploration of the reasons behind exploring the boundaries of others, as well as the challenges and frictions that emerge during a socially curious approach to composition. In the potential instances of trespass caused by curiosity, I argue that a connection to the concept of noise as a form of barrier or interference becomes clearer. I aim to illustrate that trespass and curiosity are inherently tied to the desire to explore, understand, and forge connections with others through a shared interest in local environments. Much like the breaking of physical barriers that characterise environmental trespass, similar dynamics come into play in a compositional setting. Such a context can

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[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid, 27:30.

provide insights into how to formulate a compositional approach that actively interrogates the role of noise. This not only mirrors the essence of physical trespass in its quest for understanding, but also considers the potential of using these instances as a means to question, confront, and possibly redefine the boundaries delineated by noise.

6.3.2 To Trespass Against Noise

Contrary to the more overt forms of transgression examined in Hayes and Shrubsole's writings, the concept of 'trespassing' within the sphere of social curiosity is more subtle. As I will further elaborate, my compositions reveal this subtle form of trespassing, emphasising its vital role in navigating noise – the barriers preventing individuals or groups from establishing a connection with a desired point of attention. In this context, curiosity serves as a catalyst for a form of unintentional trespassing, which emerges as a bridge between the removal of barriers and reduction of noise. As individuals share their experiences through the art of composition, the curiosity which establishes that initial connection can lead to inadvertent trespassing – a venture into other's experiences. Hence, the concept of trespass, albeit as an unexpected outcome, becomes an essential component that allows curiosity to confront and reduce noise. As a result of curiosity, my collaborators and I find ways of resisting interference and barriers. Put differently, within the interplay of trespassing through curiosity, the opportunity arises to resist noise.

I would like now to briefly reconsider the notions of noise put forward by Thompson and Voegelin. Thompson's contribution to my understanding of noise, her 'ethico-affective' model of noise, reframes the phenomenon as a productive, transformative force rather than a dualistic subjective judgement.[174] This de-centred approach extricates noise from personal preference and broadens its scope to the communal level, inviting a collective of listeners to develop relationships with noise.[175] Furthermore, Voegelin's counterargument to Russolo's glorification of noise offers a lens for examining its societal implications. By focusing on the sensorial experience, she highlights noise's capacity to stimulate an attentive, active listening process, creating individual interpretations that resonant collectively.[176]

When considered alongside the concept of trespass borne from curiosity, the perspectives offered by Thompson and Voegelin reveal curiosity's potential as a way of navigating noise and probing barriers that may emerge in my approach to composition. This curiosity induced trespassing engenders a distinct exploration of individual experiences, presenting a counterpoint to interference and a way to dilute noise.

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[174] Thompson, *Unwanted Sound*, 16-19.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Voegelin, *Listening to Noise*, 43-44.

The theoretical underpinnings provided by Thompson and Voegelin, have allowed me to consider this nuanced understanding of the interplay between noise, trespass, and social curiosity within a compositional context. Their scholarship has helped to develop my understanding of noise as a potential obstruction, with trespass serving as a conduit for exploration, interpretation, and sharing of dialogues developed upon encounters with noise.

6.4   To Compose is to Trespass (Against Noise)

My awareness of trespass has developed through the process of reflecting on my compositions as my doctoral studies have unfolded. An interesting pattern developed, revealing a subtle embodiment of trespass in my pieces, conforming to Zupančič's assertion that trespass can manifest as an outcome of enjoyment or, as I have discussed, curiosity. This is evident in my pieces for individuals, where curiosity led to instances of an imbalance in creative roles. Conversely, in my group pieces, trespass presented itself more conspicuously as a response to barriers.

The initial traces of trespass in my work can be found back in the early stages of the creative processes tied to the four solo pieces discussed in chapter 4. This became apparent when approaching each performer to ask for their interest in participating in a project intimately tied to their local environment. It was starkly apparent from the outset that this preliminary approach could be perceived as somewhat unusual, even bordering on voyeuristic from certain perspectives. This initial curiosity, which I had innocently anticipated would be well-received, did meet with some resistance. This was notably true for projects in which I had no prior collaborations with the performers, especially in the case of my pieces *With Juliet* and *Filtered Reality (location and date)*.

The concept of trespass, as an unintentional by-product of opening a dialogue, can be most clearly linked to my creative process with Juliet Fraser. It is made particularly evident by the fact that I was creating field recordings in Juliet's local area without her presence. Conversely, during the creation of field recordings with Ben Jameson for *Electric Guitar, in Southmead*, our efforts were a shared experience. Ben's presence guided and informed me about areas he frequented and held an affinity with, which in turn, offered me a sense of permission to form my own connections with these spaces. However, when it came to creating the field recordings for *With Juliet*, I was simply exploring the areas Juliet had referenced in our conversations. Consequently, this turned into a solitary expedition to explore and understand the environment, which instilled a sense of intrusion.

In this context, the sensation of trespass was still present for me, even though I obtained explicit permission to explore and present Juliet with field recordings. These moments when curiosity largely stems from one direction - in this instance, me as the composer - highlight an

imbalance in the creative process. This divergence was particularly pronounced in the piece for Juliet, because its development followed a more conventional composition 'workshop' event organised by my university. In such a structure, there is a predefined and organised time to experiment with the piece and contemplate potential alterations and changes. My process, driven by social curiosity, required me to communicate with Juliet outside the assigned time, date, and location for the workshop, in a manner she likely did not expect. However, the imbalance I observed in this creative process led, intriguingly, to one of the more successful pieces in my portfolio. It created an engaging dichotomy between planned and impromptu interactions during performance. If a more prolonged creative process had unfolded, the organic structure of a conversational performance would not have emerged. This process reveals our inherent curiosity and engagement with the field recordings, rendering them in a way that arguably feels more genuine and authentic.

