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OF EMBODIED MUSICAL SPACES AND THEIR CREATIVE AMBIGUITY

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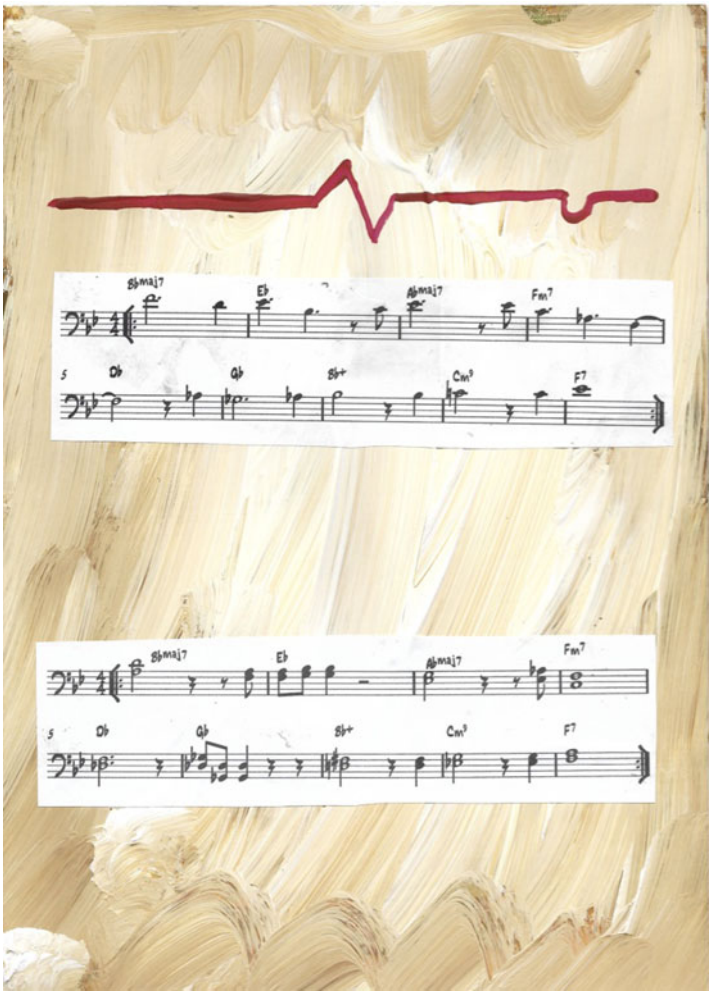
Abstract: Some musics and musical situations seem to invite the audience to participate; others insist that the audience should absorb the events of performance in rapt attention. A slippage between such distinctions can also arise: a moment where an audience might be uncertain as to whether joining in is desired or welcome. In an examination of such a moment of uncertainty or surprise, at the close of Raymond MacDonald's *Stolen in a Dreamland Heist* (2021), we suggest that such events point towards and perform the particular creative spaces and spacing effects that arise in musical events in ways which draw attention to the affective bodily relationships between performers and auditors. The article takes the form of its own nested dialogue: an interview with the composer forms its central portion, framed within theoretical examination both of that critical moment within performance and the reflections on it the interview reveals.

Introduction

At the end of Raymond MacDonald's *Stolen in a Dreamland Heist* (2021) something curious occurs: the performers set down their instruments and begin to whistle, hum and sing (see Example 1). As this happens, as the melody they are singing, humming, whistling on and around becomes familiar, there is a tug – gentle, but insistent – that suggests to audience members that they might, almost, join in. The dreamland heist is an ordinary experience, strangely encountered. This participation, the desire towards participation, is captured in Heidegger's description of Van Gogh's peasant shoes. Heidegger suggests that the wearer of those shoes spends little, if any time, reflecting on what it is like to wear them; more likely, the wearer simply hopes that they will keep the water out tomorrow at least as well as they did today. Yet the more or less realist image of them – at a distance, the distance afforded by a frame that makes of them a thing you could not, even if you wanted to, put on yourself – prompts an imagining, and maybe even an understanding, of being in those shoes, the sensation of the fields sometimes being a little too flooded for the length of the upper to cope, or the sort of drag or limp that would have produced that particular unevenness of wear.[1]

[1] Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993), pp. 137–212.



Example 1:
Raymond MacDonald, *Stolen in a Dreamland Heist* (2021).

