Free improvised music as a Deleuzian "Body without Organs":
An interview-based engagement with free improvised musical practices

by

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Abstract

This thesis engages with the nature of free improvised music as represented by a subset of the current community of free improvising musicians in Montreal. Through interview dialogue with a set of four free improvisers participating in this community, I trace an understanding of their varied musical practices in order to examine how free improvised music—with particular attention to the listening and creative practices highlighted by this group—promotes unique forms of musical subjectivity. Drawing on post-Deleuzian scholarship around sonic experience, difference, and identity, I argue that free improvised music stands in a historically distinct location in relation to the 'musical text'. Furthermore—and drawing on the Deleuzian concepts of the "Body without Organs," and "the refrain"—I argue that the creative practices demonstrated by this set of improvisers highlight the capacity of free improvised music to confound conventional notions of musical subjectivity and selfhood.

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Introduction

Discovering and Defining a Musical Community

I first discovered free improvised music in 2009 by joining a small and now extinct residential arts community located in a space just north of Montreal's Plateau neighbourhood. Moving into a collective artist-run space for the first time, I had not thought much about living collectively and mounting music and art projects in a shared space. My only defined goal at that time was to live in an environment where one could practice and record electronic music freely, at all hours of the day, in the company of supportive roommates and colleagues. These plans to pursue music on a solitary basis were disrupted when I discovered that—more than once a week—the space hosted free improvised music performances by wide-ranging lineups of local and travelling artists.

Soon I was regularly helping to put on these concerts. I found free improvisation—a mode of music making that I knew little about —to be unlike anything I had ever heard before. With each new instrumentalist and group, a new world of sounds and fascinating relationships presented themselves. In addition to putting on free improvised music shows at this space, I would soon find myself regularly seeking out live free improvised performances at other venues within the community, always attracted by the music's intellectual impenetrability and social energy.

I can recall one performance in particular that embodies some of the qualities that I have grown to appreciate in free improvised music: a clarinet player began a group set with a series of punctuated bursts interspersed with ringing harmonics, the two gestures calmly trading places within her voice/instrument. Other instrumentalists then came forward with sound: one producing vocalized, quasi-linguistic tones registering through the movements in her mouth and

instrument but also, perhaps, from shuddering and rhythmic movement of air in her chest; a second clarinet player evoked a gagging sound modulated by the opening and closing of her hand on a mouthpiece repurposed as an instrument on its own; the clarinetist who had begun the piece now shifted into a roaming melody, unsupported by any other sonic shapes around her. Guttural and vocal intonations—coming seemingly from all of the performers—hung like a flock of birds in the air, swooping down individually, drawing out moments of singularity or intention within a squall of sound: this music seemed driven and textured not by pulse and melody, but by tides propelling waters forward and dirt stuffed in instrument cavities. Reaching an apex of sorts, the instrumentalists converged upon an aching and breechingly-loud series of synchronized pitches. These tones did not seem contained within a harmonic system, but with sheer intensity they fused into a single gesture. And from this sweeping and almost singular voice, the instrumentalists carefully returned to their own inflections, emitting sparse, punctuated bursts of resonant air. Calmly speaking against one another, they brought the improvisation to an end.

Improvisation and the Trajectory of Improvisation Studies

The task of defining improvisation—in its generalizable form as well as in reference to musical and free improvised musical practises—remains a contested project. As David Toop (2016) highlights, improvisation pervades human practices and—within the domain of artistic creation, the prerogatives of daily life, and the imperatives of adaptation and survival—it has been a continuous aspect of the human condition. While Derek Bailey (1980), in the oft cited *Improvisation: It's Nature and Practice in Music*, relies on ethnographic description of varying improvisatory musical practices (rather than attempting a generalized definition), George E. Lewis and Benjamin Piekut (2016), in their introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Critical*

Improvisation Studies, also caution against mounting simplistic and contentious definitions. They instead propose that critical improvisation studies "examine improvisation's effects, interrogate its discourses, interpret narratives and histories related to it, discover implications of those narratives and histories, and uncover its ideologies" (Lewis and Piekut 2016, 3).

Critical improvisation studies represents a contemporary effort to consolidate and broaden the study of improvisation within "artistic and nominally non-artistic fields" (Lewis and Piekut 2016, 2). Spearheaded largely by scholars in music and literary studies, including Ajay Heble, Jesse Stewart, George E. Lewis, Pauline Oliveros and number of other contributors, the field has "exploded" (2) in recent years by cultivating a spirit of interdisciplinarity, embracing scholarship on improvisatory art forms as well as wide range of work in various disciplines in the humanities, sciences, and arts.

Within musical scholarship, the study of improvisation benefits from not only from this emerging culture of interdisciplinarity, but from our current historical location: having been previously cast within musicology as opposite and inferior to composition, as lacking in relevance to scholarly work, or as existing primarily in non-western musics, the alterity of improvisation is now being challenged within present and past musical cultures (Nettl 2016; Lewis and Piekut 2016). As a newly established discipline, improvisation studies has enabled scholars to begin the work of naming and studying improvisatory practices throughout musical history.

While a limited group of music historians first demonstrated interest in improvisational practices as early as the late nineteenth century, improvisation was not widely addressed by ethnomusicologists until the 1970s (Nettl 2016, 2). Improvisation emerged in musicology within a distinctly modern set of circumstances—i.e. in tandem with musical genres within which it was

an increasingly central practice (including but not limited to jazz) and facilitated by the spread of recording mediums which permitted scholars to move away from the written musical text as the central object of study (2). The growing awareness of improvisation as an important element in musical analysis allowed musicologists to gaze backwards, reinterpreting musics of the past while granting improvisation a place within previous musical discourses. For example, from the early nineteenth century and onward—in some of the earliest musicological studies of improvisation—Baroque ornamentation and concerto cadenzas were examined with an eye to their improvisational qualities (5).

The practice (if not the concept) of improvisation might therefore be said to penetrate musical history on many levels. Nevertheless—as I have suggested—contemporary scholars should be careful to note that improvisation's assumed existence in a variety of musical traditions contrasts with its lack of recognition or attention in previous musicological discourses. Improvisation—as a concept carrying analytical importance—can therefore be said to penetrate musical history more tenuously than might otherwise be assumed by modern readers. According to my understanding of this history, the tension between improvisation's proposed universality on the one hand, and its modern conceptual development on the other, continues to dynamically spur scholarship in critical improvisation studies. Furthermore, this tension continues to pose challenges for scholars attempting to historicise and define improvisation. These difficulties should therefore be kept in mind as part of any effort to define and examine contemporary improvisatory practices, including free improvised music.

Historical Definitions: Improvisation, Textuality, and Musical Structure

Originating from the Latin adjective imprōvīsus, meaning "unforeseen" and its ablative imprōvīso, meaning "not studied or prepared beforehand," improvisation was formed as a verb in Italian as *improvisare* "to sing or speak extempore" (Online Etymology 2017). Improvisation therefore denotes—in archaic forms—the task of bringing forth that which was not planned or provided for. This fundamental sense of *improvisation as spontaneous action* continues to frame many conversations about improvisation among musicians, including those within this study. Migrating to French in the 17th century (Online Etymology 2017)*,* the verb *improviser,* to "compose or say extemporaneously," combines with the already established concept of *extemporaneity* the accompanying process of *composition*. The act of composing music, and the relationship between composed musical texts and improvisational practices continues—as I shall further argue—to be important and contested issues within improvisation studies.

In the late fifteenth century, musical practices that are now read as 'improvisation' were described—in different terms—according to available language. Quite strikingly, these 'improvisatory' practices were defined through reference to their relationship to a text. Distinctions were made between composition (*res facta*) and improvisation (*supra librum cantare*) (Apel 1969, 405; Randel 2003, 141). In these cases, the term for improvisation—s*upra librum cantare*—can be translated as "singing on the book." Related types of improvisation in the same period, such as improvised harmonization—d*iscantus supra librum* (405)—which can be translated as "singing apart over a book", also invoke the idea that the improvisatory practice is tied to a structuring text. In these classical European examples—where a distinct concept for improvisation did not exist within available language—we can observe that improvisatory practices were defined as activities carried out in relation to a prescribed musical text.

This foregrounded relationship between improvisation and textuality (i.e. composed/ prepared musical texts) might be seen as both a precursor, and a contrast, to later understandings of improvisation that construct a clear and more exaggerated binary between composition and improvisation. Note—for example—this definition of improvisation from the Oxford Dictionary of Music which describes improvisation as performance carried out "according to the inventive whim of the moment, i.e., without written or printed score, and not from memory" (Kennedy and Kennedy 2012). Lewis and Piekut (2016, 3) characterize this entry as both "pithy" and driven by an "ideologically driven dialectic between improvisation and composition." As I have argued, this more contemporary dialectic stands in relief when compared with the earlier European 'improvisatory' practices that were formally defined—i.e. *supra librum cantare,* (singing on the book)—through reference to their direct relationship to a composed text.

It could be argued that throughout recorded Western musical history, improvisation has been tied consistently tied to—in varying types of relations with—some form of structuring text. Bruno Nettl (2016, 11) similarly offers the proposition that "all improvisation is somehow based on something pre-existing, some kind of point of departure—an existing tune, a series of chords, a group of style imperatives, a system of modes such as ragas, a precisely delineated system such as the radif." Drawing directly on Nettl's description of elements described as "something pre-existing" (11), I explore—within the interviews conducted for this study—the existence of these structural factors. Although the terminology may shift in different contexts, the basic terminology I will use—going forward—will be the 'structuring text'. As this study unfolds, I will further interrogate what can constitute a musical structure, and, by the same token, what can constitute a text within free improvised music.

As a point of departure for understanding how such structures operate within improvised music, we can look to the Jazz form, often described as the 'tune' or reduced simply to 'the changes'. Anyone who has studied Jazz has likely heard a particular—often helpful—ideology at work: I have been advised by Jazz instructors, on countless occasions, that you 'have to know the tune'. Learning the tune 'by heart', 'inside out', so that you can 'play it in your sleep', is understood as one of critical prerequisites for proficiently improvising over it. In this sense, Jazz improvisation can be connected to a history in which improvisation arises with—or appears to become necessary as a counterpart to—the concept of composition and knowledge of a composed or pre-existing text. Nettl (2016, 11) also notes that—even within a tradition such as the Iranian Radif, (within which improvisation is vital practice)—the structuring text (the Radif) appears to be the privileged object of study, rather than the accompanying improvisational process.

While jazz improvisation is by no means the only musical tradition to contribute to contemporary free improvised music practices, it nevertheless represents a rich, culturally-embedded (in many North American education systems, for example), and deeply-studied antecedent to contemporary free improvised music. In her groundbreaking jazz ethnography *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*, Ingrid Monson (1996) strikes a balance between formal musical analysis and perception of social, relational and cultural dynamics. She underscores the highly interactional nature of jazz by engaging with a diverse group of practicing musicians.

I should note that—while Monson's work is foundational within jazz studies, and influential within improvisation studies—my work here does not directly fall within her relational approach to jazz and improvisation. When I queried the interviewees within this study

about whether they understood free improvisation as an extension of interpersonal relationships, and whether they were interested in understanding the thoughts, emotions, and experiences of other performers, many of them tended to minimize this approach. They appeared to be more interested in abstract perceptions of sound, and in approaches that confounded the maintenance of individual subjectivities. According to knowledge gleaned from the interviews within this study, free-improvisation—while certainly a social art form, and certainly a practice that privileges listening, communication and intersubjective exchange—is not an *interpersonal* art form in the way that jazz has been described.

In spite of these differences, Monson's work nevertheless influenced my methodological approach. *Saying Something* was one of the first texts (along with Paul Berliner's *Thinking in Jazz* [1994]) to explore the possibility that "talk about harmony, scales, melodic ideas, and rhythmic precision in terms familiar to students of western music theory" may not be the preferred language or context through which to understand improvisation (Monson 1996, 93). Rather, as Monson affirms, most jazz musicians "often prefer metaphorical description [for] its ability to convey the more intangible and social aesthetic dimensions of music making" (93). Monson's work has proven valuable within my own research as a model that utilizes the illustrative and explanatory power of music theory while also recognizing that many critical aspects of improvisation are not representable through theory, notation, or discussion of specific musical languages (such as harmonic and rhythmic principles).

Like Monson's work, my approach explores the relationship between musical structure and various metaphors. When I speak in terms of 'structures', I invoke the fundamental organizing principles of western music theory and I highlight the way pieces of music are broken down and understood through a number of principles and concepts: harmony, melody, rhythm,

meter, phrases, movements, etc. However, I also highlight that music 'organized' in this way tends to become highly conceptualized in the minds of musicians. Thus, I deploy 'structural' language both in relation to the formal organizing principles of music theory—and perhaps more abstractly—to the conceptual and cognitive processes that take place during the creation of music.

In '*Thinking Musical Theory: Music Theory as Minor Science*'—an essay engaging the boundary between music theory and Deleuzian philosophy—Brian Hulse (2010, 36) argues that it may not always be readily possible to make "a meaningful distinction between thinking, sensing, and listening to sound." We might therefore suggest that musical structures (as experienced while playing or listening to music) are productive of mental processes, even as those processes shape the way music is played and interpreted. My work therefore explores various configurations, structures, dynamics, and conceptual orientations without necessarily claiming to delineate a boundary between sound and mind, or music and thought.