In both *Electric Guitar, in Southmead* and *With Juliet,* my curiosity was less present in the initial stages of the piece's development and became more pronounced during the engagement with field recordings. This pattern aligns most closely with traditional processes, in which the composer presents material for the performer to interpret. But it is in the initial process before material is engaged with that the sense of trespass is most clearly outlined. As elaborated upon in chapter 4, setting the stage for this to occur and integrating it within the piece's creation necessitates an explicit engagement – bridging the performer with my creative methodologies and desired progression for the piece. While having a pre-existing collaborative experience or dedicated time to familiarise ourselves with each other's work can certainly streamline this process, I do not think it is a prerequisite for success. In fact, the absence of a prior relationship can imbue the project with a sense of intrigue, making for a less predictable final piece. As Zupančič notes, in order to confront the 'interspace,' a heightened significance must be given to both negotiation and engagement in understanding the perspectives of others.[177] This interplay, marked by exploration and discovery, provides important connections with how we introduce and develop our understanding when working with different people, regardless of previous familiarity.

In the case of the latter two compositions featured in chapter 4, *Filtered Reality* and *Home & Away Chords*, the initial act of trespassing on local environments is not as overtly evident as in the preceding pieces. In these compositions, the performers are tasked with creating field recordings. Here, a more pronounced distance emerges between me and the creation of the original material. This dynamic establishes an alternative imbalance where the performer is

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[177] Zupančič, 'To Enjoy,' 16:03.

requested to interpret and engage creatively with their own environment on my behalf, thereby creating a degree of separation between the notions of trespass and personal space.

The barriers that potentially arise when making field recordings are instead passed onto the performer, who must consider these barriers when making their own recordings. This was especially apparent in *Home & Away Chords,* during instances when Caitlin was creating 'away' recordings. In this capacity, Caitlin had an obligation to navigate the boundaries and relationships between her recordings and obtaining individual permissions from those she was with at the time. On occasion, Caitlin would record during rehearsals with her group, Bastard Assignments, taking care to secure their consent before any recording commenced. This led to a peculiar scenario of indirect trespass on my part, as I was absent from the consent discussions and remained unaware of the making of recordings until Caitlin sent them to me later.

Moreover, *Filtered Reality* features recordings from Daniel Molloy's home, captured during a national lockdown. This situation provided an intriguing instance of trespass, with physical limitations being externally enforced due to the circumstances. With Dan's options limited, his home was the only available environment for creating his field recordings. This context essentially rendered the question of permission and place largely moot, due to lack a alternatives. Considering that Dan and I had not previously collaborated, it would be interesting to examine whether comparable considerations and strategies would have occurred, akin to those in *With Juliet.* More specifically, I am intrigued by the question of whether Dan would have wished to explore other parts of his environment that held personal significance, or if he would have opted to delegate field recordings tasks to me, aligning with the approaches seen in the pieces for Ben and Juliet. In this scenario, constraints beyond my control necessitated a particular form of engagement with Dan's environment.

In each of these instances, trespass can be interpreted as stepping into others' environments, irrespective of whether permission has been granted, with the objective of fostering collaboration. Trespass, in relation to Zupančič's ideas, can be perceived as an exploration into another's personal emotions and experiences. By instilling curiosity into the creative process, a form of trespass becomes apparent. This trespass poses a challenge, it bridges the gap between two individuals and their engagement with sounds, engaging in their mutual understanding of it. In this, trespass becomes an important tool, dismantling established barriers and encouraging a compositional process that is driven by curiosity. While noise, as discussed in chapter 4, might create sonic interference during performances, the collaboration and connection forged through the act of trespass – focusing on the sounds that resonate with the performer's local environment – serve to subvert traditional performer interaction boundaries. Consequently, this process weakens and dilutes noise as a barrier to information.

Instead, it promotes openness, fostering a more considered understanding and exchange of ideas.

In my group pieces, trespass can be considered from a different angle: specifically, how the players work together in order to collectively perform the piece. It is in the breaking of communicative barriers, to access information that allows for a more engaging and collective performing experience that trespass can be considered as a presence that helps in accessing the desired point of attention as a group.

In *Locating and Listening, Playing and Stopping*, noise emerges from the concurrent activities of two groups trying to perform the same task. The combination of multiple elements that need attention often fragment the players' focus, leading to a complex and demanding performance scenario. In reaction to these complexities, performers innately adjust their technique to counteract the noise. This includes using physical gestures, maintaining eye contact, and strategically balancing the group's dynamics to make sure the process remains both visibly clear and audibly discernible. In this setting, I suggest that the performers are committing an act of trespass against noise. They are intuitively adapting to the presented obstacles, drawing upon their pre-existing skill set and exploratory experiences to complete the task they are presented with.

Contrastingly, *Distraction Piece* inverts this narrative to spotlight the effects of noise more clearly. The task in this piece is straightforward - to sight-read a piece of music. The responsibility here falls on the other group members, whose role is to introduce distractions, making the task more complex and difficult than it would be otherwise. Consequently, this piece highlights the challenges faced when we lack the ability to navigate or confront barriers. In the context of *Distraction Piece*, the obstructions imposed on the performer completely disrupt their performance. Without the option to divert, counter, or find alternative arrangements, the player's only strategy is to make their best effort at sight-reading. However, when distractions escalate, it becomes virtually impossible to interpret the information accurately and effectively. Paradoxically, the piece in my portfolio that many might perceive as featuring the most disruptive acts typically associated with trespass, I propose, contains no elements of trespass at all.

Make to Share, on the other hand, is designed to eliminate any barriers to accessing creative materials. Every member is given the chance to share their creations with the rest of the group, concurrently receiving the creative efforts of others. This piece shows the outcomes of multiple creative instances amalgamated to create a collective whole, a space where compositional ideas are instantly translated and actualised by others. Crucially, the creators of the scores can audibly and visibly witness their ideas come to life. Moreover, all creative outputs stem

from the same stimulus, which provides an opportunity to compare these ideas. Players can perceive how others have interpreted the same information they received, enabling a more reflective and unified transcription to take shape.