The condition of art can often rely on the distance, the space and the spacing, that intervenes between the shoes and imagining what it would be to wear them. It may not be possible to understand what it is like to be a bat, but it is possible to imagine what it would be like to be a musician, perhaps especially if you already are a different, more distant musician, separated from the stage by space. The strangeness of the encounter is not the feeling of narrowing proximity between auditor and musician, but the force of the desire to close that gap, to meet across the divide: 'If encounters are meetings, then they also involve surprise,' as Ahmed puts it in a rather different context.[2] This space can be understood as constantly changing, as it embodies various possible encounters and relationships, thus creating a fluid platform on which various forms of action and interaction can flourish.

To navigate the ambiguity of this unstable space, in which openings and closings alternate and intersect, creativity becomes a, or even the,

[2] Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 8.

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fundamental category: that is, the ability to give rise to novel and appropriate (or task-efficient) items or ideas.[3] In this context, we understand the efficiency or appropriateness of creative activities as the possibility for them to be concretely achievable. For example, a piece of music that is impossible to perform may not be recognised as creative, even while it may be highly innovative. While there is an ongoing debate concerning such a definition with specific regard to music,[4] we believe it is important to emphasise that creativity does not have to be 'abstract', but rather needs to function contextually and operationally. As Kaufman and Glăveanu report,[5] definitions of creativity often include additional components such as idea(l)s of authenticity, quality and surprise. It is through creativity that distance, space and spacing can assume, or seem to assume, various more or less stable forms, embodying actions, thoughts, imaginations, sounds and gestures, which gradually define and constitute different encounters. Put differently, artistic spaces can be inhabited and modelled through evolving encounters that materialise in creative activities.

Boden distinguishes between three types of creativity: combinatorial, exploratory and transformational, each referring to distinct cognitive processes involved in the generation of creative artefacts.[6] Combinatorial creativity relies on making unexpected associations and connections among familiar items or ideas; exploratory creativity involves remapping one's domain of experience, thereby pushing boundaries or slightly altering elements in novel ways; finally, transformational creativity results in radical changes in existing modes of thought or action, producing items that could have not emerged under the previous conditions.[7] As noted by Huovinen,[8] exploratory and transformational creativity are particularly relevant for music research, with scholars such as Wiggins examining music composition as the exploration and transformation of a given conceptual space. Indeed, it is notable that both combinatorial and exploratory modes seem to rely intimately on metaphors of spatial territory.

When such a conceptual space suddenly becomes an extended ecosystem, inhabited by different subjects, intentionalities and experiences, body and action may be understood as necessary categories to generate creative outcomes and encounters. But this complex interplay between musical interaction, space, bodies, action and creativity can hardly be captured linearly. In recent years the study of musical creativity has been increasingly addressed through the theoretical

[3] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996).

[4] See, for example, Emery Schubert, 'Creativity is Optimal Novelty and Maximal Positive Affect: A New Definition Based on the Spreading Activation Model', *Frontiers in Neuroscience* 15 (2021), 612379.

[5] James C. Kaufman and Vlad P. Glăveanu, 'An Overview of Creativity Theories', in *Creativity: An Introduction*, eds James C. Kaufman and Robert J. Sternberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 17–30; see also Anatoliy V. Kharkhurin, 'Creativity. 4in1: Four-Criterion Construct of Creativity', *Creativity Research Journal*, 26, no. 3 (2014), pp. 338–52; Robert J. Sternberg and Todd I. Lubart, 'The Concept of Creativity: Prospects and Paradigms', in *Handbook of Creativity*, ed. R. J. Sternberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 3–15; and Margaret Ann Boden, *The Creative Mind: Myths and Mechanisms* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990).

[6] Margaret Ann Boden, 'What Is Creativity?', in *Dimensions of Creativity*, ed. Margaret Ann Boden (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), pp. 75–119.

[7] Margaret Ann Boden, *Creativity and Art: Three Roads to Surprise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 41–45.

[8] Erkki Huovinen, 'Theories of Creativity in Music: Students' Theory Appraisal and Argumentation', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12 (2021), 612739.