Literatures of Free Improvisation

As I have argued, the history of improvisation in music could be conceptualized—broadly speaking—as a history of creative practices of interaction with structuring musical texts (often texts that are privileged in musical discourse and musicological study). This relatively simple assertion can become more applicable to a range of improvisatory practices when we conceive of structuring musical texts not simply as written compositions constructed by a single composer, but also as socially generated and shifting 'folk' musical structures, deeply implicit jazz forms that shift over time, and even the irreversible, undeniable sonic elements that unfold and organize themselves while forming together—from moment to moment—within a free improvised

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performance. Even this latter conceptualization—the musical structure that forms *during* a free improvisation—becomes a substrate, a structure, or point of departure upon which subsequent improvisations are conceived.

A broad survey of the literature on free improvisation raises important questions about the interplay between expressive acts, on one hand, and musical structures, idiomatic musical languages (Bailey 1980, Thompson 2007) on the other. These works ask questions about how spontaneous and dynamic creative actions interact with various existing and emerging structural elements within a given improvisation or work of art. Ellen Waterman (2008) notes that free improvised music entails a formula wherein a static compositional domain interacts with a spontaneous creative domain. In conceptualizing these two interpenetrated domains of musical activity, Waterman argues that free improvisation "transects" (2) the orientation of rational composition, on the one hand, and the orientation of embodied practice, on the other. Like other contemporary theorists (including Toop, through his characterization of the American experimentalists and the jazz tradition), Waterman is accounting for an observed shift—in a variety of contemporary and experimental musics—away from the western musical score. Nevertheless, she also maintains that free improvised music entails a creative interaction between a musical modality analogous to the textual and compositional realm, and a musical modality more aligned with the embodied, spontaneous realm. Waterman's work—including "Naked Intimacy: Eroticism, Improvisation and Gender," an essay exploring the work of Charlotte Hug—demonstrates how different structural elements develop during the course of an improvisation, and how improvisers play with these structures to form the music towards new possibilities.

I have done my best, throughout this study, to explore the possibility that free improvisers envision—and interact with—such structuring texts, just as the plethora of musicians addressed by Nettl and other ethnomusicologists have done throughout musical history. However, there is a contrasting school of thought suggesting that free improvisation involves the denial or disavowal of such a scheme. David Toop (2016), for example, fundamentally challenges the validity of the structuring text. In the introduction to *Into the Maelstrom: Music, Improvisation and the Dream of Freedom*, he indicates that, "the type of improvisation that concerns me here…(is) a music without score, notation, image, or text, composer, director or conductor; a music spurning reliance on tradition, established forms or hierarchies of labour; lacking in plans, rules or protocols of any kind other than the act of playing through listening" (Toop 2016, 15). Similarly, Rogerio Costa (2011, 137), in "Free Improvisation and the Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze," argues that free improvisation involves a "quest to overcome the idiomatic, the symbolic, the representational."

While Toop and Costa may be speaking from the perspective of their own personal and possibly ideological orientations, their conceptions of free improvised musical practices are also consistent with a historical process that Toop and others have described at length. Toop (2016), for example, explores how notions of authorship and composition shifted across multiple musical domains within the later-half of the twentieth century: a process that coincides with the emergence of free improvised music. Focussing on both the jazz/free jazz lineage and the experimental/avant-grade music typified by John Cage and other American experimentalists, Toop argues that both of these musical movements reject the conventional authority of the composed musical text/form:

In the 1950s Jazz shed itself of popular song's harmonic structures—a leap into the hot, the free jazz period shaped by Ornette Coleman, Milford Graves, Sunny Murray, Albert Ayler, John Coltrane and many others. At approximately the same time, composers such as John Cage rejected existing compositional systems, instead structuring their music according to chance procedures. At a middle point in the 1960s these two strategies of the avant-garde converged to make a third stream (though not Third Stream), hence free improvisation. (Toop 2016, 30)

This view highlights free improvisation's coming-into-being through a process of shedding the mantle of conventional compositional practices and musical structures. At the same time, Toop is careful to complicate this narrative by recognizing other important trajectories of musical innovation. For example, he highlights composers of the post-war classical tradition (such as Stockhausen, Rzewski and Evangelisti) who offered, to emerging free improvisers, musical practices that were experimental but "logical extensions of compositional practices" (Toop, 2016, 30).

George Lewis (1996) complicates this history further by arguing that a number of the Eurologically oriented practices addressed above (i.e., the use of use of improvisation, aleatoricism, and indeterminacy by Cage and his contemporaries), were likely influenced by Afrological modes of improvisatory discourse. In this way, Afrological and Eurological modes of improvisation were interpenetrated from early on in the twentieth century. Furthermore, as Lewis highlights, this exchange or "confrontation…took place amid an ongoing narrative of dismissal, on the part of many of these composers, of the tenets of African-American improvisative forms" (92). This complex relationship between Afrological and Eurological practices—which continues to animate the field of free improvised music today—can be

considered part of an origin story for a set of musical practices that are still contested today both within and outside of the Afrological/Eurological binary.

In addition to having well documented roots within a wide array of musical traditions, free improvisation is sometimes understood as representing a partial disruption of these traditions and of their typical modes of operating and reproducing themselves. Drawing on the scholarship of Mike Heffley (2005, 3), Toop (2016, 30) suggests that free improvisation may have arisen as improvisation—in integrating ethnic influences and moving towards experimentation—moved "so far away from its parent idioms—Western art music, [and] the American experimentalists…and American Jazz—that its initial free-jazz handle [gave] way to the more wide open, less jazz-specific descriptor of 'new and improvised music'". This later conceptualization of free improvisation as encompassing the continued use of a wide range of traditional and idiomatic musical languages—but in mixed contexts divorced from parent idioms–has been supported in the research of Jesse Stewart (2007), and by a range of improvisers within this study.

Within free improvised musical practices as a whole, I believe that a healthy ambivalence persists: most—but not all—of the improvisers interviewed for the present study either concede or celebrate that idiomatic vocabularies are part of their musical practices, even if they also contend that the use of traditional musical languages and vocabularies should be challenged or minimized within free improvisatory musical practices. As I shall suggest within the concluding chapter, I believe that questioning the dynamics surrounding this ambivalence continues to be an important area for scholars of free improvised music to address.

I began this project with the intuition that free improvisation could be fruitfully viewed as a continuation of a process of change that began with classical western music (which typically

utilized a conventional musical score), to classic Jazz or Bebop (incorporating extensive

improvisation on top of a known 'score' internalized by the musicians) to its current form

wherein the musical text has dissolved to the extent that it has become not just implicit, as in

much of jazz, but unknown, un-assumed, sometimes spontaneously generated within the

moment, or—at times—actively disavowed. Derek Bailey's (1980) claim that free improvised

music is defined precisely by its rejection of idioms—though too sweeping an idea to represent

the plethora of free improvisational practices in the contemporary context—nevertheless

represents an important individual modality (among many other conceivable modalities) within

free improvised musical practices.

Bailey's observance of this aspect of free improvised musical practices finds resonances

in Deleuzian scholarship on free improvisation, such as Rogerio Costa's (2011) "Free Musical

Improvisation and the Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze." In this work, Costa argues that free

improvisation represents a constant overturning of structural orientations and patterned behavior.

He suggests that free improvised music works against the entrenchment of given orientations, by

moving towards process:

> We could say that free improvisation is only possible in the quest to overcome the
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> idiomatic, the symbolic, the representational, the gestural, the systematic, the controlled,
>
> the foreseeable, the static, the identified, the hierarchical, the dualistic, the linearized, in
>
> favour of the multiple, the simultaneous, the unstable, the heterogeneous, the living, the
>
> energy, the material itself. (Costa 2011, 137)

While I take Costa's interpretation of free improvisational practices as a point of departure for

my work, I consider the practices outlined by Costa and other Deleuzian scholars to represent

possible modalities within free improvised music; I do not assume that they can encompass or define free improvised practices as a whole.

Deleuze and Free-Improvisatory Musical Practices

The Deleuzian concept of territoriality is critical to understanding the musical subject and, more particularly, the type of musical subjectivity that I foreground in the subsequent chapters by engaging dialogically with improvisers interviewed for this study. As Michelle Duffy (2017, 191) argues, "The work of Deleuze and Guattari offers a means to make sense of the complex configurations of sound, affect and emotion. For example, they use music as an analogy for the processes involved in living things marking out and making claims to a territory." As I shall subsequently explain, I draw on this conception of music and sonic experience as a vital domain within which individuals both cultivate and challenge musical and extra-musical identities.

Much of Deleuze's philosophical project was instigated through an effort to reconceive—or radically alter—various theories and institutionalized methodologies that stood at the intersection of the social, human, and natural sciences throughout much of the twentieth-century. One of Deleuzian[1] philosophy's critical efforts involved reinterpreting the Darwinian narrative that had achieved—by the mid twentieth-century—hegemonic status within and beyond the institutional boundaries of natural science. Out of this impulse to transform a static, established narrative, Deleuze and Guattari conceived (by remapping the various Darwinian theories pertaining to the territorial behavior of birds and other animals) a theory of territoriality, which—in their estimation—represented something of a combined philosophical idea, metaphorical

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[1] Throughout this text, I have included Guattari's name when referring to specific concepts derived from writing that he contributed to. Furthermore, it should be noted that references to Deleuzian' ideas, and the Deleuzian philosophical project in general, should also be understood as accounting for Guattari's overall influence and contribution.

deployment, and usable methodology or 'machine'. In this way, they conceived that the process of establishing and defending territory—and all of the other processes and possibilities that could be mapped and associated with this behavior—could also be applied outside of the realm of animal behavior (Bogue 2003). They therefore de-territorialized the idea of territory itself and, by instigating this process, projected future possibilities and ways of thinking. Furthermore, as they (and other thinkers) deployed the concept further afield, they participated in processes of re-territorialization. In this way, territory became a critical feature of their philosophical project and led towards further metaphors and engagements with a range of subjects, including sound.

There are a number of examples, in the expanding literature on Deleuze and music, that make claims about both the territorializing quality of sound and the de-territorializing aspects of sonic experience. Ronald Bogue (2003), for example, highlights Deleuze's understanding of birdsong as a sonically (and perhaps musically) realized and negotiated form of territoriality. Sound therefore constitutes a medium through which territory is cultivated and defended. However, sound also demonstrates a powerful ambivalence and a uniquely de-territorializing potential. While listening is often considered a delicate and effortful process, sonic resonance is experienced always and involuntarily: to use Deleuze and Guattari's (1987, 348) terminology – sound "transpierces" us. This characterization suggests that sound is a fundamentally connective element, and that it bridges territories because it spans beyond our given consciousness of specific territories, conceptual orientations in our work, musical structures, creative goals, etc. These are powerful claims about the capacity of sound. For Deleuzian scholars of music, sound is a fundamentally connective and territorializing element, yet it also challenges subjectivity and continually threatens to de-territorialize.

My critical argument departs from these observations about the ambivalent potentials contained within sonic resonance. In particular, I suggest that the dynamic nature of free improvised music—along with its tendency to belie easy representation—stems from its alliance with the de-territorializing (and noisy) aspects of resonance. My work does not necessarily privilege the de-territorializing act (and, indeed, Deleuze himself delineates the complex integration of de/re-territorializing movements). But I do suggest that free improvisation might operate uniquely—privileging certain de-territorializing potentials. For this reason, I consider this aspect of Deleuze's work to be critical to my efforts to engage with the creative practices of free improvising musicians.

Identity, Musical Use of Self, and the Body without Organs

According to my understanding of free improvised musical practices, improvisers' musical identities can remain in flux throughout the course of a performance. To provide an example: imagine a vocalist beginning an improvisation with a series of percussive bursts generated by pushing air forcefully against their lips; these sounds might serve a particular expressive function and may be interpreted as material that the other performers can incorporate and/or engage with musically. Later, the vocalist may shift their orientation, now producing long, drone-like, humming tones which achieve a distinct hollow and grainy character while passing through the relaxed muscles in their chest. Their music serves a different expressive function here, and has different textural, rhythmic, melodic, and emotive qualities. It will be interpreted differently according to the perceptions of each musician. In this configuration, and without a formal musical text, their decisions about how to use their instrument (and body) in these different ways, and how they intuit themselves as fitting within the larger musical context, at different

moments, define the music they are producing. In such a configuration, it is through their musical identity—that is to say: the way they chose to use themselves—that they generate music.

By querying how musicians envision themselves, their instruments, and the sounds they produce, we are forging an understanding of their subjective musical identity. However—just as the absence of the musical text heightens the importance of the musician's understanding of their musical identity as a vital constituent of the musical whole—the absence of the text also permits the fluidity and flux of these identities. In continually shifting their listening strategies and their alliance with different elements and actors within the music, musicians are able to develop complex identities, which at times confound conventional notions of subjectivity, selfhood, and musical experience. During dialogue with the improvisers who participated in this project, I found our discussions arriving—in different ways—at the realization that free improvisation can be fruitfully understood as the process of constructing a musical identity out of traces of past experience, consciousness of present circumstances, and active interrogation of existing or pre-existing orientations.

Deleuze and Guattari tilt—or de-territorialize—their understanding of life away from biologically-bound entities, and towards creative intersections that underscore the genuine specificity, novelty, and self-determination of an entity or individual. This overall project drives their conceptualization of the 'Body without Organs' (BwO). In order to shed light on the musical relationships and sonic experiences documented in the interviews conducted for this study, I will elaborate on the BwO so that it can continue to be deployed as part of an effort to understand free improvised musical practices.