In asserting that *Distraction Piece* is devoid of any elements of trespass, I also contend that *Make to Share* demonstrates how trespass can dilute noise. Information is accessible, freely shared, and collectively presented. Ideas are exchanged in such a way that none is disregarded or celebrated over another. I consider that these two pieces represent polar opposites. Where *Distraction Piece* epitomises my truest example of noise, *Make to Share* represents my most genuine sense of trespass.

6.5 *The Other Side of the Sign* (2021)

The final piece of my PhD portfolio represents the only time I have explored the idea of trespassing as a physical activity in my composition. This piece is closely connected to my personal experiences of making and collecting field recordings. What makes it different from my previous work is the change in how I view my role in the work. Instead of trying to minimise and de-centre my presence in the work, I now intentionally foreground trespass as a part of my personal process, represented in, and as the concept for, the piece. This shift reflects my personal and artistic growth and is inspired by the ways in which trespassing looks to challenge boundaries.

My primary focus when writing *The Other Side of the Sign*[178] was to place the audience at the heart of the experience. This shift was essential in my compositional process to effectively convey the experiential qualities found in my solo pieces and the dynamics surrounding noise in my group pieces to audiences. Through this piece, I sought to combine these elements and introduce more direct references to trespass. This approach is partly introduced by the insights collected from *Make to Share,* where I noted the importance of extending notions of access and experiential listening to the audience. My hope in doing so was to frame more complex ideas such as trespass and noise as interference in a manner that could be experienced viscerally rather than merely understood intellectually.

Throughout the process of creating my pieces, I discovered that being a part of the performance offered far more context than simply observing the piece as an audience member. Consequently, translating this context into an audience's perspective became an important consideration. I also had to consider how audiences usually interacted with my work.

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[178] The name of this piece was inspired by the omitted verse from Woodie Guthrie's *This Land Is Your Land*, - 'There was a big high wall there that tried to stop me. The sign was painted, said 'Private Property.' But on the backside, it didn't say nothing. This land was made for you and me.' Nick Spitzer, "The Story of Woody Guthrie's 'This Land Is Your Land," *NPR*, 15 February 2012, https://www.npr.org/2000/07/03/1076186/this-land-is-your-land.

Typically, I would provide the musicians with binaural field recordings via headphones, enabling them to immerse themselves fully in the locational and directional nuances of the recording. However, due to certain constraints, audiences would experience these recordings through stereo amplification, inevitably diminishing some of the depth available in the recordings. Given this, it felt crucial to invert the performance setup and offer each audience member the opportunity to experience the field recordings through headphones, mirroring the depth of engagement usually experienced by musicians in previous compositions.

The setup for the performance puts the audience in the middle of the performance space and each member is given headphones.[179] The four musicians occupy positions around the edge of the performance space, front, back, right, and left. This arrangement is intended to mirror the spatial element inherent in the binaural recordings. Interestingly, situating the field recordings 'inside' the headphones and the musicians 'outside' – performing acoustically or through monophonic amplification in the case of the electric keyboard and guitar – subverts typical performance expectations. Often, when thinking of instruments in combination with field recordings or embedded in real environments, the environment is viewed as a broad, external experience, encompassing the more intimate setting of the instruments. However, in *The Other Side of the Sign*, this relationship is inverted; the field recordings provide an intimate, internal setting. This inversion further disrupts the traditional concert setting by introducing an 'inside-out' dynamic. Here, the elements traditionally perceived as 'outside' – the field recordings and audience – are nestled 'inside', thus recasting the performance landscape.

My objective in this piece is to gently guide the audience towards the types of listening that I critique when discussing the shortcomings of acoustic ecology in chapter 2. A tranquil and neutral soundscape is presented, aiming to lull the audience into a state of comfortable acceptance. I wanted to evoke a sentiment of contentment, an unspoken thought from the audience of 'this is nice and relaxing'. The opening five minutes of the composition feature ambient countryside sounds such as bird's singing and some generic sounds of man-made machines such as the occasional car passing and an overhead plane. A serene, if unremarkable, soundscape is painted. In parallel, the ensemble introduces periodic tones, in a rather directionless manner, pivoting between consonant and dissonant intervals that tend

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[179] When Plus-Minus Ensemble played this piece, I used multiple headphone preamps, enabling each audience member to personally adjust the volume for their own headphones. Should this piece, or any future compositions that use this set up, be performed again, a 'silent disco' setup might be better - this setup uses wireless headphones (that can be volume controlled individually) in which music is broadcast via a radio transmitter. Another possibility involves audience members using their personal devices to play the track individually, cued at specific times. However, this piece in particular hinges on the synchronised interplay between live performance and prerecorded audio, meaning that if any audience member fails to play their audio at the right moment, it may lead to a somewhat disjointed reception of the work.

not to go anywhere. The quiet dynamics allow the sounds to gently permeate the headphone material, creating a quaint blend between the two sound worlds.

At 5'30'', there is a shift. The keyboard moves away from the chordal texture, which continues for a further 30 seconds in the other three parts, and begins an arrangement of Elgar's *Nimrod* from the *Enigma Variations* using an artificial string sound. The shift towards Elgar at this moment serves as a connection with the idea of 'Englishness' within the composition. This introduction transitions the work from a generic soundscape piece to something more deeply imbued with English cultural identity. Although the integration of Elgar might appear somewhat crass, it serves as a springboard to explore Englishness from both a critical and personal perspective, an approach greatly explored in the works of Michael Finnissy.