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tools of embodied cognition.[9] This is an orientation originally developed in philosophy and the cognitive sciences which sees mental life as a combination of bodily and intersubjective factors.[10] By this view, mind need not be understood as primarily relying on information processing (that is, the mind-as-computer metaphor); rather, it can be seen as an instantiation of the entanglement (dynamical, physical, cultural) occurring between living systems and their worlds.[11] In a way, this non-linear understanding of mind and subjectivity reveals 'encounter' as a constitutive part of what makes us humans: a core element of what it means to be embodied is constituted in the precondition that bodies encounter and are entangled with other bodies.

Exploring musical creativity through the lens of embodiment means to decentre the focus on the individual creator to embrace a more contextual view in which the interaction between agents is emphasised.[12] Their continuous interplay gives rise to creative outcomes and processes when it actively forges live synergies between bodies that are novel and appropriate. In other words, musical creativity may be seen as a form of action that takes place in a meaningful musical space, rather than a detached property of a disembodied mind.[13] From this perspective creativity becomes a truly intersubjective, distributed phenomenon that involves a give and take of intentions, thoughts and actions.[14] This makes the distance experienced during the dreamland heist an invitation to act and interact, one that might even be conceptualised as a body (in) itself.

The remainder of this article takes the form of a recent interview, undertaken 'live' via a shared text document between Martin Iddon, Oli Jan and Raymond MacDonald, and a commentary on that conversation by Iddon and Andrea Schiavio.

Martin Iddon: I wonder if we should start with your simply telling us a bit about the piece, how it's set up, what happens in it, what the performers see (and what the audience sees too).

Raymond MacDonald: Each musician has an individually created graphic score, an A4 cardboard page painted with thick acrylic paint and a short segment of conventional notation glued on top. There are very simple instructions for the musicians about how to play the score (type of musical material, long textures/short events, etc.) and some general indication about how long each section should be. The musicians' personal experiences will influence precisely how they interact with the score, so everybody will experience and perform the score differently. Musicians are also free to interpret elements of the score in more impressionistic ways if they wish (strong colours or bold brush strokes might suggest particular responses for

[9] Zvonimir Nagy, *Embodiment of Musical Creativity: The Cognitive and Performative Causality of Musical Composition* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016); Dylan van der Schyff et al., 'Musical Creativity and the Embodied Mind: Exploring the Possibilities of 4E Cognition and Dynamical Systems Theory', *Music & Science*, 1 (2018), 2059204318792319.

[10] Shaun Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006).

[11] Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

[12] Andrea Schiavio and Mathias Benedek, 'Dimensions of Musical Creativity', *Frontiers in Neuroscience*, 14 (2020), 578932; Mark Reybrouck, *Musical Sense-Making: Enaction, Experience, and Computation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020).

[13] Nicholas Cook, *Music as Creative Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Andrea Schiavio et al., 'Processes and Experiences of Creative Cognition in Seven Western Classical Composers', *Musicae Scientiae*, 26, no. 2 (2022), pp. 303–25.

[14] Eric F. Clarke and Mark Doffman, eds, *Distributed Creativity: Collaboration and Improvisation in Contemporary Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Vlad Petre Glăveanu, 'Creativity as a Sociocultural Act', *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, 49, no. 3 (2015), pp. 165–80.

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different musicians). The audience could see small reproductions of the scores in the programme notes, but it is not essential that they can see the score (The score could also be projected on a large screen and or even be animated, but that's another story). The musicians move between sections in their own time, so there is no need for precise synchronisation. However, performers should all be aware of where each other is within the score, and generally move together in an approximate way, so there is real time negotiation involved. At some point the accordion player starts to play the more conventional part of the piece by playing the notated melody and the others can also choose to interpret the melody, either precisely or impressionistically. The final instruction invites the musician to leave their instrument and hum, sing or whistle the melody, and the piece finishes when the final musician (not specified) playing decides to stop.

MI: You did a bit of work with the musicians before the performance. Did you tell them anything more about the piece at that stage? Or give them other instructions that they didn't already have? Did you change anything in the rehearsal process?