In my reading of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), I imagine the Body without Organs by first tracing the characteristics of a typical body containing a set of biological organs performing

different predetermined functions that cooperate hierarchically to grant life and normal functioning to an organism. According to our knowledge of this body, it once existed in what Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 499) call a "germinal" state (i.e. a state in which the organs had not yet divided and hierarchized into a complex functioning system). According to Jean-Godefroy Bidima (2010, 154), the Body without Organs, is "that body which has repudiated the jurisdiction of the organs with their respective functions; it is also that body which is full like an egg before the extension of the organism and the organization of the organs." Just as we can imagine this body returning to the germinal state in which normal functioning has not yet been realized, we might also conceive of this body's various modalities re-forming themselves into different sets of relations, or joining other bodies to produce more complex/disorganized/unknown sets of relations. In this sense, the BwO is a body that is reaching out toward "everything that passes between organisms" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 499).

On a basic level, the concept of the Body without Organs invokes the possibility that consciousness can reach beyond its typical modes of functioning, towards a state of disorganization in new relationships and contexts—a state Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 161) characterize as a "continuum of intensities." As envisioned within a typical body—which houses a set of different modalities organized in a unified and hierarchized set of functions (organs)—the BwO arises out of the hierarchized system and forms new relations:

If everything is alive, it is not because everything is organic or organized, but, on the contrary, because the organism is a diversion of life. In short, the life in question is inorganic, germinal, and intensive, a powerful life without organs, a Body that is all the

more alive for having no organs, everything that passes between organisms. (Deleuze,

and Guattari 1987, 499)

According to my argument, the Body without Organs is particularly vital and effective tool for

understanding free improvisation because it posits a capacity to reach beyond an existing

functional set of relations, and towards relations that exceed linear and habitual instrumental

modalities, listening orientations, or musical-creative approaches.

Free improvisational listening and creative practices are—at times—highly analogous to

the Deleuzian Body without Organs. In the (relative) absence of predetermined musical texts or

procedures, or preconceived rules and musical identities, free improvisation continually posits

new sets of relations in which improvisers must invent and recover a sense of their musical

identities while coming into contact with others who are, likewise, undergoing a similar process

of transformation. The Body without Organs mirrors this configuration of newly-forming, non-

hierarchized, disorganized, and potentially vital relations. Secondly, when we reach into relation

with others—especially in the absence of a unifying text—we must not only be open to

reforming and reinventing our modalities (i.e. our intentions, mobilized skills, and musical

identities), but also to letting these modalities exist in a state of disorganization or chaos in order

for them to enter into meaningful relation with newly discovered others.

As I discuss in subsequent chapters of this thesis, the conditions articulated by the Body

without Organs—its exploration of relations that call into question our intentions, perceived

functions and musical identities—resonate strikingly with the experiences of the free

improvising musicians interviewed within this study.

When sonic experience—already a potentially de-territorializing state—is considered

within the context of free improvisation wherein we are not necessarily tied to the determinants

of a structuring musical text, musical identities become highly fluid. By virtue of the fact that free improvisation does not entail a script, plan or "slender, moving window" —as Hulse (2010, 36) describes the musical score—the free improviser may continually shift subjective positions within the music.

In the relative absence of explicit idiomatic rules about musical roles, improvisers can potentially choose to (re)-identify with the centre or the periphery of the sonic formation. This is not a state of complete freedom or complete chaos, but a configuration within which identities are formed and continually re-formed; rules about how to navigate oneself within the music are often defined during the course of a performance and are coextensive with the development of a musical identity. As I will argue, the musical text can resurface within these practices, but it is often deferred in favour of something else: musical actors often ally themselves with the de-territorializing aspects of sound, creatively cultivating what Deleuze describes as the virtual dimension of experience, and reaching beyond typical individualized musical subjectivities. In short, they tend to pursue improvisation through a radical form of immanence and a commitment to process.

Further Terminology

Deleuze and Guattari's articulation of musical territoriality (territoriality as it intersects with musical expression) is articulated through their concept of "the refrain." As I will further address in Chapter 3, they present the refrain as the product of a musical being generating itself through melodic, patterned and functional interaction with the world. Scholars of music have used the refrain to contest the boundary between the human-musical and natural systems, and to trace processes of territorialisation and becoming within a variety of Western and non-Western musics

(Bogue 2003). I utilize the refrain in order query whether structural and patterned contents might present themselves within free improvised musical practices. Furthermore, I use the refrain to test whether we can account for musical structures (or even musical texts) within free improvisational practices which otherwise tend to defer away from textual and structured musical consciousness, towards immanence and process. As I address in Chapter 3, this later conceptualization of the refrain places free improvisational practices in dialogue with the Deleuzian notions of becoming, and becoming through difference.

      I utilize Deleuze's concept of virtuality to explore non-conceptual and/or inclusive listening and creative practices. In order to envision the virtual, I imagine that there are fluid and traceable relations between actual circumstances and the potentials that prefigure and condition them: these potentials—and our perception or knowledge of them—can be referred to as 'the virtual'. Virtuality conditions and enhances the free improvisational Body without Organs. The improviser who maintains contact with virtuality enables the free improvised performance/organism to support a constant renewal of creative lines of flight, a constant overturning of emergent and developing musical ideas/structures. Virtuality—or what Deleuze describes as art "immersed in virtuality" (Deleuze 1994, 209)—becomes a way of highlighting the creative practices that are specific to free improvised music.

      Closely related to virtuality is the concept of immanence. Throughout his entire project, Deleuze seeks to overturn a dependence—within western intellectual and theological history— on the notion of the transcendental (Williams 2010, 129). For Deleuze, thinkers have created the transcendental domain in order to defer truth away from concrete experience—in order to establish identities that pre-exist and precondition the ideas and actions that manifest in the non-transcendental (i.e. experiential, physical, concrete) world. Deleuze and Guattari (2009, 112)

therefore suggest that we ignore, oppose, or reorient situations that traditionally call for reference to the transcendental[2] by utilizing 'immanence'. Immanence implies that experience and thought are determined not by forces deferred away and into a transcendental domain, but by forces that are connected to experience. Immanence therefore has a number of obvious and vital implications to free improvised practices. I will address these implications as they come up throughout this study. For now, I offer the proposition that free improvisation rejects the authority of any text, idea, or composition that stands outside of the improvisational experience and moment. It therefore envisions a radical form of immanence through its very commitment to process.

Chapter Outlines

In Chapter 2 section 1, I track how improvisers define and understand their relationship to one another. This involves an assessment of what characteristics might be valued in other performers while forming free improvisational groups, and what factors determine the formation of these groups. I also query whether these groups assemble a set of musical or creative agreements that underpin their improvisational performances, and I question whether they seek out shared artistic values—between group members—as part of the process of creating successful free improvising musical groups. In particular, I address these questions by focussing on improvisers' understanding of the listening practices and musical backgrounds of different performers. Ultimately, the interviewees suggest that stark differences in musical background—even to the point where they do not readily understand the intentions, musical vocabulary, or artistic

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[2] The transcendental can be framed in many different ways. For example—in describing psychoanalysts, on a number of occasions, as priests—Deleuze and Guattari allude to the fact that the 'unconscious' is one of the more recent cultural attempts to create a transcendent category.

processes being used by other performers—are productive of powerful free improvised music. Drawing on these insights about free improvisation as a set musical practices that begin in conditions of difference, I argue that Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the Body without Organs can help us understand how improvisers inhabit a shifting creative system in which identities, roles, and musical possibilities unfold in real time.

Chapter 2 section 2 examines the types of listening that the interviewees describe within free improvisation. I move beyond an examination of the composition of improvisatory groups and towards descriptions of free improvisational creative consciousness. Once again, the underlying theme is the presence of musical difference and the improvisers' intense navigation of multiple orientations and subjective musical identities. The Body without Organs figures—within this section—for several reasons: it highlights how the simultaneous negotiation of multiple perspectives within the improvisational moment coincides with a number of de-subjectifying dynamics wherein improvisers maintain contact with unformed sonic experience, and with the periphery of musical consciousness.

In Chapter 2 section 3, I highlight how these dynamics—demonstrated through my examination of the Body without Organs—can carry improvisations towards de-subjectification—towards an extension of improvisational creative consciousness beyond its typical limit. This reorientation of consciousness—in which improvisers describe converging with the totality of the sonic/improvisational experience—is related to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the Field of Immanence.

In Chapter 2 section 4, I consider creative practices that resonate with Deleuze's concept of virtuality. In particular, I suggest that the presence of the Body without Organs in a variety of free improvisational contexts is conditioned and reinforced by the fact that free improvisers

actively cultivate the virtual dimension of creativity. This type of engagement, which I compare to Deleuze's description of art that is "immersed in virtuality" (Deleuze 1994, 209), can thus be considered an asset within free improvisational creative practices.

Having made the case in chapter 2 that free improvisational listening practices disorganize and reorganize a performer's musical subjectivity (a configuration that evokes the Body without Organs), I explore—in chapter 3—a more dialectic approach that seeks to recover the musical text/structure within the processes of transformation demonstrated in the previous chapter. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's description of the refrain, chapter 3 thus engages with the question of where (implicit) musical texts or structuring elements might exist within free improvisation and where they might be invented or recovered in their absence. Thus, this chapter engages with—and contests—Bruno Nettl's (2016, 11) provisional claim that "all improvisation is somehow based on something pre-existing, some kind of point of departure—an existing tune, a series of chords, a group of style imperatives, a system of modes such as ragas, a precisely delineated system such as the radif." By dialoguing with the interviewees around the subject of such a scheme within free improvised music, I complicate and contest the view that improvisation depends upon a structuring principle or a "point of departure" (11). Building on the insights generated within Chapter 2, I argue that one of the predominate creative modalities within free improvisation, as evoked by the Body without Organs, suggests that free improvisation involves a more complex set of relationships with structure including efforts by the musicians to centre their musical subjectivity by identifying with sound. The overarching goal in this chapter is to query how free improvisation's unique relationship to the question of musical structure informs our understanding of what constitutes 'creativity', 'composition', or

the discovery of new musical experiences and identities during the course of free improvised

performances.

Chapter 1:

Research Methodologies and Background to the Interviews

Methodological Issues

In planning the interviews, my goal was to speak with improvisers from a range of different

backgrounds and communities that exist within the amorphous network of free improvising

musicians in Montreal. For example, interviewees ranged from those who came from jazz

backgrounds to those coming from contemporary classical, classical, noise/experimental, and

folk-music oriented backgrounds. During the process of planning and conceiving of this project,

I also asked people within the community, including some of the interviewees themselves, who

they felt would be good candidates for interviews. The interviewees ranged in age from those

who were in their late twenties (Raphaël Foisy-Couture) to those in their early eighties (Malcolm

Goldstein). I spoke with three women and four men. As I suggest in the conclusion, people of

color are not well represented in the Montreal free improvised music community and they were

also not included in my group of interview subjects. There were other axes of identity that were

left largely unaddressed within the group of interviewees—although some may have existed

invisibly within the interview sample (as less visible aspects of identity). Although I am LGBTQ

identified and have an interest in queer theory as it relates to my own musical practices, I did not

explicitly engage with the interview subjects—through prepared questions—around how gender,

sexual, or relational identities shape their artistic practices and prospects. It is possible that some

of my own issues of internalized oppression—and also some valid overarching concerns around

the possibility of outing people in the interview format—may have shaped my decision to allow

people to raise identity issues at their own decision and on their own terms. I will reflect more on

these questions—with a particular emphasis on gender as it relates to creative practices—in the

conclusion. It is also important to note that one person—who was also the youngest potential interviewee that I contacted—turned down the interview on the grounds that they did not consider themselves an expert and did not feel that they would be able to share about their practices in an articulate way. It is quite possible that these kinds of reservations reflect existing hierarchies and silencing processes within the musical community, and—thus—even the improviser's simple decision of whether or not to participate in an interview can have significant implications for the type of knowledge gathered.

In total there were seven interviews conducted (four of which were ultimately included as source material within this study) and they ranged in length from just under one hour in one case to almost two hours in a couple of other cases. All of the interviews were rich, challenging, and—I believe—reflected unique practices developed within, on the fringe, or outside of a number of different musical and artistic traditions. In one case, there were technical difficulties that disrupted the recording of the second half of the interview. I subsequently decided not to draw on this interview as I felt I did not have a valid and complete portrait of what was said. There were an additional two interviews which, though rich and full of insight, I did not integrate into the final text. This decision was based on the need to negotiate a balance between achieving a thorough engagement with the perspectives of individual improvisers, on the one hand, and accounting for the perspective of a larger group, on the other. This balance was difficult to strike given the range and depth of material available within individual interviews. In fact, I certainly could have written the entire text while engaging simply one or two improvisers.

I indicated to the interviewees in advance that the interviews would require about an hour of time. In most cases they preferred talking for longer than this. All seven of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. English was mostly spoken however French was also used at

times. The group of interview subjects were composed of a number of improvisers with whom I had never conversed before but whose music I was familiar with, as well as several improvisers who I knew on a more personal level. In the case of Malcolm Goldstein, Lori Freedman, and Rainer Wiens, we had never spoken directly, but I had seen them all perform on a number of occasions and I had participated in improvisation workshops facilitated by all three of them.

Research Questions and Interview Format

In designing the questions and carrying out the interviews, I was concerned with the ineffability of free improvisatory creative practices. I was at pains to ask questions that gave the interviewees room to explore their practices on their own terms. I was also mindful of the difficulty in discussing and constructing discourse around these practices. Jesse Stewart (2016, 42) draws attention to the complicated relationship between the academy and the free improvised music community and—with an eye to the potentially problematic effects of institutionalizing our understanding of musical communities and practices—he cites modern jazz as a "cautionary tale". Stewart and others are concerned with the fragility of certain musical forms when they come into contact with institutionalized efforts at codification and re-transmission. Free improvisation—in the view of many practitioners that I have conversed with over the years—can be particularly susceptible to being misunderstood or misrepresented through analysis. One of my fundamental methodological goals, throughout the interviews, was to maintain a sharp eye on these concerns.