In an interview concerning his composition *English Country Tunes* (1977), Finnissy discusses the connection between his upbringing in England and his artistic work. For Finnissy, Englishness is more than just a romanticised ideal or vague abstraction; it constitutes a deeply personal, lived experience that translates into his musical compositions.[180] Finnissy draws a comparison between his work and Derek Jarman's film, *Jubilee* (1977). Just like *Jubilee*, Finnissy's *English Country Tunes* does not aim to reproduce a depiction of England, he instead considers both works as fantasies. These fantasies are not unfounded or detached, but rooted in the layered cultural narratives that inform our understanding of Englishness. For Finnissy, capturing these intricate narratives in his work is part of authentically representing the environment he intimately knows and experiences.[181]

I position the transition towards the registering of Englishness in my piece not merely as an alteration of style, but as a crucial pivot in the cultural and thematic landscape of the piece. This pivot serves as a connecting tool, associating the previously established soundscape with a specific cultural frame of reference, enabling a deeper dialogue between the audience's experience of England and their interpretation of the field recording. More than a scenic backdrop, this newly established English context sets the stage for the exploration of more complex themes associated with trespass. Specifically, introducing Elgar is not simply a way of preserving the calming and idyllic nature of the composition, although it may come across that way when it first appears. Instead, it introduces a cultural anchor point that invites the audience to actively engage with the notion of Englishness.

Introducing the concept of trespass becomes increasingly important within this context. The concept of trespass carries varied implications across different cultures and geographical

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[180] Michael Finnissy, 'Interview Between Ian Pace and Michael Finnissy on English Country Tunes,' *Notations Music and Evolution,* 1, (2009), https://ianpace.wordpress.com/2014/12/03/interview-between-ian-pace-and-michael-finnissy-on-english-country-tunes-february-2009/, 14.
[181] Ibid.

boundaries. By situating the narrative firmly with the English milieu, I can scrutinise these implications more closely and provide a nuanced perspective. In this way, the Englishness embodied within the piece serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it offers a shared cultural experience, creating a point of reference for the audience – which will of course be registered and understood differently for each person. Secondly, it serves as a way of allowing the audience to engage in the upcoming exploration of trespass, challenging their understanding of this concept with the constraints of the cultural and geographic context in which they are now immersed in.

Through this deliberate shift towards Englishness in my piece, I hope the audience are no longer observers of the tranquil soundscape, but become participants in a shared journey that looks at the themes of English identity, ownership, and trespass. This approach, I hope, offers a more interesting and contextual listening experience that extends beyond capturing and replaying field recordings. Instead, it engages the audience in an exploration of deeper societal themes to do with barriers, which I will later connect with my previous decisions on noise and trespass.

Building upon established narratives of Englishness, I introduce a sonnet 'I dreaded walking where there was no path' by poet, John Clare.[182] The poem, narrated by Peter Falconer, appears in the audience headphones alongside the field recording. Meanwhile, the arrangement of Elgar's *Nimrod* continues on, with the other instruments not playing. I decided to have Clare's poem appear in the headphones of each audience member, as opposed to being performed live, in order to generate a sense of personal and individual monologue, rather than a shared collective experience.

This section serves multiple functions within the broader context of the composition. Firstly, the incorporation of Clare's poem serves to further anchor the narrative within the English countryside. Clare's words, known for their deep-rooted connection with the English landscape, combined with Elgar's *Nimrod*, one of the most recognisable pieces of English music, intertwine to create a clear, almost brash, connection with England. Secondly, and more importantly, the introduction of Clare's poem initiates the conversation around the concept of trespass, adding a new layer to the narrative. However, it does so in a gentle and non-confrontational manner. Clare's words not only reflect on the literal act of trespassing but also explore the emotional and psychological implications of the act. This offers a humanistic, rather than political, approach to the subject matter, which I hope allows the audience to place their experiences and understandings of trespass more directly.

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[182] John Goodridge and R. K. R. Thornton, *John Clare: The Trespasser* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 2016) 9-10.

Around the 8'00'' mark, the piece revisits the texture and structure of the material that featured just before the entrance of *Nimrod.* In contrast to the earlier sequences, when stacked fifths, with some variation, created non-functional harmonic movement, the chords now mimic those found in the following section of *Nimrod.* In this passage, Elgar uses an F minor 7 chord to build tension before moving to Bb major, providing a cathartic perfect cadence to Eb major. I try to mirror this trajectory of tension with an electronic phaser effect introduced on the keyboard, which progressively increases in intensity as the section continues. The other instruments also increase their use of vibrato to the point of extreme wideness. However, rather than ending the section on the tonic, I instead let the quotation end on the F minor chord. The effect produces a rather unhinged sound, and it seemed fitting to leave the Elgar in this frenzied state before moving to a completely different sound world.

The final section of the piece sees the keyboard taking its own course, gradually accelerating through a repeated passage. The tones heard at the beginning of the piece are now accompanied by text-to-speech artificial voices audible in the audience's headphones. These voices are paired with the parts played by the cello, guitar, and bass clarinet. Each artificial voice statement presents the words to a trespass sign, starting with courteous requests not to trespass – typically justified – and escalating to unnecessarily violent exclamations. As the artificial voices progress through the trespass signs, I introduce older forms of text-to-speech technology, reflecting the lack of humanity behind the message. Each of the sound cues is deliberately paired with a musical phrase that subtly mirrors the conveyed message. The beginning phrases are echoed in the gentle tones heard at the piece's beginning, evolving into more extreme statements that reflect the intensifying messages given to the audience.

The piece ends with the ensemble being asked to 'just go crazy', creating as extreme a sound as possible on their instruments whilst also being asked to shout at the audience. This moment of chaos is short-lived, however, and passes to reveal the initial field recording that has been continuing on in the audience's headphones, albeit unheard due to the noise created by the players. This moment lasts only briefly, giving a fleeting opportunity for introspection. This juncture in the performance serves as a way moving between the audience's immersive, imagined reality, induced by the synthetic voices, and the authentic reality of musicians performing live in front of them. The reason behind transitioning to real voices was aimed at promoting an introspective consideration on our responses in these contexts, and stimulate thought on how these reactions might be perceived, and explore the broader implications they bear on our understanding of interpersonal engagement.