RM: The rehearsal was really important, but not to get the musicians to play the piece correctly. Rather, I hoped to set up a good social situation for the piece to be performed. I wanted to let the musicians know how grateful I was that they were playing my piece and make sure they knew that the ambiguous elements of the piece could be interpreted in any way they chose. Possibly the most influential recent development within psychology and embodiment is 4E cognition – the notion that our identities and cognitions are embodied, enacted, embedded and extended – and this piece attempts to engage with these issues within a composition that also includes significant amounts of improvisation. The piece is concerned with how the nature of embodiment (including bodily processes outside of the brain and extrabodily processes) is involved in negotiating the score. Most of what we consider cognition and embodiment has its roots in social interaction, and the interactive elements are the most important aspects of this piece. The interactive elements are negotiated in real time and extend to the idea of embodiment being situated (the concert hall at a given time and place). Also, the embedded nature of embodied cognition within this musical context relates to the constraints individual bodies may impose on how the piece is performed. So, while the musicians are free to interpret the score in any way they wish, the embedded nature of embodied cognition places constraints (for example, a musician choosing to sing or not sing when voice is not their primary instrument has clear links to embodied perception).

MI: Did they know anything more about what the title means than simply what the words themselves evoke?

RM: I had no time to say anything about the title – this wasn't intentional; it just was not top of my priorities (had they asked I would have gladly chatted about it), and there is still quite a lot to say about the title. The piece has some origins in a dream I had. The dream involved the homecoming of a freedom fighter retrieving 'something', I wasn't sure what, that had been stolen.

Oli Jan: For me, the moment when the harmonic progression emerged was highly associated with the bodily, or mental, experience of dreaming. When a 'real world' stimulus occurs and wakes you up from your dream, that stimulus might enter the 'dream world' and take forms in various ways, interacting with the dream. For instance,

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if you are woken up by a loud, sudden clap, you may experience several different events in your dream that are associated with that sound. What's interesting here for me is that although you are woken almost instantly by the clap, in the dream world many events may have occurred in the short moment from the onset of the stimulus to the awaking. It is almost as if time is distorted or even reversed.

In your piece, when the harmonies emerge, because they kind of contain the fragmented materials from the more chaotic and obscure previous section, I feel like it is a moment of 'waking up', in that I associated this clear, familiar harmonic progression with something in the real world, which entered the dream world in the forms of mysterious and vague fragments of the first section. This moment connects the two realms and gives an interpretation to everything that happened before. The illumination is so strong that it almost drags me backwards in time to the previous section, and it reminds me of the experience of waking up from a dream, realising that a certain mysterious event in the dream world is actually associated with a clear stimulus in the real world. I also wonder if there's any similarity to how the neoplatypus came into being?

RM: The neoplatypus (a fictional animal in my dream) and the dreamland heist. Yes, I guess the title is a phrase that first and foremost I like saying: it has a poetic element to it that I like. But the piece and the melody (possibly fragmented or wonky or surreal) also tried to create some sort of a dreamscape, and the move into the final section was certainly planned to be a type of shift or change of scene, like how scenes in a dream can shift in an instant with no seeming connection. If it's not too narcissistic to go into it, the neoplatypus did appear in a dream and I watched (from a tall building) her pull an ornate royal carriage down a city street during a ticker tape parade with music playing. The idea of time being distorted or reversed is also a key theme in the piece because these types of graphic scores can be as short as 30 secs or longer than an hour and so the piece is also a negotiation between players and the score, as well as a negotiation between the players themselves. The piece also involves a negotiation between the players and the audiences and the players and composer. In some ways I had hoped the piece might also foreground ideas of distributed creativity, with composer, performers and audience all involved in the creation of the piece, the performance of which is unique to a time and place. While the piece is different each time it is played, it should retain some key elements that make it identifiable as a unique composition.

OJ: I find it interesting how I just assumed that the shift is from dream land to real world, while for you it's actually merely a shift between two dream scenes! Reminds me again of the embodied experience of nested dreams: you believe you're awake and back to the real world while in reality it's just a false awakening (we can never tell anyway, ha!).

RM: False awakening is a great phrase! Sounds very *Inception*-like! And I guess the piece could be a movement through different surreal scenes. I suppose the embodied experience of the musicians is really important here – the shift from playing an instrument to singing and also the embodied experience of the audience where the urge to join in could also signal a change in the embodied experience from listener to performer, attempting to celebrate the communal experience of listening together and perhaps performing together. In some sense we all are performing the piece together even if in the audience. Also, moving through the different sections may produce changes in the

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bodied experience of the performers, such as reading a conventional score compared to interpreting ambiguous brush strokes.