Nevertheless, most practitioners also feel that improvisation can be discussed, developed, practiced, facilitated, and taught, to varying degrees across a range of contexts. I was heartened by the generosity of all of the research participants in this study. They offered their time and

gave a great deal of consideration and respect to my questions. They also confronted me with a range of fascinating perspectives that—as a whole—went far beyond what I had imagined these interviews producing.

The questions that formed the locus of my conversations with the Montreal improvisers I interviewed are reprinted in the appendix A. These questions engage with the following concerns: how do free improvisers listen during the course of an improvisation and to which actors and sonic elements do they attend? Do improvisers consider thought to be an important tool during improvisation and, if so, what kinds of cognitions do they describe as being part of their creative practices? What problems, frustrations, or barriers do they encounter during improvisations and how do they deal with these? How do they describe their musical instrument and their relationship to it, and how do instrumentally-oriented skills and forms of consciousness inform their creative process? How does their attention to resonance, timbre, sound-texture, and noise inform their capacity to improvise and to generate new improvisatory musical ideas? These questions served as the backbone of the interviews, each of which evolved according to the concerns and interests of the improvisers and according to which elements and practices they foregrounded within their work.

At the end of each interview, I felt that I had addressed each of the fundamental themes that the prepared questioned were designed to explore. However, I did not ask every single one of the prepared questions and I considerably elaborated on specific questions, while also reframing them in dialogue with the interviewees. At times, the interviewees skillfully suggested concepts, terminology, or ways of reframing the questions that informed subsequent interviews. It may have been a more empirical approach to have used exactly the same set of questions, word for word, in each interview. However, by allowing the interviews to evolve away from my own

framing of the issues and change through the process of dialogue, I believe I was able to enrich my own perspective and move away from my own biases.

In analyzing the interviews I first read through them several times (both during and after the transcription process). I attempted to consider the interviewees responses both in their complex and more nuanced form (i.e., reflect on *everything* this improviser has to say about listening) as well as in more summarized, simplified or comparative form (i.e., what are the fundamental differences and similarities reflected in the various improvisers' approaches to listening; and what are the patterns that emerge in different responses to questions about listening?). In the early stages, I also experimented with collecting and comparing the perspectives of the different interviewees while withholding any particular theoretical material. This approach was used in order to ensure that the interviews resonated with one another, and held engaging points of interest, even without the assistance of a theoretical model. Even after it became clear to me that Deleuzian philosophy and the Body without Organs resonated strikingly with the creative practices demonstrated within the interviews, I continued to consult with and consider a range of literature (including, for example—literatures of performativity) in order to guard against a premature development of a singular theoretical perspective.

The outcome of this study may have been shaped by a number of the above methodological choices. For example, if I had engaged equally with all six interviews, it is possible that it may have been more challenging to develop a coherent argument and a nuanced understanding of the practices addressed. I should also note that my own bias has been to assume that free improvised musical creative practices are highly variable and based on wide range of individualized experiences. However, it is interesting and important to observe that—through the process of constructing an argument within this text—I may have chosen artistic practices which

had a similarity, resonance, or tension with one another, and which appeared to be in dialogue with one another in such a way as to encourage analysis and interpretation. In addressing and articulating these particular practices, I may not have given as much attention to practices which simply stood on their own, or did not engage with readily observable axes of interpretation. Overall, I would therefore make the simple observation that analyzing qualitative materials carries the necessary burden of balancing between generalization, specificity, and everything in between. The interviews, as I have suggested, were incredibly rich, even on their own, and could have sustained a number of different projects and types of engagements.

Finally, I would highlight that this project was designed as an interview-based study of free improvised musical creative practices. This chosen methodology therefore relies upon declarative knowledge—i.e., verbal interactions and verbalized reflections on creative practice and experience. Within the context of free improvised music, musicians often indicate that improvisational experience can be starkly different from everyday experience. They sometimes note, for example, that they are able to think and reflect about performances afterwards, but that during the improvisational 'moment' they experience types of musical consciousness that are difficult to describe. Some of these tensions are addressed within this thesis, particularly when I discuss listening (and the relationship between listening and thinking). However, it is also important to note the types of observations that I have collected here come from declarative knowledge and they are therefore filtered through the conscious reflections of these performers, after the performances have already transpired. A final concern with declarative knowledge— from my perspective—is that it can be understood as diverting our attention away from the critical relationship between audience and performer (which is how music is most commonly

experienced). Nevertheless, as an approach to understanding how improvisers approach their own creativity, I believe it is fundamentally valid and useful.

My Interpretive Positionality

I have been listening and performing in the free improvised music community for the last six years, and I have been reading and writing academically for at least twice as long. During this project, I was situated both within the field, as an active participant in the free improvised music community in Montreal, and also within the 'academic community' as a researcher. By inhabiting both spheres, I felt well-situated to act as an interpreter. However, I recognized—and tried to mitigate—my position of privilege and authority within this process through open dialogue. Overall, I attempted to foster a complex conversation between two overlapping communities (academic and musical), communities that sometimes value different kinds of knowledge, and communicate this knowledge in different ways.

As I have previously suggested, I am determined to pursue free-improvisation (academically and within my own artistic practices) as a music defined by a set of practices, musical identities, and approaches to creativity, rather than as a 'musical tradition' per se. This decision is reinforced by my own identity as a musician, as a queer performer, and because of my own shifting relationship to canonically reinforced understandings of music and identity. Nevertheless, I appreciated the opportunity that this project offered by giving me the chance to understand the creative practices, artistic identities, and assumptions of other musicians. I knew that their creative practices would no doubt differ from my own; and this was one of the many things that made this project dynamic and engaging for me as a researcher.

The purpose of this project was to conduct interviews that put my own perspective meaningfully and dynamically in dialogue with the practices and experiences of other improvisers. Furthermore, I felt that this project would represent a valuable contribution to research because it fulfills a need to ethnographically interrogate listening practices and dimensions of musical subjectivity that I believe are under-explored within existing literature. As I will address in the concluding chapter, the insights presented in this thesis have implications for further research in studies of the philosophy of artistic process, and in continuing efforts to diversify and enrich the study of improvisation and free improvisation. Above all, I hope to have cultivated a meaningful and continuing relationship between an increasingly-engaged academic community and this rich and dynamic musical community.

Introduction to the Interviewees

Raphaël Foisy-Couture

Raphaël Foisy-Couture introduced himself at as an "upright bass player, double bass player, electric base—basically a bass player. I do mainly improvised music. I do some work with electronics – especially no input mixers – and sometimes just working with objects and non-musical instruments in different contexts. I've also being involved as a community organizer, as a curator, as a booker, somebody who generally tries to get things done for the community." Throughout my conversation with Foisy-Couture, he spoke very pragmatically about the institutional culture surrounding musical free improvisation; and he linked this culture to improvisatory creative processes. In this way, he drew attention to how larger political dynamics within the musical community shape, define, and hinder the creative output of local improvisers. I appreciated the way he reframed my questions to emphasize this larger picture. Foisy-

Couture is also very well placed to discuss these issues, as he has worked enormously hard as an organizer, booker, and activist within the Montreal music community. I can attest to his relentless work ethic having attended and performed at numerous workshops and concerts organized by him.

Lori Freedman

When asked to introduce herself as a musician and improviser, Lori Freedman responded simply: "I'm Lori Freedman and I play Clarinet and I improvise, and I interpret other people's music. I compose my own music; I teach music. Is there something else?" Freedman is a Montreal based, globally recognized multi-instrumentalist, interpreter of contemporary music, new music composer and free improviser. While remaining planted in the contemporary classical world, she has become a critical force within the global free improvised music community. Today Freedman also coaches/teaches both contemporary and improvised music. In the interview medium, she has volumes to say about free improvisation; and she also speaks fluently about the nature of improvisation as an element within contemporary classical music. Freedman is known in the Montreal free improvised music community for her outstanding solo performances, and her work with countless local improvisatory groups, including *Mercury*—a recent collaboration with Nicholas Caloia. In addition to contributing to the interview with a generous and enthusiastic presence, Freedman created a lot of interesting dialogue with the questions—sometimes responding directly to them, or, at other times, suggesting valuable reframes of my own assumptions and ideas. I was grateful for the chance to interview Freedman and—as readers will notice—our conversation became a critical source of inspiration within this project.

Malcolm Goldstein

Malcolm Goldstein is a celebrated American-Canadian improviser, violinist and composer. Currently living and working in Vermont and Montreal, Goldstein traces his musical roots back to his work in the 1960s in New York City, where he collaborated with James Tenney and Philip Corner in creating the Tone Roads Ensemble. Goldstein reflected on this period during our interview, highlighting the many important creative intersections that took place in New York during the 1960s. He placed particular emphasis on his work with the Judson Dance Theatre and noted the role of dance in informing his practice as an improviser. Goldstein also spoke insightfully about the distinction between what he calls 'structured improvisation' and 'open improvisation'. His conception of the latter concept—which he prefers over the term 'free improvisation'—richly contributed my investigation of listening practices within the project as a whole.

Rainer Wiens

When asked to introduce himself, Wiens stated: "My name is Reiner Wiens. I self-identify as musician. My primary instrument the past 20 years has been prepared guitar and—for the last eight years—also different lamella phones, Embiras, Kalimbas have started to take up a larger part of my musical life as well." Wiens' (2018) online musical biography notes that he is "one of Canada's leading creative guitarists, known equally for his profound grasp of rhythm and his sonic imagination." Attending a number of Wiens' improvised performances over the past decade, I have become acquainted with an artist who modifies and prepares his guitar always with an incredible sensitivity to subtle and unexplored textures. This awareness complements the attention that Wiens also gives to unconventional, non-linear, and exploratory rhythmic

possibilities. I was lucky enough to participate in a fantastic rhythm workshop given by Wiens, in which he elaborated on his approach to rhythmic composition and performance. During our interview, we discussed at length both techniques of guitar preparation and listening practices. Wiens highlighted a number of different approaches to listening that, in his view, can arise during the course of a single performance. I found Wiens descriptions of the improvisational process compelling, and they also resonated well with both the perspectives of Lori Freedman and Malcolm Goldstein (his frequent collaborator).

Chapter 2:

From Difference to the Free Improvisatory Body without Organs

Beginning in difference: Musical background and free improvisatory experience

Prior to carrying out this research project, I hypothesized that the interviews might recognize the existence of 'free improvisatory rules of engagement'—ideas held by improvisers about how to best bring free improvisational music into being. Although I was aware that practitioners of free improvisation were often hostile to the suggestion that this music operates like a genre (i.e. with specific rules generating recognizable musical forms that are repeated in different performances), I also considered that the interviewees might demonstrate a consistent set of approaches that were deployed in the creation of free improvised music—even if the musical outcomes were still held to be highly variable.

In order to track whether improvisers came to such shared understandings about 'how to make free improvised music', I developed questions addressing how each improviser understood the musical approaches deployed by others. I asked about the extent to which improvisers felt that they shared a common understanding of the music with other improvisers. I probed this issue by asking whether the improvisers felt that they listened to each other through reference to common 'musical languages', and whether they shared a similar musical 'vocabulary'[3] with others. More broadly, I asked whether they believed differences and similarities in musical background affected free improvisational creativity. In many cases, I also asked the improvisers whether they *developed* a shared 'listening ground,'[4] or an emergent and shared

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[3] The word 'vocabulary' was proposed by Lori Freedman, who preferred to use this term when addressing questions of this type.

[4] This term was also proposed by Lori Freedman.

language/vocabulary, during the course of performance (beyond their backgrounds and basic assumptions).

Through conversation with Lori Freedman, I discovered that such shared musical understandings—i.e. common musical vocabularies or approaches to listening—were not held to be an important condition of successful free improvisatory experience. Freedman, in fact, stated that "my least favourite, my least memorable, musical improvisations with others have been with people who are coming from my background." Answering based on musical experience rather than from any methodological (or ideological) point of view, Freedman also indicated that she could not explain why improvisations with people of the same musical background were sometimes less interesting. However, she offered the simple and evocative suggestion that these musical interactions were limiting because "the sound of our words are too close." Freedman, thus, according to my understanding of this account, underscored that differences in musical background tend to yield productive conditions for the creation of free improvised music.

Freedman's experiences resonated with the insights of a number of other improvisers who—similarly—grounded their respect for musical difference in recollections of what had yielded powerful improvisations in the past. For example, I asked Malcolm Goldstein whether group improvisation depends "on the existence of—at least to some extent—common musical languages that are shared between all of the improvisers?" Recognizing that the *known existence* of common musical languages might be difficult to affirm within free improvisational groups which were constructed ad hoc (i.e. with a rotating cast of musicians from diverse backgrounds), I posed the alternate question of whether Goldstein believed "you need to *feel* like you're speaking the same musical language"? Goldstein felt that such common or shared understandings were not a prerequisite for the realization of good improvisations. He noted that,

"I played with Jazz musicians, I played with Chinese musicians; I played with traditional.. [inaudible]…It doesn't depend on anything like that." Goldstein and Freedman therefore both appeared to respect musical difference as a condition of successful free improvisatory experience.