In writing this composition, my approach largely involved fusing ideas from all the pieces presented within my PhD portfolio. While this approach may not connect as seamlessly with the concept of social curiosity as my individually focused pieces do, I believe that it presents

the same kind of dialogue (albeit unspoken) that emerges from those pieces. This dialogue unfolds between my presentation to an audience and their subsequent process of internalising and developing their understanding of trespass. For better or for worse, my understanding of the environmental concern, activism, and the experimental aspects of my work have taken root in my experiences of growing up and composing in England. Though I initially endeavoured to remove myself as the central subject of my pieces at the onset of this PhD, my writing and research journey clarified a crucial point. Rather than having my involvement remain solely behind the scenes, what was more important for fostering a socially curious approach was to be candid about my position in the work.

Recognising the facets of my life that surface - my ideas, ideals, understandings, and experiences - is crucial. However, they must be presented in a manner that allows the audience to engage with my pieces in a way that promotes exchange and not didacticism. Instead of presenting these aspects of my work as facts, my aim is to create an inviting space. This environment encourages each person who engages with my pieces, whether as a performer or audience member, to bring their own ideas, experiences, and feelings into play, allowing them to own their interactions with and reactions to the experience.

This work depicts trespass in numerous ways, yet it primarily views the act itself as a method for addressing societal barriers, regardless of whether these barriers serve beneficial or detrimental roles. Through the process of creating these pieces, I have come to realise the importance of scrutinising not only the existence of these barriers, but also their underlying reasons. The exercise of curiosity in composition and art-making frames trespass as an inevitable consequence, with the decision to trespass being dependent on one's engagement with the individual, location, space, or concept involved.

My work amalgamates notions of trespass, not just as a defiant act, but also as a form of enjoyment, a yearning to venture into and understand varying environments and communities. It seeks to deconstruct the conventional perspective of trespass as an act of defiance, and instead paints it as an exploration, a conversation between the known and unknown, the accessible and inaccessible. This process embraces the possibility of revealing alternative perspectives or hidden truths, fostering a deeper connection with the spaces we inhabit and the narratives they hold for other people. Ultimately, it is a celebration of the desire to break free from constraints and satisfy our natural curiosity about the world that surrounds us.

6.5.1 Outcomes (*The Other Side of the Sign*) and Chapter Conclusion

Audience Engagement:

A significant aspect of my creative process revolved around authentically positioning the audience at the centre of the listening experience. I discovered that by offering an immersive encounter with binaural recordings, mirroring the engagement that performers share with my other compositions, I could facilitate a more sincere connection to the concept of environmental listening. This approach focused on the audience's engagement by allowing them to interact more profoundly with the soundscape they were presented with.

Addressing Trespass:

Recognising the emergence of trespass as an important feature in my socially curious approach to composition, it became critical to consider and address the themes of trespass in relation to the environmental and societal dimensions of my portfolio of pieces. As this composition is the final composition in my portfolio, it felt important to focus on trespass as a central aspect to my making and collecting of field recordings. Moreover, this exploration allowed me to revisit the barriers that surfaced during my collaborative pieces with individuals and groups.

Cultural and Personal Exploration:

In the course of my PhD research, I wanted to explore means by which I could de-emphasise myself as the central focus of my compositions. Although one might contend that the final piece in my portfolio does not strictly adhere to this aim, I consider that when immersing myself in others' local environments and observing how groups negotiate the complex dynamics of noise during performance, the 'composer' role I occupy is still an important part of the process to consider.

For instance, throughout the commentaries on my pieces I have examined my personal and professional relationships with collaborators and groups, to determine how they might adapt and evolve in response to situations I present. Consequently, it felt apt in this piece to offer the audience a glimpse into my own insecurities, revealing some of the cultural nuances that emerge as I navigate my work in England, especially when confronting ideas around trespass.

In this context, I find it acceptable to position myself as a more central aspect of the work. This work strives to address the same dialogues and navigations that arise when collaborating with others. Furthermore, because this piece deals more deeply with audience experiences rather than extended creative processes with individuals, introducing trespass and concepts of 'Englishness' seemed an appropriate way of bridging a connection with place.

6.5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has sought to draw together a multi-layered approach into the notion of trespass through its associations with both activism and philosophy. The exploration of trespass, as supported by Hayes and Shrubsole, exposes some of the cultural and historical implications of privatisation and its impacts on the English countryside. These implications are far-reaching and provide a helpful bridge to more philosophical understandings of trespass as a way of navigating barriers.

In consideration of this, Zupančič discusses trespass as a form of enjoyment. She considers that forms of enjoyment have a tendency to bleed into the experiences of others, inadvertently crossing metaphorical boundaries within communities and societies, where the cause of the trespass is often difficult to examine.[183] In addressing these notions, I felt a connection with my approach to socially curious composition in Zupančič's consideration of the 'interspace', where my investigation of others' environments has tendencies to produce types of trespass, in which boundaries may be crossed within the creative process. This crossing of boundaries allowed me to connect to the idea that trespass may emerge as a by-product of curiosity, and in turn, that curiosity may be one way of diluting certain conditions surrounding noise.

Looking into my own pieces, and their relationship with curiosity, trespass, and noise, I considered how trespass emerged in all of the piece's previously discussed in the commentary sections of this PhD, determining that trespass, whether as a consequence of curiosity (as in my piece's for individuals) or as a way of navigating and adapting to consequences of noise (as in my piece's for groups), trespass has become vitally important product of my creative process.

Finally, I presented the final work in my portfolio, *The Other Side of the Sign*, where I positioned the audience within the heart of the performance, and invited them into my personal entanglements with trespass, noise, and Englishness. Incorporating my previous interest in soundscape music as a directionless non-functioning environmental rhetoric with new considerations around Englishness (as indicated by my inclusion of Elgar's *Nimrod* and John Clare's trespass sonnet) and trespass, I highlight openly the impacts of trespass on environmental engagement, and what that might mean in many different contexts when exploring the English countryside.