MI: I think, in listening to the piece, in being in the same room as the piece happening, so physically experiencing it too, there's a point at the end – where the musicians leave their instruments, specifically – where it feels like, on the one hand, you're invited to *join in*, but, on the other hand, you feel like it's a performance, so your instincts tell you you're not *allowed* to join in. I've got a couple of questions about that. First of all, how's the piece designed to lead to this section at the end? (If it is designed to do that!) But also, second, normally you're involved in the performance of your own music and, here, you weren't, but you were, just like me, in the room. What was the experience like of being asked to do a thing that you normally would do in a piece, but in a piece you'd specifically set up to prevent your own involvement?

RM: The piece was definitely designed to lead to a strongly melodic finale, but I left it open to the performers as to whether they would actually take up that option. The instructions on the notated elements said 'play what is written or play whatever you want', but in this performance the musicians seemed to negotiate towards playing the melody in a clearly identifiable way. The two sections leading up to that involved the musicians interpreting graphic notation in a more abstract or ambiguous way, but the conventional bars of music pasted on the painted scores invite a more literal interpretation. It's interesting that you mention 'not allowed to join in', because notions of freedom and the musician being given permission to play whatever they want is at the heart of this piece. I had not considered this permission reaching the audience, but if that is the case that is great. Blurring the boundaries between instrumental experience and what might be thought of as novice (a highly trained clarinet player suddenly singing) and conventional virtuosities (technical mastery on an accordion) and non-conventional virtuosities (choosing when to sing, how to sing and how to blend with others) was also central to the piece. If the audience also felt that there was an unstated or even ambiguous invitation to join in with the singing, humming and whistling, that is great too. For me the experience of not playing in a piece I had 'composed' was strange but also very enjoyable and a privilege. To experience the piece unfold, one degree removed from it, and witness how the musicians negotiated the score was quite thrilling for me, even if I did have the urge to join in, like a football player not on the pitch, eagerly waiting on the bench to get on the field of play.

MI: I guess I ask because it's such an unusual moment, or definitely unusual for me, anyway. In most concert situations, whether it's a fully notated piece or graphically notated, improvised around a set of guidelines, or freely improvised, I don't have that experience of feeling the pull to join in sonically, even if I might tap my feet or fingers, or something like that. I wonder if you think there's something integral to that moment of the performers moving away from their own instruments, to singing, whistling or humming – which is, I suppose, to things that feel like I *could* do – that gives rise to that sense.

RM: Yes, yes, yes! I hadn't thought of it in that way but now you phrase it like that that is exactly what I was hoping for: singing as a universally accessible form of collective creativity. When a violinist is playing masterfully and beautifully and very quickly I imagine people don't have the urge to join in, but if a simple melody slowly appears and the musicians gradually leave their 'normal' instrument to sing, then this highlights that we are all musical, that everyone

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can join in and take part. It hopefully makes the creative process accessible, but not in a patronising way. It's essential to avoid a feeling of this is the audience-participation part of the evening, let's all sing along. It was very important that this moment just emerged by itself. Though if it hadn't it would not have been a problem, either; it was important not to force it. I had also imagined this part of the piece dissolving in a very tentative fragile whistle as the musicians chose not to engage fully with the invitation to sing, whistle or hum. Maybe it suggests a different kind of musical embodiment: we can all use our voice, all join in but hopefully still retain a connection with the overarching narrative and shape of the piece.

MI: I'm reminded a bit of the Dutch premiere of Stockhausen's *Stimmung*, where there was what was interpreted as a very unwelcome intervention, when some leftist students started to sing and hum: Stockhausen evidently regarded this as some sort of protest against his music – and maybe he was right to – but it's also the case that Dirk Dekker, one of the 'troublemakers', who perhaps had his tongue a little bit in his cheek, argued that the fact that the whole piece was on a single six-note chord, derived from the partials of a B♭, alongside the fact that the singers were arranged in a sort of 'spiritual meeting' format, in a circle, gave the impression not only that it was easy to join in with but also that really one ought to.

RM: Ah yes. I suppose in this instance, context is everything. Yes, it would have been very easy for anyone in the audience or in the band to ironise what was happening in the room and to sing very loudly in a mocking way and completely alter the atmosphere in the room, and of course if you give an instruction to musician to play what you want or play what is written then the composer is obliged to accept whatever happens. I think maybe Christian Wolff has been very clear on this point – that if there is explicit ambiguity in a score then composers must accept whatever is delivered by the musicians. In this regard I am really grateful that the musicians performing took my score seriously and chose not to be a 'troublemaker'. Although troublemakers can sometimes be welcome, too.