Rainer Wiens shed light on the same line of questioning by expressing how he at times felt a sense of unknowingness in relation to other improvisers, which was also amplified by their differing musical or artistic background:

> I mean now I'm working with Maya [Kuroki] and…I have no idea what goes on in her mind. It's like she's kind of in a trance, possessed. She comes out of theatre and [says things like] 'I can't improvise until I have a clear image'. … So it's like—wow man! We really live in such different universes and it really works. So even if I wanted to ask her how...(laughter)…I know I'd never get it. So I enjoy it.

Wiens was clearly enthusiastic about improvising with someone whose artistic process was removed from his own. He also described with tangible wonder (i.e. "wow man!") the mental-preparatory process that Kuroki uses before improvising; and he relates the overall disconnect between their practices to a sense of enjoyment.

My argument begins with these observations because I believe that the improvisers' embrace of musical difference speaks to a wider set of creative practices—and also a more generalized theoretical framework—that will be observed throughout my engagement with the interviews. This affirmation of difference places free improvised music in dialogue with Deleuze and Guattari's articulation of the Body without Organs. They understand the Body without Organs as a site uniquely capable of realizing relations of difference. As Janne Vanhanen (2017, 170) highlights, "the Body without Organs is not understood as a self-enclosed unity, but rather a

site that brings together heterogeneous elements out of which a subjective perspective can emerge and renew itself by forming new relations." The Body without Organs therefore constitutes a meeting ground upon which musical actors confront one another with raw differences in their musical subjectivities, backgrounds, and understandings.

As demonstrated in the accounts of Freedman, Goldstein, and Wiens, stark differences in musical or artistic background are not considered to be problematic for the creation of free improvised music. In various ways, these improvisers tend to affirm difference: by referring to the positive affect that it generates and by suggesting that diverse (musical) languages of interaction create productive improvisational conditions.

Thus—through the precondition of musical, artistic, or personal difference—the Body without Organs is brought into being as an interactive-creative plane upon which individualized musical subjectivity is fundamentally challenged. Furthermore, while the Body without Organs—as a creative concept—might develop within a host of artistic practices, the determination to pursue difference (as demonstrated in the accounts of improvisational practices outlined above) suggests that the Body without Organs is uniquely active within free improvised musical practices. Having acknowledged 'difference' as described by the interviewees as a potential point of departure, I will discuss the Body without Organs in relation to other creative lines of flight within free improvisational practices.

Free Improvisatory Subjectivity and the Body without Organs

A particular joy of making improvised music is not knowing precisely

the relationship between one's thoughts and one's actions (one has to

surprise oneself, after all) and between one's actions and the actions

of other improvisers (did you do that because I did that, or did I do that

because you did that?) (Borgo 2016, 1)

      Accounts of free improvisational experience confounding the typical parameters of an individual's musical subjectivity—or sense of self—can be found in existing literatures of free improvisation, as David Borgo demonstrates in the above passage. In section 1, I addressed the improvisers' shared emphasis on musical difference: they seek out performance contexts made up of improvisers from diverse musical (and by extension, cultural, and social) backgrounds. They describe these situations of musical diversity as a routine, or particularly productive, aspect of their practices. I will now examine how difference is experienced during the course of musical performance by examining how improvisers experience personal musical subjectivity during free improvised performance.

      As Deleuze and Guattari indicate, the Body without Organs—which forms through circumstances of diversity and difference[5]—challenges the organism by disrupting its typical modes of functioning and being. Especially in his later work, Deleuze links the Body without Organs to artistic expression and experience: for example, in discussing painting, he is interested

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[5] Deleuze and Guattari highlight the theme of multiplicity/diversity in the first sentence of Ch. 6 *(November 28, 1947: How Do You Make Yourself a Body without Organs?)* of *A Thousand Plateaus:* "At any rate, you have one (or several)." (1987, 149)

in how a Body without Organs forms within our experience of the painter's work: "I *become* sensation and something *happens* through the sensation, one through the other, one in the other. And at the limit, it is the same body that, being both subject and object, gives and receives the sensation" (Deleuze 2004, 31). Deleuze subsequently traces a similar de-subjectifiying dynamic within artistic experience in general. However—as I shall also explore in this section—he makes some specific comments about how musical experience uniquely calls forth the Body without Organs.

The Body without Organs is evoked by artistic practices that challenge the maintenance and development of a particular and individualized musical subjectivity (or creative consciousness). In my conversation with Rainer Wiens, he articulates conditions that evoke the Body without Organs by describing a listening process in which he simultaneously negotiates between consciousness of his own production of sound, and the sounds being produced by other improvisers.[6]

> Well [listening] is like one of the primary things on stage: it's kind of a controlled schizophrenia. I mean you're totally into the playing and outside listening to your sound and the person you're with. So it's a little bit hard to describe: like to be totally into your sound and totally outside, listening to the details of it and the details of—let's say—what Malcolm is doing.

In the case of Wiens' account of free improvisatory listening processes, one is struck by the sense that his subjectivity is somewhat fractured, challenged, disorganized, or confronted by chaos (i.e. through the invocation of schizophrenia).[7] At the same time, he hints at attempts to

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[6] Malcolm Goldstein is the other improviser in this case.

[7] I have some reservations about pursuing the term schizophrenia as a metaphor in relation to practices which are obviously remote from its lived realities (even if Deleuze and Guattari had a respectful and important presence in the early psychiatric survivor community). At the same time, I should note that Deleuze links music and 'schizophrenia'

synthesize and arrange this experience. For example, his use of the word 'controlled' suggests that he is mobilizing efforts towards some form of mastery, containment, or orderly comprehension of the sounds surrounding him (and sounding *from* him). Wiens' evocation of a destabilized subjectivity wherein "you are totally into your sound and totally outside" evokes Deleuze's understanding of music's effect on subjectivity (and on the subject's nervous system). Deleuze describes sonic/musical experience (or "sensation") in the following way:

> Certainly music traverses our bodies in profound ways, putting an ear in the stomach, in the lungs, and so on. It knows all about waves and nervousness. But it involves our body, and bodies in general, in another element. It strips bodies of their inertia, of the materiality of their presence: it disembodies bodies. (2004, 47)

From my perspective, Weins' description of being "inside and outside" sounds like a kind of disembodiment; and his intense navigation of different sonic subjectivities conjures the image of an ear in various 'body parts' spread across the distance of a de-subjectified organism. This is an organism which—in Deleuze's model of artistic experience—is forming and de-forming, through sensation, a relationship with another improvising performer.

Lori Freedman's account of improvisational experience also underscores the importance she attributes to the navigation of different listening orientations. While acknowledging—like Wiens—the importance of musical difference, she also describes the delicate realization of the musical or sonic 'whole':

> It's impossible for me to not listen to the whole; but in a really concentrated [way]; I might be focussing the listening in one place at one moment, and then in another place at

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directly in the text being considered here: "When music sets up its sonorous system and its polyvalent organ, it addresses itself to something very different from the material reality of bodies….This is why music does not have hysteria at its essence, but is confronted with a galloping schizophrenia" (Deleuze 2004, 47).

another moment. But, you know, it's not like a place with a strobe light or a light show

where you tend to look at where the brightest light is.

Freedman's invocation of listening in a "concentrated way" to multiple orientations resonates

with Wiens' attempt to order and synthesize various experiences of the sounding-self and

sounding-other(s).

Furthermore, Wiens and Freedman—in different ways—complicate the proposition that

differing sonic perspectives can be fused towards the development of an easily assembled or

navigated 'whole'. For Wiens, the fragile complexity of the sonic whole is evoked in the image

of 'schizophrenia', whereas, for Freedman, listening to the 'whole' is qualified by the

observation that she is also "listening in one place at one moment, and then another place, at

another moment."

In my reading of both of these improvisers' accounts, I see an undercurrent of a set of

listening practices that avoid establishing or privileging particular aesthetic perspectives. These

non-hierarchical listening approaches evoke what Deleuze and Guattari would call

deterritorializing lines of flight. Freedman makes this undercurrent more explicit when she

indicates that her listening does not manifest like "a light show where you tend to look at where

the brightest light is." In offering this metaphor, she thus challenges the notion that improvisation

entails listening with sustained focus within specific sonic orientations. Rather, her approach

seems to be one of shifting orientations: she describes a form of listening that apparently resists

settling on a given perspective, while moving away from the centre and towards the periphery of

sonic experience. This practice evokes Deleuze's assertion that—through one's experience of

sensation— "the transitory organs are felt under the organization of the fixed organs" (Deleuze

2004, 43). In this way, Deleuze would suggest that this type of sensation—which reaches

underneath the formed organism, towards intensity and de-subjectification—is realized through free improvisatory listening practices.

Listening towards the periphery of sonic experience is a practice that Janne Vanhanen[8] (2017, 177) also explores within the work of Pauline Oliveros and John Cage. Addressing Cage's famous inversion of the listening experience in in 4'33"—first towards silence and then to peripheral and imaginative sound—Vanhanen argues that Cage's work evokes not "the radical silence of a void, but a landscape—a soundscape that invites the listener in and opens their perception to sounds previously unheard" (177). Vanhanen thus suggests that such listening, in drawing attention to "what remains on the fringe, withdrawn from conscious perception," constitutes "what Deleuze would term sensation" (176).

In considering Vanhanen's articulation of these experimental listening practices (along with Deleuze's concept of sensation), I argue that Freedman's listening practices invoke a similar process: by describing the way she navigates differing sonic orientations, Freedman points towards a practice of listening that retreats from formed sonic experience towards the underlying intensity of pure sensation. According to my argument, by maintaining contact with 'sensation' at the periphery of sonic consciousness, the free improviser maintains a presence with the Body without Organs. Such unformed sonic subjectivity in one improviser can thus meet with other improvisers who are similarly preserving their own contact with such forces (but in their own ways—i.e. Wiens' 'controlled schizophrenia'). As I shall explore within the next section, such a configuration allows a group of improvisers to converge upon a shared musical experience, what

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[8] Janne Vanhanen's work analogises the modality of listening as a Body without Organs. He thus constructs an image of an "Inorganized Ear, [or] a sonorous Body without Organs" (2017, 171). According to Vanhanen, within the sonorous Body without Organs "experience is not essentially categorized or organized but is encountered as a flow of intensities between bodies, organic and inorganic, out of which the experience of listening emerges" (2017, 171).

Vanhanen describes as "an opening onto an immanent plane of sound…where previous hierarchies of sound are undone" (2017, 177).

The Field of Immanence/Plane of Consistency

I have been examining the ways in which multiple musical subjectivities—especially those that have been assembled within a context of difference—can achieve musical ends and/or a powerful and rewarding sonic experience. The improvisers that I interviewed noted that they try to navigate difference within the improvisational moment, accounting for multiple sonic orientations (and multiple sounding actors) perceived within the music. However, there are also indications that free improvisational consciousness can exceed or complicate experiences of musical difference by also yielding to a sense of unity within sound. I will explore this possibility in the subsequent section, while also addressing the resonances between this process of fusion and Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the Field of Immanence.

In reviewing the interviews, I discovered that both Rainer Wiens and Malcolm Goldstein described the emergence of a de-subjectified musical consciousness when they play together. Wiens described it in the following terms:

I remember we were playing once and [Malcolm] goes: 'do you have any idea what we're doing'. I said, no, I'm just following the sound, 'oh, ok, me neither'. And it's that kind of thing with the prepared guitar and the violin. You're kind of doing something and, like, none of us know who is doing what. And every once in a while I stop just to figure out what's me and what's him. Like it's an incredible blend.

Goldstein noted this same type of experience while speaking about the relationship between listening and hearing:

to hear is to be in touch with the whole experience: the body, which then makes, through the muscles, gesture to breath and to sound. It all becomes one. … And, if I want to focus: It's like, if you try to walk and you focus on...try to focus on every muscle that goes into walking. You will go nowhere. It's impossible. So I think listening is very important. And so in my workshops we focus on listening. But ultimately you don't want to listen you want to hear. You want to receive everything without discriminating anything. And, like, when I play with Reiner, you become one. I'm not listening to him and I'm not listening to me. Something new happens that is beyond us. And it becomes a oneness of the twoness of us.

Goldstein thus suggests that the coming-together-of-subjectivities that occurs during free improvisations with Wiens is related to: (a) the integrated (rather than isolated) experience of all the bodily modalities involved in the generation of sound; and (b) an emphasis on hearing (receiving "everything without discriminating anything") over listening. These approaches involve directing experience away from specified (sonic) formations and individualized (instrumental) functions or skills, thus opening the improviser up the totality of the musical experience.

This experience is consistent with what Deleuze and Guattari highlight as the field of immanence. In their description, "the field of immanence is not internal to the self, but neither does it come from an external or nonself. Rather, it is like the absolute Outside that knows no Selves because interior and exterior are equally part of immanence in which they have fused" (1987, 156). In a sense, Goldstein and Wiens both described a shared experience of "the field of immanence" in which their musical subjectivity reaches beyond its conventional limit and towards a fused identity with sound (they note that they are, in fact, "following the sound").

Though Deleuze and Guattari do not indicate a connection between sonic experience and the field of immanence, a strong conceptual link can be made between the two since sound is understood to have the capacity to "transpierce" the individual (1987, 348). In this regard, it is not surprising that Wiens and Goldstein notice that they lose their conventional subjectivity when they were "following the sound."

When musical subjectivity achieves this new formation—one that is ultimately de-subjectifying, since it involves identification with elements outside of one's typical sphere of consciousness—the music realizes a number of different features that correspond to what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the plane of consistency.[9] They describes this plane as:

> an altogether different plane, or an altogether different conception of the plane. Here, there are no longer any forms or developments of form; nor are there subjects or the formation of subjects. There is no structure, any more than there is genesis…We call this plane…..the plane of consistency or composition (as opposed to the plan(e) of organization or development). It is necessarily a plane of immanence and univocality….However many dimensions it may have, it never has a supplementary dimension to that which transpires on it (1987, 266).