In this light, trespass emerges as a critical and productive lens to interpret and engage with the dynamics of noise, social boundaries, and cultural identity. It allows me to frame my understanding of access, the nature of auditory experiences, and social interactions,

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[183] Zupančič, "To Enjoy."

questioning and reassessing the structures that shape these experiences. Trespass and curiosity, as represented in my compositions, offer an experiential approach to exploring environments, whether my own or those of others. I hope that they invite a consideration of how we consider our own interactions with boundaries, confronting the unfamiliar and the unexplored with an open mind. Reflecting on this, I believe that through trespass, of stepping through boundaries and questioning interference, we might uncover new insights and spark dialogue around how we perceive, navigate and experience our environments.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1   Summary

In this PhD research, I have navigated the intersections of noise, curiosity, and trespass within my compositions, aiming to develop an understanding of how these can be applied to my creative process. Considering the critiques of acoustic ecology and the limitations of attributing inherent qualities to sounds, I have navigated away from these perspectives. Instead, I have incorporated Thompson's ethico-affective approach to noise, positioned with Barthes' ideas surrounding authorship and reception, decentralising myself from the position of the primary subject in my compositions. This led to my interpretation of noise as a barrier that prevents individuals or groups from establishing a connection with a desired point of attention. Informed by these insights, my compositions attempted to engage with musicians more directly and interactively.

In this commentary, I have engaged with scholarship to develop an approach I term socially curious composition. This process began with the exploration of noise through the lens of Marie Thompson and Salome Voegelin, allowing me to pivot away from the conventional interpretation of noise as unwanted sound to a more nuanced consideration that presents noise as a form of barrier or interference. Turning to Claire Bishop's critical viewpoints on socially engaged art, I drew parallels and proposed contrasting views to enrich my compositional processes and their social implications. The collaborative stories spiral (CSS) framework, drawn from community arts, played a pivotal role, offering a process-orientated and reflective approach that foregrounded the importance of communal narratives. The *Sowing Seeds* project by Brona Martin was incorporated as a case study, demonstrating the practical applications of the CSS framework in an artistic context and revealing the need for an additional fifth stage centred on the artist's self-reflection.

Influenced by these insights, my compositions have sought to explore the intersections of noise, curiosity, and the auditory experiences of local environments. As a result, I developed distinct approaches for individual and group compositions, using strategies including field recordings, open scores, text scores, and staff notation. These methods, as explored in *electric guitar, in Southmead, With Juliet, Filtered Reality (location and date),* and *Home & Away Chords*, looked to develop a jointly pursued creative process built on notions of social curiosity, in order to highlight the interconnectedness of individual and collective narratives within environments local to each musician I worked with. By doing so, these pieces emphasise the role of active participation and mutual engagement as integral elements of socially curious composition. In the group pieces *Listening and Locating, Playing and Stopping*, *Distraction*

Piece, and *Make to Share*, noise was purposefully employed as an interference, challenging players to adapt, overcome, or resist it.

In the final stage of my research, I integrated Alenka Zupančič's philosophical concept of 'To Enjoy is to Trespass'. In my final piece *The Other side of the Sign,* this philosophy served as a conceptual bridge. It linked my understanding of curiosity as a form of enjoyment to considerations of personal spaces, societal norms, and the transformative experiences of trespass. While my compositions use varied techniques and approaches, they can be connected through the notion of trespass, whether intentional or accidental, as a natural response to confronting noise. The concept allows for a more nuanced exploration and understanding of noise and its socio-cultural implications.

Reflecting on the course of my PhD project, I have made several critical realisations that contribute substantially to my growth as a composer. Through this, I was able to consider noise not merely as a dualist concept, but as a barrier that prevents individuals or groups from establishing a connection with a desired point of attention. I was able to reframe noise to allow me to incorporate a way of thinking about sound that is objective in its understanding, but deeply personal and subjective to the individual who is listening using their body and mind. This perspective, I hope, encourages listeners to engage more critically with the sonic environment, enhancing their awareness and sensitivity to sound and local surroundings. Importantly, this has the capacity to go beyond music composition, potentially influencing the broader social implications of noise within communities.

My research has reinforced for me the value of curiosity within socially engaged art practices and experimental composition. I have discovered that adopting a curious approach can facilitate the creation of a communal space for exchange of experiences, knowledge, and creative autonomy. This approach has allowed me to gently enquire into the lives and environments of the people I collaborate with, allowing me to probe the functions of a relationships that can form between composer and performer. Moreover, the concept of trespass surfaced as an essential by-product of curiosity in my compositions. This discovery taught me that trespass, whether deliberate or accidental, can serve as a conceptual tool in understanding how we navigate our environments, discover different perspectives, and confront boundaries.

My approach has underscored the importance of a balance between shared creative spaces and individual creative autonomy, thereby fostering both a collaborative and critical artistic environment. This methodology not only accommodates a socially curious perspective, actively seeking out and encouraging group interaction and participation, but also values the individuality within each creative process. It allows each participant, including myself, to carve

their own space within the broader group dynamic, offering a level of autonomy to create, reflect on, and critique their own contribution. This dual emphasis on social engagement and individual creative agency thereby enriches the creative process and artistic product, ensuring that it considers both communal exchange and personal exploration. I believe these insights contribute to the broader academic discourse, opening up new avenues for socially curious composition and a more nuanced exploration of noise and its socio-cultural implications. It is my hope that they serve as a catalyst for further inquiry and exploration within and beyond the experimental music community.

7.2   Reflection on Research Questions

Research Question 1: *How does the use of field recordings, both as a creative starting point in music composition and as an element of interaction with a musician's local environment, contribute to the enhancement of a listeners' awareness and sensitivity towards their sounding environment?*

In chapter 2, noise is framed as a barrier that prevents listeners from establishing a connection with a desired point of attention, offering a conceptual framework for understanding its role in shaping the listening environment. Through this framing, field recordings become instrumental in guiding performers and audiences to engage with local environments in a way that activated their listening and developed a greater awareness of their surroundings.