MI: Yes, I remember being drilled, when trying to write text scores especially, that, presuming a musician of goodwill, you should try to work out what the worst potential misreadings of your words might be and change them accordingly (unless you decided you were, on reflection, happy with those misreadings).

RM: I think the opening section of the piece with colourful paint on the page accompanied by simple instruction is very open to any interpretation by the players, and I hadn't thought of what the worst misreading of these graphic elements could be. I try to maintain a position that if players sincerely engage with the instructions then whatever emerges is OK. The composer and flautist Dave Heath once utilised the ambiguity in one of my scores to hit me on the head with his shoe, which I had to accept with equanimity.

MI: What would have happened, do you think, if anyone in the audience had given in to that sense that this was the moment to join in? If they'd done it with the seriousness of the musicians, do you imagine you would have welcomed it? Might you have sanctioned it by joining in too? Or is that different sort of participation also important to keep discrete? (I suppose I'm thinking, too, of that experience of distributed creativity and the different sorts of creativity that are in play when an auditor is, well, auditing.)

RM: I had thought about this after you mentioned it on the day, as I had assumed that my urge to join was purely my own desire to be

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on stage like a big ham. I think I would have been overjoyed if people had started to sing along, because, as you mentioned earlier, there was no explicit invitation to join in, and normal conventions dictate that this is 'not allowed'. So had the performance reached a point where audience members felt they could and wanted to join in, that would have been wonderful. It would challenge the normal power relations in an auditorium and perhaps be a real signal of challenging the hegemonic power of the composer – like those pesky trouble-makers at Stockhausen's concert – but this time with kindness and collectivity in their hearts. This action would also embody notions of distributed creativity and co-authorship.

MI: Do you think you could (do you think you would) consider actively working with this idea in future? I mean: might you try to design musical situations where there's an ambiguous participatory invitation? Can you imagine any ways of doing that might press a tiny bit more closely towards the 'go on, you will join in?' side of the equation?

RM: Yes, but I am very aware of the toe-curling pitfalls of this approach. While I am unashamedly evangelical about universal musicality and everybody's potential to be creative, to force the issue in a concert context, where perhaps some (or even most) people just want to listen (and why not?), could be embarrassing for all concerned. So, the short answer is yes, I would definitely consider this, but 'proceed with caution' might be a good modus operandi.

MI: You're right, of course. As soon as the invitation becomes visible as an invitation the piece seems, to me, to start to fall apart. It has to remain a half-invitation, or something like that, and maybe it's even more potent to feel, as an audience member, that you're being asked to do a thing that you can't quite give in to than to feel that it would definitely be OK. The second isn't, then, really transgressive at all: it doesn't do anything to challenge the hegemony that you seem to be suggesting you'd like to challenge.

RM: That is what I was trying to say but you said it better! Also, once the invitation becomes explicit it perhaps loses its dreamlike quality and people might interpret an explicit invitation as an instruction, so keeping this aspect unstated or at least very understated is probably best.

OJ: What would be (if any) some potential methods that you would like to implement next time that could suggest some sort of invitation? Or would you prefer leaving it like this?

RM: My hunch is, with this piece, the only addition I would make might be a very short statement to the audience saying that, if they felt so inclined, then please join in, but even that could be heavy-handed. I have on occasion turned to the audience and used a hand signal as a way of inviting long sung notes to complement a piece but only very occasionally; my family and friends are quick to remind me that many (or most?) people don't to go concerts to join in.

(In)conclusion

It is not necessary to accept in full Blake's dictum that 'Time and Space are Real Beings, a Male & a Female. Time is a Man and Space is a Woman'[15] to want to argue that space itself is a body.

[15] Quoted in Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 169.