By suggesting that "forms and developments of form" do not exist on this plane, Deleuze and Guattari evoke Goldstein's assertion that the improviser avoids the cultivation of musical or conceptual structures and listening-oriented approaches to creative consciousness. Furthermore, in placing the erasure/absence of "forms and developments" alongside the denial of "subjects or the formation of subjects," Deleuze and Guattari highlight the possibility that both of these elements are erased through a similar process. I consider this to be a critical insight because, as I

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[9] Deleuze and Guattari appear to use the term 'plane of consistency' and 'the field of immanence' in similar contexts; I am treating them as relatable, while acknowledging their different terminological choices.

argue in the next section, improvisation fosters a particular kind of experience that has the capacity to contest the primacy of both the subject (the bearer of consciousness) and the (musical) form. This experience is borne out through the subject's relationship to what Deleuze calls 'the virtual'.

Virtuality and the free improvisatory Body without Organs

Thus far, my engagement with the interviews has underscored a tendency within free improvisation to build creative potential out of musical diversity, while also illustrating that free improvised performances can confound conventional musical subjectivities. Having addressed this *precondition* of musical diversity and *outcome* of expanded or transformed musical subjectivity, we can now trace *listening practices and creative techniques* that stand in between these preconditions and outcomes. In this section, I examine the fundamental creative practices within free improvised music, arguing that a number of the practices outlined within the interviews can fruitfully be interpreted through reference to the concept of virtuality.

Although it will be important to address Deleuze's understanding of virtuality—including its relation to processes of becoming (as well as through his explicit references to artistic creativity)—I will first address 'the virtual' through a larger historical and cultural lens. To do so, I draw on the work of Rob Shields. Shields (2003, 3) indicates that the noun 'virtual' originates from *virtus* in Latin—signifying strength or power. He also historicises and argues for an understanding of the virtual as the "real but not concrete" (3) or, in Marcel Proust's formulation, the "real without being actual, ideal without being abstract" (3). Highlighting its shared lineage with 'virtue'—a culturally important and contested term signifying personal ethical attributes—Sheilds also notes how 'virtuous' individuals are characterized as those who

have realized (i.e. actualized) a particularly powerful expression of their moral potential. He also highlights virtual presences throughout history, as "representations that take on a life of their own" (17). Finally, he suggests that by conjuring "altered perceptions….the virtual overlaps with liminal rituals such as rites of passage..[and evokes]..social spaces in which initiates are 'betwixt and between' old and new social statuses and identities" (17).

While my engagement with Shields represents a quick account of a complex history, I take from Shield's historicization of the 'virtual' a number of important insights. First, I note that the virtual relates to human consciousness,[10] that it signifies our capacity to find inspiration for action away from present or concrete experiences, lending energy to the actualization of these circumstances. The virtual's proximity to concrete experience is ambivalent and uncertain but, according to Deleuze, immanent. The virtual skirts concrete reality by fundamentally conditioning it; we can access and experience it through somewhat indirect means. Furthermore—as Deleuze emphasizes—the virtualities which create actual/real circumstances do not resemble what they help create. Virtualities therefore relate to actualities through a non-linear process of realization. Finally—following William Echard's observation that "our access to the virtual seems to fluctuate…it is never quite here, but remains accessible" (2006, 8)—I highlight that the virtual can be interpreted as an artistic device to be cultivated just as much as it can be conceived as an ontological fact. In this way, many of the interview conversations—i.e. around listening, sonic consciousness, bodily experience, and gesture—can be interpreted as inquiries into the accessibility and relative mobilization of the virtual within free improvisational creative practices.

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[10] For his part, Deleuze avoids using term consciousness, which—in privileging a more traditional image of the subject—tends to uphold the principles of psychoanalysis (Message 2010, 37).

While Deleuze suggests that virtuality has a place in all domains of life—i.e., intellectual, artistic, or everyday-experiential—he tends to privilege virtuality[11] when describing certain artistic processes. For example, when describing art that is "immersed in virtuality," he suggests that artists maintain contact with "virtual or embryonic elements":

> The elements, varieties of relations and singular points coexist in the work or the object, in the virtual part of the work or object, without it being possible to designate a point of view privileged over others, a centre which would unify the other centres. (Deleuze 1994, 209)

This account is striking because it highlights how Deleuze understands artistic process as a continual process of becoming through difference, within which diverse lines of flight are continually cultivated. Deleuze thus explains one's capacity to achieve difference, becoming, and creative ends, through reference to the activity (or functionality) of the virtual.

Several of the improvisers I interviewed appeared to recognize the presence and vitality of virtual experience and virtually-grounded approaches to creativity. In order to begin an exploration of the practices and creative techniques at the centre of free improvised music, I will first draw attention to Malcolm Goldstein's recurring emphasis on 'hearing' during the improvisational moment. Goldstein indicates that when doing 'open' improvisation, he privileges the act of hearing in which "you get rid of your mental choices, you get rid of your intentions, you get rid of your value judgements." While a great deal of scholarship and artistic output has grappled with the differences between listening and hearing (Attali 1985; Nancy 2007), Goldstein's elevation of hearing (as a technique or state of being) within improvisation resonates with Deleuzian scholarship—particularly in relation to virtuality.

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[11] I am suggesting that Deleuze privileges or emphasizes virtuality (when describing certain artforms) over concepts which might have contrasting or alternate characteristics (i.e., actuality, territorialisation, molarity).

In order to address Goldstein' approach to generating and listening to/hearing sound, I will first recount a brief demonstration he offered during our interview. In reference to what he refers to as *open* improvisation, I asked: "What do you listen to; what do you listen for; what aspects of sound are you interested in hearing; and what aspects of sound are you interested in responding to?" While Goldstein acknowledged that listening is important during the context of workshops or practice sessions, he stressed that he does not listen while preforming in open[12] improvised contexts. In order to express his point further he paused and emitted a long, open and airy choral/vocal sound: 'Whaaaaaaa'. He then discussed the sound produced:

There was so much happening in that, that if I start to focus by listening then I'm already choosing what might interest me; what I think might be valuable; what might be even musical by my standards, yeah?

Goldstein's vocal demonstration—articulated as pure sound—prompted a discussion about how much potential was contained within a single sonic gesture. Highlighting that "there was so much happening in that," he suggested that we would lose contact with the richness of this gesture if we adopted the stance of considering the musical or valuable elements within such a sound.

Throughout the interview, Goldstein returned repeatedly to the premise that he does not listen during open improvisation. Putting it simply, he indicated that "ultimately you don't want to listen, you want to hear. You want to receive everything without discriminating anything." Goldstein's approach to improvisation emphasizes experience of—and participation in—the

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[12] Goldstein uses the term 'open improvisation' rather than 'free improvisation' to describe his practices. He also draws a very firm line between his own practices of 'structured improvisation' in which a pre-existing musical form is explicitly present, and 'open improvisation' in which he performs using the listening/hearing practices described at length here.

fullness of sound. Returning to Deleuze's understanding of the virtual, Goldstein is seen here privileging the virtual dimension. He cultivates the fullness and potential of a sonic gesture while remaining closed to any effort to synthesize it into a specific line of flight, a conceptually developed musical idea, or a highly cognized sonic experience. Goldstein's approach—though by no means the only way to approach the virtual dimension—finds resonance with Deleuze's (1994, 209) understanding of art that is "immersed in virtuality." As I previously indicated, Deleuze highlights how—within these circumstances of immersion—artists maintain perpetual contact with "virtual or embryonic elements" (209).

Like the artistic practices that Deleuze is considering, Goldstein's approach to improvisation is calculated to avoid the development of a privileged sonic perspective, or Deleuzian line of flight. By "receiving everything without discriminating everything," Goldstein maintains perpetual contact with the virtual, where the continued presence and fullness of sound ensure that sonic/musical or conceptual structures do not overtake the improvisational experience.

In addition to highlighting an approach to sonic consciousness that emphasizes hearing, Goldstein also expands the question of virtuality beyond the realm of sound, by emphasizing both the locatedness of his practices within space, and his generation of sound through bodily movement:

> To hear is to be in touch with the whole experience: the body, which then makes, through the muscles, gesture, to breath and to sound…That's why I do so much in the workshop on gesture. Because the gesture—sound can only be realized by a specific gesture. If you change the gesture, if you change the balance of your body, if you change anything, if you change even the space you're playing in—it becomes a different sound.

Goldstein's thinking here suggests that the production of sound is dependent upon a number of factors including bodily orientation, the consistency or manipulation of various sound-producing gestures, and the position of an improviser in a room. Furthermore, he suggests a coordinated process in which—through "muscles, gesture, to breath"— one arrives at sound. What is striking about Goldstein's account of musicianship is the emphasis on interactivity of sonic, physical and spatial elements. He cultivates an awareness of these elements' interactive presence within space, rather than focussing on micro techniques, which serve specific instrumental or functional ends. Put more simply, Goldstein indicates that "If you try to walk and you… try to focus on every muscle that goes into walking. You will go nowhere."

Goldstein's emphasis on the interactivity and codependence of sonic, physical and spatial experience also invokes how emphasis on virtual experience can heighten one's ability to participate in what Janne Vanhanen describes as "subjective becoming":

> Starting from this notion [of deep listening], listening may not be restricted to the auditory realm only, since listening can encompass a heightened awareness of one's connection to the work in every modality of existence. We can listen to musical or other types of sounds, but also our senses and the body, our thinking, situations and dynamics, and so forth. We can widen the span of audition from the subject centered model of hearing to understanding listening as unearthing a constant process of dynamic relations from which the listening subject emerges as subjective becoming. (Vanhanen 2017, 180)

We are thus beginning to see a picture of the Body without Organs forming not simply between different improvisers sounding independently within a performance, but within the resonance of different sensory and physical elements that cooperate in the production of sound. Widening "the

span of audition" (180), in this way, activates a more dynamic set of modalities underpinning improvisatory experience.

Thus, improvisatory experience of this kind entails at least three things: an openness to musical difference; the ability to experience sensation as it draws the subject/improviser away from the rigid establishment of a singular musical identity; and the skill of maintaining contact with virtuality as it exists in this combination of elements—body, bodies, listening affects, spaces, and musical forms. In the following chapter, I will place these dynamics in dialogue with an examination of the way these improvisers also understand and navigate musical structures during the course free improvised performances.

Chapter 3:

Free Improvised Musical Becoming and the Musical Structure/Text

The refrain and the validity of the 'departing text'

My discussion so far highlights the importance of difference as a foundation within free improvised musical practices. I have traced free improvisatory practices from their beginnings in (often shifting) groups of musically diverse performers, and I have accounted for musical difference—as experienced by the interviewees—as yielding powerful moments during improvised performances. I have also explored listening strategies used by improvisers to avoid the privileging of specific sonic orientations or creative lines of flight, as well as different strategies used in maintaining contact with the virtual. Finally, I have addressed how such inclusive hearing practices—when privileged over more selective practices of listening—can yield to forms of creative consciousness that confound individual musical subjectivities, generating powerful musical/sonic experiences. The next task, in following the insights generated by the interviewees, is to return to the musical text (or the foundational musical structure, as highlighted in the introductory chapter) by interrogating its relevance and its relationship to the creative processes and forms of improvisational consciousness addressed above.

A significant portion of the scholarship linking Deleuzian philosophy and music builds on chapter 11 of *A Thousand Plateaus*, namely '1837: Of the refrain'. As Ronald Bogue (2003) indicates, the refrain provides a focal point for Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of territorialisation within, but not limited to, art and music. Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 311) consider the refrain in light of a child's effort to comfort himself with a "calming and stabilizing, calm and stable" song gently sung under his breath. In portraying the vocalization of this simple

melody, Deleuze tracks this child's effort "to draw a circle around that uncertain and fragile centre, to organize a limited space" (311). By humming the refrain, the child grants himself a basic sense of security—a space in which he can build an identity, and further relations with the world.

Such an image not only offers insight into the child's cultivation of a (musical) territory which grants safety and meaning, but also aids in representing an overall reorientation of subjectivity: Deleuze and Guattari replace traditional understandings of subjectivity—in which identity pre-exists event or expression—with the observation that life is characterized by processes of *becoming.* Deleuzian becoming resonates strikingly with free improvised musical practices in which performers cultivate musical identity through listening, and through immanent participation in an unfolding piece of music.

A second insight into Deleuze and Guattari's larger project, also presented by the example of the child's refrain, is observed through the child's encounter with difference and desire—a process that yields new lines of actualization. As the child sings, she[13] "summons strength." Eventually the child and her refrain open into a new milieu:

> one opens the circle a crack, opens it all the way,[14] lets someone in, calls someone, or
> else goes out oneself, launches forth. One opens the circle not on the side where the old
> forces of chaos press against it but in another region, one created by the circle itself. As
> though the circle tended on its own to open onto a future, as a function of the working
> forces it shelters. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 311)

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[13] The child's gender (or the individual in question) has changed by this point.

[14] This process of territorialisation, de-territorialization, and re-territorialization is characterized by several stages which can be described as: (1) establishment of order and cultivation of place; (2) an opening onto a new sphere of activity in which new forces are encountered; and (3) generation and entrenchment of a new location/place upon navigating or assembling these forces.