In chapter 4, the solo compositions look further into this relationship. In *electric guitar, in Southmead* the use of field recordings to explore local environments, places the performer's creative responses at the forefront and encourages attentive interpretation of the sonic landscape. The inclusion dialogue in With Juliet helps establish a shared creative space where field recordings inspire and connect the performer to their surroundings. Filtered Reality and Home & Away Chords blend field recordings with instrumental performance, revealing the careful listening required in performance, offering personal and individual interpretations. In each solo piece, field recordings serve as the foundation, demonstrating how attentive listening to the soundscape enhances sensitivity.

In chapter 6, *The Other Side of the Sign* positioned the audience centrally through binaural recordings, immersing them in the listening experience to provide a reflective connection to the environment. This facilitated an authentic engagement with the concept of trespass, encouraging an appreciation for the interplay between noise and field recordings.

Research question 2: *How can incorporating the principles of socially engaged art into open scored compositions enhance performers' engagement through listening to local sounds, and in turn, offer audiences nuanced observation of this interaction?*

In chapter 3, the socially curious methodology was established, creating a framework that emphasised curiosity as a means to foster engagement between composers and performers. In *With Juliet* (chapter 4), dialogue provided a social context, and pre-creative conversations encouraged artistic collaboration. By inviting performers to participate actively, their listening skills were tested, enhancing their creative engagement with local sounds.

In chapter 3, the group compositions further refined the interplay between socially engaged art and open scores. *Locating and Listening, Playing and Stopping* required performers to adapt and solve problems together, managing noise within a collaborative setting. *Distraction Piece* framed noise through social interaction, using humour to transform it from a negative interference into a light-hearted act, showing how distractions could be incorporated into group compositions.

Chapter 6's *The Other Side of the Sign* activated the audience's role by inviting them to engage with the work through binaural listening. This placed the audience at the centre of the performance, providing them with a more nuanced observation of the interplay between social curiosity, noise, and trespass. By encouraging active listening, the work blurred the lines between performer and observer, creating a shared experience.

Research question 3: *What strategies and approaches can be used in group compositions that aim to highlight collective behaviours, to effectively communicate the underlying social interactions to the audience and enhance the overall performance experience?*

In chapter 5, the thesis showed how noise can be used as a disruptive factor in group compositions can reveal collective behaviours and social interactions. In *Listening and Locating, Playing and Stopping,* performers were prompted to problem-solve and articulate their needs as they managed noise collectively, creating a cohesive and interactive performance. In *Distraction Piece*, noise was framed through a focused lens of social interaction and distraction, revealing the tangible impact of noise on communication.

In Chapter 6, *The Other Side of the Sign* went further by creating a shared experience that invited the audience to explore the interplay between curiosity, noise, and trespass. The inclusion of cultural references such as Englishness and the concept of trespass offered the audience a means to connect with the performance while maintaining transparency in the creative process. This transparency allowed the audience to observe the inner workings of collective behaviours, ultimately enhancing the overall experience.

Together, these group compositions illustrated the importance of maintaining clarity in the compositional process while revealing how noise and social engagement can facilitate communication and collaboration within performance settings.

7.3 Reflection on Methodology

Within this PhD, the methodology of my process could be interpreted in two distinct ways, each offering valuable avenues for exploration and expansion. The first approach involves replicating the process for each individual piece, allowing for an analysis of sensitivity and awareness in listening through different interpretations and results. For instance, in *electric guitar, in Southmead* the process of selecting a recording location and connecting specific listening modes to different aspects of the recording could be replicated with another musician. This methodological replication opens up the possibility of observing how variations in interpretation and outcomes influence the enhancement of listeners' awareness and sensitivity towards their sounding environment. This presents an opportunity to explore the nuances of listening across different contexts and performers, using the same compositional process. This aspect of my methodology is arguably less transferable to other composers.

Similarly, this approach could be applied to group pieces, albeit with a more abstracted process that allows for broader interpretation and performance by multiple groups. For example, *Distraction Piece* has been performed and interpreted by various groups since the initial submission of my PhD material, showing the successful implementation of my methodology to encourage the emergence of group behaviours within the context of noise and social interaction. Further exploration could look into the variance in group decision-making and outcomes, providing potential insights into how social situations and noise are perceived and navigated by different groups.

The second, and perhaps more interesting, way to reuse my methodology is to abstract the socially curious method more generally. Rather than focusing solely on individual pieces or specific group compositions, this approach would involve distilling the underlying principles of socially curious composition and applying them to diverse artistic contexts. By embracing curiosity as a guiding principle and encouraging collaborative exploring, this abstracted methodology has the potential to generate new works based on curiosity and collaboration. Socially curious methods invite artists and composers to rethink collaborative approaches to composition, emphasise mutual exchange, co-creation, and entanglements with notions of trespass as a barrier within the creative process. This broader application of the socially curious method opens up possibilities for interdisciplinary collaboration, community engagement, and varied artistic experiences.

7.4 Reflection on my own position in the compositions

As I reflect on my position as a composer, my understanding of authorship and collaboration in composition has deepened, refining the principles that guide my creative approach. My initial stance emphasised a shift away from the hierarchical role of 'composer' towards a facilitator, navigating the complexities of authorship in socially curious methods of collaboration. With collaboration and curiosity at the forefront, my philosophy has evolved, now encompassing the critical aspects of care, attention, and the delicate art of negotiating barriers.

Central to my current perspective is the understanding that careful navigation of barriers, whether logistical, conceptual, or relational, is essential in collaborative work. Barriers are not merely obstacles to be overcome; they can be windows into deeper creative exploration when approached through the lens of trespass. This concept aligns with my philosophical approach to collaboration, wherein each barrier marks an opportunity to consider the power dynamics, personal boundaries, and creative potential inherent in the process.