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Or, better, that the spaces between bodies are themselves bodied. To be embodied also involves experiencing the bodied in between bodies. Equally, bodies, and embodiment, can be seen to be produced by the bodied spacing effects of bodies encountering bodies in space. An (if dubious) extension has been made[16] that suggests that narrative (the progression of events over time, syuzhet or fabula equally well) might be conceptualised as fundamentally masculine, in a way that collapses the metaphorical into socio-political force. By extension, then, description (the reflective pausing of narrative in a moment; the exploration of a space that is here and now) is feminine: thrusting narrative force as against open space to be filled.[17]

The artwork comes to be when there is play between the object and its viewer, the players of the game, the potential rules of which are set in play by the artwork.[18] For musical artworks, there are players on both sides, players in play, not perhaps in a fully defined dialogue, but in an evolving, dynamical resonance: the music which sounds resounds, re-sounds, echoes in its receivers; that echo sometimes takes a literal form: feet tap, hands clap, voices hum or sing along. In phenomenological vein, '"my body" is possible in its particularity only through encountering other bodies, "your body", "her body" and so on', Ahmed notes.[19]

In its fuller form, music when understood as an art of time, of time that flows forward, and not of space, has been an art that privileges immaterial flow at the expense of present bodies, a comparison captured in Dyer's comparison between rock and disco: 'Rock's eroticism is thrusting, grinding – it is not whole body, but phallic. Hence it takes from black music the insistent beat and makes it even more driving; rock's repeated phrases trap you in their relentless push, rather than releasing you in an open-ended succession of repetitions as disco does',[20] which stands in contrast to Abel's albeit brilliant attempt to recapture groove within the ambit of form, even as he argues groove turns against linearity and narrative.[21] Important contributions criticise Newtonian perspectives which separate (musical) time and motion, suggesting instead that musical time shapes and is shaped by our bodies-in-action.[22]

So, while categories such as musical time and musical space need not (perhaps cannot) be approached a priori, a music which primarily occupies space, rather than extending itself through time, might still be seen to privilege the vertigo that collapses distance between performer and auditor. The body (and its creative potential) becomes the main driver of musical experience when it inhabits this space for action, shaping in novel, creative ways the modes of engagement it brings forth through the musical encounter(s) it co-constitutes. Indeed, Ahmed goes on to recall that there is no distinction of note to be made between the experiences that make it possible to think of a body as my body and those which open that body to other bodies

[16] Leonard Shlain, *The Alphabet versus the Goddess: The Conflict between Word and Image* (London: Penguin, 1998).
[17] Sue Best, 'Sexualising Space', in *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism*, eds Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 181–94.
[18] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd edn, tr. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 102–30.
[19] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, pp. 46–47.
[20] Richard Dyer, 'In Defence of Disco', *Gay Left*, no. 8 (1979), p. 22.
[21] Mark Abel, *Groove: An Aesthetic of Measured Time* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).
[22] Mariusz Kozak, *Enacting Musical Time: The Bodily Experience of New Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

'in the simultaneous mutuality of touch and being touched, and seen and being seen' or, though she does not say so, hearing and being heard. Embodiment, she argues, is not an index of the way in which a body belongs to, is constituted in relationship to and with, itself, but is rather 'what opens out the intimacy of "myself" with others'.[23]

The experience of creative encounters to which *Stolen in a Dreamland Heist* can give rise remains only partially revealed. We have tried to examine and contextualise the composer's words, reported in the interview, through an examination of different schools of thought and disciplines, reflecting on the meaning of space and distance in the performance, on the role of the body and creativity and on the creation of 'encounters' and the meanings they disclose. In doing so we do not really have a conclusion to offer, but only a series of thoughts and considerations that perhaps can help us better understand the rich, ambiguous tension at the heart of this piece and the desire that accompanies the listener to participate in a dialogue. While creativity is increasingly understood as a social phenomenon,[24] its embodied manifestations often remain hidden when approaching aesthetic discourses. *Stolen in a Dreamland Heist* is a fascinating example of how creative experience becomes intrinsically social, kinaesthetic and embodied, in its ambiguous presence and absence, in the spaces and distances that are continuously created and filled and in the encounters that flourish in musicking. If 'the relationship between bodies is characterised by a "with" that precedes, or is the condition for the apartness of "my body"',[25] then the relationship between embodied performer and auditor is no less a condition for the autonomy of the music which is embodied in the space between them.

[23] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*.
[24] Romina Elisondo, 'Creativity Is Always a Social Process', *Creativity. Theories – Research – Applications*, 3, no. 2 (2016), pp. 194–210.
[25] Ibid., p. 47.

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