Upon encountering this outside world, Deleuze and Guattari highlight the child's process of becoming through difference—through contact with and transformation towards difference as represented here by an opening "onto a future" (311). According to my argument, free improvised practices can be richly understood through Deleuzian notions of becoming (and becoming through difference). In this chapter, then, I consider the musical text alongside the Deleuzian emphasis not on being (which places identity and meaning within a fixed, pre-existing, and often transcendental domain), but on the becoming manifested through the child's song, or through the free improvisers immanent participation in an unfolding musical moment.

The interviewees' accounts of feeling a sense of discovery and change can be interpreted through the Deleuzian notion of encountering and participating in becoming through difference. Free improvisation—as described in many of the interviewees accounts—is a musical practice in which felt experiences of discovery and change are accorded a great deal of importance. Thus, in order to trace an understanding of these creative experiences, I will draw upon Deleuze's understanding of difference as well as his more expansive concept of becoming (and becoming through difference).

The story of the child's refrain (which can also be interpreted as the development of creative consciousness) can be linked to improvisational experience in a number of ways. As Eugene Holland highlights, "the refrain establishes something like a protective comfort zone from which one is then able to launch forth and improvise in the outside world"[15] (Holland 2008,

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[15] I would argue that a useful comparison can be made between this territorialized 'comfort zone' that Holland observes in jazz, and the maternal 'home base' (and the types of infant exploration) observed within the founding experiments in psychological attachment theory (Ainsworth and Bell 1970). Furthermore, this comparison becomes rich in resonances for free improvised music when we consider that 'atypical' infants (who are 'insecurely' attached) are often far less comfortable with the parent; and thus, their behavior—including the types of exploration they engage in—is not necessarily tied to the security of a 'home base'. Considering the parental home base as analogous to the 'departing text' within improvisation becomes a way of contesting the primacy and necessity of 'playing off of' this text, just as a number of the interviewees have done in various ways.

199). In this chapter, I further examine the statements of the improvising musicians I interviewed by bringing Holland's logic into dialogue with Bruno Nettl's (2016, 11) proposition that "all improvisation is somehow based on something pre-existing, some kind of point of departure." I will draw on the concept of the Deleuzian refrain in order to augment our understanding of the musical text, or foundational musical structure. Considering free improvisation in light of the refrain allows us to account for the presence of the musical text—or the most important features of musical textuality within improvisational contexts—while also achieving a reorientation away from textuality, towards immanence and process. This orientation is consistent with the accounts of improvisational experience highlighted by the interviewees.

In describing his own practice of open improvisation, Malcolm Goldstein was the most unequivocal in rejecting attention to textual, structural, patterned, or conceptual forms of musical consciousness within his practice of open improvisation. His responses to many of my questions were filled with references to the belief that improvisation was about a process of discovery that disregarded any structural, linear-temporal, or cognitively-driven understanding of experience. For example, when I asked him if he could explain the relationship between thought and improvisation, he responded:

> Oh no to thought. Oh no thought. No thought. No. When you're thinking—I don't know, maybe I said it in the workshop? If you start thinking, stop and write it down: you've become a composer…See I work differently than other people. So you're asking me about my way, yeah? Because a jazz musician would say just the opposite. I've heard some wonderful, fantastic jazz musicians say, 'man, if you can't play again, exactly what you did before, then that's...you're not improvising...it's not worth it." To me I don't know what I did, I don't know where I am—I'm sorry, I don't know where I was, in

playing, I don't know where I'll be going. I have no intentions. And I say to people—if you're thinking—there is a difference between composing and improvising. For me, improvising means you're—this might sound Zen-like, [but] I am not going to say I'm Buddhist—you're in the moment, and the moment does not exist.

In order to understand how Goldstein interprets the difference between thought and open improvisational consciousness, we can look at a number of his statements here. He seems to feel that thinking reflects a tendency towards rational engagement and intentionality—a linear and systematic consciousness of one's circumstances, which is navigated through mobilized intentions. He thus contrasts his own approach of non-intentionality to that of jazz musicians who are portrayed[16] as highly intentional improvisers (their intentionality is also linked to the notion that they know their improvisations well enough to flawlessly reproduce them). Finally, he also raises a discussion of time, temporality, and change in relation to my question about the role of thought. By suggesting that he privileges, imagines, activates, or experiences the improvisational moment as constant motion, change, and process suggests to me that he interprets thought as a type of experience in which the improviser becomes fixed within a determinate musical-conceptual system. Thinking extends the improviser into a determinate relation with existing sounds, subjects, concepts, and musical forms. Such an approach cannot— at least on its own—sustain Goldstein's engagement with a musical context that is constantly shifting. Although he acknowledges that he is frequently challenged for holding to this outright rejection of thought and intentionality within open improvisation, 'thinking' appears to disrupt Goldstein's process of musical becoming.

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[16] Goldstein later qualifies this description of jazz musicians by distancing himself from John Cage's claim that jazz music was rife with intentionality. Nevertheless—whether or not the comparison with jazz is valid—his point about the non-reproducibility and non-intentionality of his practices is clear.

As I indicated, Goldstein attends to the issue of temporality in response to my inquiry about the role of thought within improvisation. He appears to do so because of his association of thought with a particular type of temporal experience. In this regard, he seems to feel that thought externalizes improvisational experience—placing sound along a linear timeline and placing his own subjectivity outside of sound. In order to draw out this view further, he compares improvisational experience to an ancient story told by Heraclitus:

> The moment does not exist. Do you know Heraclitus the philosopher [who speaks] about the brook? He said you can step into the brook once, but—you know—it's motion. … Clouds are good too [gesturing towards the window] but they're almost too physical. A brook does not exist. A brook is a word. Finally [Heraclitus] says you can't even step into it once, because it's already gone, it's already moving: Everything is motion. This goes back to the Chinese way of thinking about change. It's endless change. So, there is no object in any [of this]. It's all process.

By referring to the brook—described by Heraclitus as representing endless change—Goldstein captures the notion that improvisational consciousness cannot easily give way to linear temporal representation. Furthermore, he evokes the sense that improvisation cannot be broken up into individual conceptual-temporal points of reference, or frozen in place by the formation of specific cognitive associations. In his view, improvisation is fostered by 'following the sound'—by identifying with the sonic experience a whole. As he puts it, "if you're thinking, you're not *there*…if you're thinking about it, then you're not *it*."

Attempting to place Goldstein's unique approach in dialogue with improvisational discourses about a 'departing text' (as articulated, for example, by Bruno Nettl)—which assume that within contexts of improvisation, there is always a structuring text, always a pattern that is

being explored, elaborated upon, or modified in some way—I asked Goldstein if he ever senses or pays attention to patterns or other structured content within his improvisations. In his response to this question, he again drew on Heraclitus' story:

> With open improvisation when I'm like that brook, which is in the sound, just going. And I don't know what I did. So unless I listen to it, I can't talk to you about structures or not structures or patterns or not patterns, or even habits or not habits. I can tell you, though, that Malcolm Goldstein is interested in a very wide range of sound that includes noise, tone—everything. [17]

Goldstein augments this image of open improvisation as constant process of change by describing improvisation as "a process of discovery" throughout the interview. Reinforcing this image, he explained that "discovery means: you're not holding onto something. If you're holding onto something, sit down and write it. It's probably a great piece of music." Finally, he explains that "it's a question of enjoying situations in which life is being lived in its discovery."

While Goldstein's conception of the improvisational moment is unique—and though he seems to disavow cognition and rationality to an almost improbable degree—his image of improvisation is clear: when I asked him whether he senses patterns or structures within his improvisations he settled upon an image of the natural world:

> Ok, so to listen, to be in the sound, is to be open to all aspects of sound. That was enriched for me, not just in working with dancers, but living in Vermont where you begin to hear the sound of wind through trees. Every tree has its own sound. A pine tree has a

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[17] With a humorous flair, Goldstein describes how the perception of noise might alter one's experience of music: "When you listen to the violin, a person is playing Tchaikovsky, you hear a beautiful melody, you hear tones, yeah? You start to listen to all the noises—the articulation of the bow, a staccato, spicatto—[and] it becomes a whole different experience. Now if a person playing a Tchaikovsky concert, I think it would be very embarrassing [laughter], because the person would have a revelation and probably have to stop playing in the middle…of the performance, yeah? Ok, so to listen—to be in the sound—is to be open to all aspects of sound."

sound, a maple tree has a [sound], a birch tree; and each one of them has their own sound

depending on the shape and everything.

In my assessment, Goldstein took pains to highlight that that improvisational consciousness was fundamentally different from what we consider to be 'thought' in our everyday lives. His ideas—which are at times challenged by other improvisers within the community—gave me a lot to consider, both within this project and beyond.

While my dialogue with Goldstein focussed on the question of whether the improviser could sense musical structures within an ongoing improvisation, my conversation with Lori Freedman evoked a parallel question: I asked her whether "there [are] things that you're able to take from one improvisation into another. Like things that you learn, things that you discover, specific ideas that you're able to carry from one [performance] into another?" In posing this question, I was interested in whether musical phrases and structures could be preserved and reused across different contexts. If so, these captured ideas might come to form something akin to the 'departing text' or the Deleuzian refrain. In a more general sense, I hoped Freedman might have some insights into the types of musical repetition—or any other structural content—that might exist within her own improvisation practice. In asking these kinds of questions, I also hoped Freedman might share some insights into how structural features of an improvisation might relate to the generation of new or spontaneous musical ideas. In fact, Freedman had been exploring this question with a musical partner earlier in the day:

Just this morning, for instance, I was playing with somebody who...we were mounting a

project, and we listened back to what we played in order to try to remember: to try to

identify the things that we like. And [we asked ourselves] what's the difference between

that particular thing or can we bring it back? Was it only really beautiful in that context?

And [what would happen] if either of us tried to do that same thing in another piece?[18]

Freedman and her musical partner were debating whether particularly impactful, beautiful, or significant improvisational moments could be differentiated and carried into other contexts. Having considered this possibility, Freedman responded to her own inquiry:

> You know we all have a sack of things that we do consciously or unconsciously. But I think I can fairly say that what I do try to do is…find something new each time: learn something new; learn how to play something new, each time. Not to try to repeat anything. Because in fact you can't repeat anything—particularly with improvisation because improvisation is a musical passage in time and it's forming time completely differently each time.

Freedman thus explains that her improvisation practice is informed less by the conscious repetition of musical ideas, and more by the realization of change—the effort to "form time completely differently each time." Through this emphasis on creating new sonic and musical possibilities, she appears to downplay her previous inquiry into whether something particularly beautiful could be captured and implanted within a subsequent improvisation. While acknowledging that habits are carried in various ways, and that "we all have a sack of things that we do," she advises herself "not to try to repeat anything." Thus, for Freedman, structural content (or 'departing texts')—if they exist within the free improvised music that she makes—do not appear to be consciously emphasized. At most, they might form an implicit backdrop to the kinds of consciousness that she brings to bear on the act of improvising. Freedman makes this

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[18] Freedman noted, in a subsequent conversation, that this particular project involved "developing compositions out of improvisations." Thus, she indicates that improvised music can be deployed compositionally. However, as she later clarifies (in the subsequent quotation), she does not emphasize or argue for the preparation or implantation of music within free improvised contexts.

point more directly when I ask her whether she hears "structures or patterns in [her] improvisations":

> No. Not when I'm doing it. I'm not conscious of much other than the present and to be able to listen to patterns and structures means you have to be able to remove yourself enough to remember: Listen back in time or in forward. While I'm improvising I can't identify those things, no.[19]

Drawing out a similar set of beliefs about the problems attendant to the repetition of previously realized musical ideas within free improvisations, Rainer Wiens articulates how he sometimes fights the temptation to carry existing ideas into a free improvisation. Describing the temptation to draw on specific rhythms that he had developed within his practice of rhythmic composition, he notes that,

> It would irritate me at the beginning [of a free improvisation] that stuff didn't just come out, and I would just fight the urge to play one of those rhythms in my book that sounded so...; but then you're not in that moment, right? You're already bringing something to it pre-conceived…I mean…I have assimilated [things], like how I reply to situations. It's based on the work that I've done; but I'm not trying to give voice to stuff that's in my notebook because I know it sounds really good. Because even to play what worked so well last night is a kiss of death because when things really work it's because you're really in an very authentic moment—like fully present to the now; and if you think oh

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[19] Freedman's response is strikingly similar to Goldstein's view in that she implies that improvisational consciousness defies typical experiences of temporality and memory (i.e., it is entirely concerned with inhabiting the moment), and also in that she is concerned with the possibility that this kind of cognitive activity would remove the improviser from their direct engagement, or presence in the music. However, she differs from Goldstein in that she does not reject thought altogether. In particular, when I ask her whether "it's productive to avoid overly thinking and overly conceptualizing an improvisation?", she indicates that she wouldn't "go that far..I don't want to cut off thought because imagination is thought."

man that worked so great last night and you try to find that [again]—I mean you're dead already, like before you start.

Wiens suggests that bringing pre-conceived ideas or prepared rhythmic phrases into a free improvisation removes him from the moment, compromising a practice that is based on being "fully present." Like Freedman, he acknowledges that he carries habits—which are described as things that have been "assimilated"—but he rejects conscious efforts to give voice to composed, or pre-conceived musical ideas. Like Goldstein, he appears to define improvisation primarily in relation to the improviser's ability to be authentically present in the moment, attending to the nature of sound, while minimizing impulses to play pre-conceived content or to consciously use "assimilated" musical techniques/languages, or to 'think' structurally. On the whole, the improvisers addressed in this section tell a story in which structured and pre-conceived approaches to improvisation are minimized or rejected. In this sense, they considerably complicate and contest Nettl's thesis that improvisation is consistently tied to a 'departing text'.