The act of trespass, not as a violation but as a form of deliberate and artistic inquiry, allows me to question and reassess how collaboration unfolds. A collaborative space where trespass is carefully and artistically considered becomes one where relationships are nurtured and strengthened. This requires transparency and an acute awareness of individual contributions. Barriers arise due to differences in expectations, communication styles, or creative priorities, but addressing these issues thoughtfully opens the door to new artistic possibilities.

I advocate for a methodology where care is given to recognising and dismantling barriers that limit participation while respecting the identities and boundaries of collaborators. In this sense, my role as a composer remains one of initiation and facilitation, but it is also grounded in a commitment to care that involves listening, adapting, and sharing decision-making power. It requires recognising when my authority as a composer might impose limitations on others and understanding when to step back and allow collaborators to shape the work more directly.

Through this approach, the composition becomes an evolving entity shaped by both intentional and emergent collaborative processes. I strive to maintain a balance between guiding the creative direction and encouraging the collaborators' voices to emerge distinctly. This balance requires continuous reflection on how barriers appear and affect the collaboration, with particular attention to maintaining an equitable distribution of benefits and opportunities.

In group compositions, this careful negotiation becomes even more critical, as multiple perspectives and dynamics interact to create a complex web of authorship. Here, nurturing a culture of shared ownership is vital, as is ensuring ongoing dialogue about credit and compensation. My work aims to ensure that each contributor is recognised and valued, building collaborations that reflect the openness of my approach.

In summary, my evolving understanding of collaboration, framed through the lens of curiosity, listening, and trespass, leads to a more inclusive an open creative space. By navigating the barriers that emerge with humility and a willingness to listen, my position as a composer becomes less about hierarchy and more about facilitating meaningful collaboration. This research, driven by curiosity and artistic integrity, has shaped my compositions into explorations that honour the multiplicity of voices and relationships involved.

7.5   Further Avenues of Research

7.5.1   Further develop socially curious approaches

As this research has suggested, socially curious methods hold potential for developing our understanding of the interplay between sound, society, and individual perspectives. To fully consider this potential, further research might concentrate on establishing more relationships and instances of the socially curious method. This expansion would allow for a more comprehensive documentation of how each creative process unfolds, in turn enhancing my understanding of the method's potential. Furthermore, increasing the range and diversity of these engagements will provide richer evidence of the approach's capacity to produce intriguing and insightful explorations of another's local environment. Importantly, these explorations should uphold the method's commitment to a gentle approach, fostering engagement that is respectful and mindful, in its curiosity.

7.5.2   Investigate the possible connections and differences between co-authorship and socially curious composition

Another promising avenue for future research involves contrasting the effects and outcomes of co-authorship with socially curious methods. Such a comparative study could provide valuable insights into the nuances and distinctive qualities of each approach, as well as the potential synergies that may arise when they intersect. This would require a shift in perspective, where the project is not perceived merely as a collaboration between a composer and a performer, but rather as a fully co-authored and co-developed endeavour from inception to conclusion. It would be interesting to examine how such a holistic and shared creative process influences the nature of the resulting work, the relationship dynamics within the project, and the overall quality of engagement with the local environment. By identifying and analysing the differences and similarities between these methods, a better understanding of their outcomes, and how they may complement each other could be explored.

7.5.3   Engaging with cultural implications of Trespass

A further potential avenue of research could investigate the cultural implications of trespass more deeply, particularly in the context of art. As cultures around the world possess differing

views, laws, and attitudes towards trespass, the reactions to and impact of trespass-influenced art could vary significantly from one region to another. Investigating how notions of trespass manifest and are received in different cultural settings could provide a comprehensive global perspective on this topic. A comparative study might offer insights into diverse societal reactions, legal frameworks, and cultural interpretations of trespass as a form of artistic expression.

Moreover, a focus on Englishness and its associated cultural identities and insecurities would add an enriching dimension to the study, personally for me. Exploring why and how trespass becomes a mechanism for confronting and dealing with these elements is crucial. It could encompass historical, socio-political, and cultural perspectives to understand the role of trespass in challenging, reinforcing, or altering notions of Englishness. This avenue could lead to a better understanding of the intersection between trespass-influenced art, societal norms, and cultural identity, contributing significantly to the broader dialogue on socially engaged methods in art.

7.6   Final Reflection

Throughout my PhD, I have explored diverse fields of study, extending from noise theories to socially engaged art, from case studies in community projects to philosophical notions of enjoyment and trespass. This engagement has contributed to a socially curious compositional methodology that is evident in my portfolio. Each composition reflects a layered exploration of noise, its interpretation, and socio-cultural implications, threaded through with ideas and desires for curiosity and trespass. Significantly, the process of trespass emerged as a common thread in every piece, manifesting as an intuitive response to encountering noise. By navigating the dynamics of sound, noise, and societal constructs, my pieces present a nuanced understanding of these elements and, I hope, contribute to ongoing dialogues within experimental composition, potentially contributing to future research into the intersection of sound, society, and curiosity.

To briefly reflect on the viva, the process made it clear that I am deeply passionate about a socially curious method. It assumes a vulnerable yet nuanced view of collaboration that invites exploration of people and environments. The collaboration is purposefully open and exciting, allowing processes and behaviours to emerge naturally, and welcoming the unpredictability of chance discoveries. It takes a nuanced and open approach that permits personalities and behaviours to unfold naturally.

This careful and considered methodology is gentle in its inquiry yet strives for critical, informed art. It seeks to establish meaningful connections between people and their environments through listening, emphasising co-creation and inviting exploration into how collaboration can

open up new possibilities for art. The socially curious method creates a framework for meaningful engagement that delicately balances creative freedom and structured guidance, leading to artistic outcomes that connect performers and audiences in the pursuit of curiosity and discovery.

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