Musical-Institutional Structures, the Refrain, and Contemporary free Improvised Music

Having addressed these improvisers' perceptions of a foundational structure or text within their improvised performances, I would also like to highlight the way another improviser offered a compelling reorientation of this issue, by describing the structure of the musical culture itself—the institutions within and around free improvised music and the way they influence the music being produced.

I asked Raphael Foisy-Couture, "if you had to choose, is improvised music for you, something that has a form and a structure, an idea that you can understand and comprehend, or is it something that is formless?" Rather than approaching my question immediately from the

perspective of the musical practices themselves, he first drew upon the institutions and forms of social organization that surround free improvised music:

> If I had to choose, I think in the way most improvised music is done today, and most of what is being produced, and most of how we work and how the scene works, you know like improvised music even has its own like festival structures now, and crowd and everything. I'd say it's definitely a defined language. Some people are still pushing it some people are still searching; but I'd say it's as codified as jazz. I mean, I think [of] extended techniques on the saxophone for example, if you look at the sax player, in jazz will know the chord change and all these things and you find like a free jazz sax player, you already have a certain codification of what he does. He probably uses like circular breathing, and tongue slapping, and double tonguing, and all of these extended techniques, and he probably already has certain kinds of references you know?
>
> One of my good friends, says a lot that there's Charlie parker cliché, and there's Evan parker cliché; and it's kind of the same thing, you know like, in improvised music how many guitar players do things that Derek Bailey did, or how many people who work with the same structures that like Ornette tried to work with; or Cecil Taylor; these things become tropes in themselves.

As a musical organizer as well as an active musician, Foisy-Couture also emphasizes the interpenetration of systems of social organization and the musical creativity tied to them. He also draws out these ideas with a number of concrete examples:

> You can do improvised music as a profession now; if you're using improvisation, it's another thing—because improvisation is doing it in the moment and surprising myself. It's a practice I can use in so many contexts; and if I'm only thinking of improvised

music, I'm thinking of a certain language of music, I'm thinking of a tradition, I'm thinking about a certain type of presentation, a crowd: I think it's totally defined. In an ideal world —or not ideal, whatever— I think when it really works, or when it's really exciting, or most of the music that I've found really exciting that I've done or that I've listened to, is when it falls out of these improvised music ideas or contexts. But I definitely think it has its own language, its own form, its own festival, its own structures—it's very codified.

I quote Foisy-Couture at length because I think his way of thinking resonates (somewhat discordantly) with the types of musical activity and creative consciousness that the interviewees have described as important within their practices. If festival structures, subcultural expectations, the assimilation of extended techniques into a repertoire, and a number of other factors are all generating a territorialized refrain—a cultural system that is reproducing itself within and around free improvised music—then how can we reconcile this system with a more de-territorializing refrain, with the possibility of creative practices that will generate further becoming through difference? How can free improvisers access and mobilize the Body without Organs (both socially and musically)? These questions will be given some consideration in the concluding chapter.

Conclusion

While the current momentum within improvisation studies has opened up a number of areas of inquiry that advance our understanding of free improvised music, we should continue to bear in mind some of the unique challenges of analyzing and interpreting this music. As this study has indicated—through the character of the interviews, as well as the range of theoretical concepts that I have brought into dialogue with them—questions of textuality and structure continue to pose illuminating and difficult problems within studies of free improvisation.

At the same time, free improvisers mobilize artistic processes that call forward something not quite structural or textual—a form of sensation and creative experience that both prefigures and exceeds our understanding of a fixed and cohesive musical system. I have tried to deepen my understanding of these features of free improvisation through the concept of the Body without Organs, which provides a starting point for further engagements with the extra-textual, proto-structural, non-rational, and asignifying aspects of free improvisation as a creative practice.

In the introduction, I suggested that the alterity of improvisation is currently being challenged within musicology and cultural studies. However, when viewed through a historical-lens, the primacy of the musical text continues to challenge some of our efforts to parse out the distinguishing characteristics of free improvisation as well as a more generalizable understanding of improvisational practices. It is of particular note that a rough genealogy of improvisation (prior to the widespread use of the term itself) leads us back to practices like supra librum cantare ('singing *on* the book') and to musicological engagements such as the Iranian Radif, in which the study of the musical text was privileged over accompanying improvisational processes. I believe a tension presents itself when we consider the tendency of cultures that engage in music scholarship to reinforce the primacy of the musical text even within improvised

musics. [20] Within free improvised music, the fact that we do not generally refer to or perform

from actual physical musical texts does not negate the effects of the centrality of the musical text

within centuries of western musical culture. [21]

If improvisation studies has enabled an examination of a range of musical practices that

previously had been un(der)examined, I feel as though we ought to be wary of the tendency

within studies of improvisation to emphasize the compositional domain and the static textual

domain. These concerns should also be directed towards efforts to frame improvisational

processes in relation to a 'departing text'—i.e., to view improvisational acts as emanating from a

text or structure that in some way pre-exists the act of improvisation. While the existence of such

a text might make perfect sense to most musicians and musicologists, its relevance, utility, and

existence within the improvisational moment was disputed in a number of the accounts of free

improvisation articulated by the interviewees in this study. Thus, the interview materials within

this study pose some important questions about the relation between structure and process within

improvised music.

I suggested in the introduction that the terminological roots (or archaic definitions) of

improvisation suggested processes of bringing forth material "extempore"—i.e., producing that

which was not planned or provided for. However, the location of contemporary improvisation

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[20] It is important not to simplify this textual tradition, or to assume that the influence and nature of the musical text remains static in previous discourses. I would argue that—just as the presence of improvisation in Western art music shifted over time, becoming almost non-existent by the late nineteenth century (Stewart 2016, 39)—the significance of the text itself changed dramatically throughout the history of written European music.

[21] I do not mean to imply that I am ideologically opposed to musical textuality. I am simply describing the way that I understand the influence of textuality within contemporary understandings of music, and in the way we perform music in a host of contexts. I should also note that graphic scores—though not explored within this study—do not necessarily contribute to the primacy of musical textuality, in my view. Rather, they often seem designed to provide cues, variable ways of relating with other members of group, and symbols that amplify different features of the creative process. While graphic scores are textual, they are, in many ways allied with or "immersed in virtuality," to use Deleuze's words (1994, 209).

studies poses some problems for this definition. As an area of study that has been developing for the past twenty years or so, critical improvisation studies sits at the tail end of the twentieth century's foregrounding of the operations of discourse and examination of the mimetic characteristics of human culture.[22] Contemporary improvisation studies is therefore situated within an intellectual climate in which any understanding of 'free action' or the production of the 'new' must also be situated in relationship to existing cultural forms and recurrent discourses (i.e. 'departing texts'). Put simply, critical theory has established robust, and meaningful connections between ideas of reproduction of existing systems on the one hand, and novel and spontaneous behavior on the other. Furthermore, just as the concept of improvisation arose in tandem with the increasing pre-eminence of the musical text, the discipline of improvisation studies can be seen as arising in response to (and often in cooperation with) an emerging consensus around the importance of discourse and mimetic processes within cultural study.

From this vantage point, one can argue that free improvisation has served, in part, as a confrontation or contestation of the musical text. By the same token, future academic studies in improvisation can be used to contest the development of free improvisation into a territorialized refrain—a musical system and culture with a set of style imperatives, a recognized methodology

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[22] Mimesis can take many different forms, and can be driven by many different forces. Bearing the musical text in mind, I argue that free improvised music has been affected by the same processes of textuality and commodification that have been frequently foregrounded in analyses of twentieth century musical cultures. While a number of scholars have noted that improvisation has gained currency (due to its necessary alterity) alongside forces of commodification that have reinforced the text (and notions of musical authorship), I argue that we have not yet—within improvisation studies—fully articulated free improvisational processes that oppose the hegemonic logic of reproduction. While contemporary capitalist modalities emphasize artistic processes that transform existing (raw) materials (i.e., processes that alter or expand the existing and known text), free improvisational creative modalities can be envisioned as efforts to complicate and perhaps even reverse this process in a number of ways. For example, a Deleuzian free improvisatory creative process can move towards sensation, proto-structural experience, and the Body without Organs imagined as an unfurled creative organism. Since the *complexity* of modern systems of techno-production can actually limit and *simplify* the sphere of activity consigned to individual human 'input', one way of confronting these limits is to 'return' to the materials that compose it, reactivating their latent intensity. However, this noisy exercise is one of many modalities available to free improvisational creative processes.

of reproduction, and a hierarchized discourse of who and what can participate in and claim to be part of this musical community/practice.

Free improvisation in Montreal is still largely practiced by a white, male, heteronormative, able bodied group of musicians. In particular, the participation of women and people of colour is often limited in a way that is significantly out of parity with the wider demographic reality of the city. In my view, this music is not any more inclusive than many other musical cultures, and it is probably more conservative, at least in terms of the demographics of participation, than Montreal's pop music scene (to provide one example). In response to this, I think some free improvisers—especially those of us who occupy more privileged social locations—should ask ourselves what kind of identity, what kind of relationship to tradition, and what kind of musical culture are we are creating, and how it might serve our more privileged locations. I am not suggesting that all musical cultures, and all individuals within a given musical culture, should try to perform or embody the same movement towards diversity, inclusion, and group empowerment. The collective musical culture may need to reconceive itself, but each individual will need to navigate this becoming by maintaining consciousness of their own particular location and difference.

I do believe that Deleuzian ideas of difference—as explored within this study—can inform ideas of change and inclusion within this particular musical culture. However, future research might critique some of the notions of difference that have I have highlighted within these musical practices. For example, I highlight the fluidity and 'free action' within free improvised music perhaps without engaging sufficiently with the need for more marginalized actors to shore-up, build, reinforce, and protect their locations and creative potentials.

In the second section of Chapter 2, I explored the way sonic/musical difference can give way to a field of immanence—to a musical context in which the performers' separate and individual subjectivities stretch towards a collective, undifferentiated, and immanent experience of the music as a whole. This experience has been catalogued elsewhere within literatures of improvisation (Borgo, 2016), and there were a number of striking examples within the interview materials from this study.

To offer some food for thought, I would suggest that future research engage with the question of whether this field of immanence—this identification with the totality of the musical experience—tends to be foregrounded more by male or masculine-identified performers. It is true that David Borgo, Rainer Wiens, and Malcolm Goldstein fit with this characterization, whereas these experiences of the field of immanence were not highlighted in the accounts of any of the three female performers interviewed. Identifying gendered aspects of creative consciousness may be a fruitful area of future research within improvisation studies,[23] and I believe that free improvised music is ideal for this kind of analysis—especially given that there are no explicit, highly developed, or hegemonic methodologies or pedagogies of free improvisation (i.e., ideas about how to perform and experience free-improvised music). Because free improvisation is less determined by roles and rules that uphold a cohesive musical system, we may discover that individual identity may actually be enacted and explored more fruitfully through this music.

While gendered experience may reproduce itself within free improvisational creative practices, we should also attend to the fact that discourses, role-defining rules, and identities

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[23] Ellen Waterman's (2008) work has been influential to my own understanding of issues of gender within free improvised musical practices. However, it would be inspiring to see gender further addressed in future research in free improvisation.

seem to operate differently within these practices. Also, performers' relationships to emergent

musical structures, departing texts, and developing musical ideas seems to shift—within free

improvisational practices—towards abject sonic experience, towards the periphery of

consciousness, towards sensation and de-territorializing lines of flight. Several free

improvisers—and this dynamic did not appear to be gendered—suggested that they devoted

energy to the navigation of, and attention to, multiple sonic orientations, and to difference as

experienced within the improvisational moment. The "inside and outside" split-orientation to

understanding sonic experience, as highlighted by Wiens, and the unfixed, shifting orientation,

away from "where the brightest light is," described by Lori Freedman, offer a picture of free

improvisation as a space where fixed, entrenched, and singular musical subjectivities are

challenged.

   In chapter 2, I discussed the basic composition of free improvised music groups. While

we often name or celebrate diversity in the abstract or on the surface level (i.e., artistic diversity,

cultural diversity, intersections of race, class gender and sexual identity, ideological diversity,

etc.), we do not necessarily engage with the dynamics of selection and intersection. How do we

choose or find ourselves associating with others? How are contexts of diversity felt and

experienced in real time? How do they unfold to produce variable distributions of roles, altered

identities,[24] and structural or creative changes? My interest in this study was not in querying the

exact composition of groups, or even the kind of musical backgrounds that converge within free

improvised groups, but rather to examine the way musical difference is framed, experienced, and

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[24] One self-critique that I will offer—in response to my argument that free improvisation promotes a fluidity of musical identity, a context in which our understanding of our musical roles, our instrumental and sonic relationships to others shift in real time—is that this ease of identity fluidity may only be available to privileged actors (i.e., those who are not forced to devote energy to shoring up an identity, to 'being heard', or to issues of self-preservation). These dynamics can also be observed within musical and improvisational contexts, as many improvisers discuss the impact—for example—of being drowned out by other performers.

interpreted by a select group of improvisers. I was surprised that the interviews did not yield any

sense that free improvisers believe in the musical utility of forming any sort of agreement,

finding a common listening ground,[25] or playing with other musicians whose musical

backgrounds are recognized as having important similarities or resonances with their own. The

absence of these ideologies or methodologies of 'effectual communication' (which I certainly

tried to locate, by engaging with the 'departing text'), leave free improvisation more in the

mould of thinkers like David Toop (2016, 15), who suggest a practice "lacking in plans, rules or

protocols of any kind other than the act of playing through listening." While listening is a central

value for all of the improvisers I spoke with, the inquiry becomes exceedingly contested the

moment we begin to discuss questions of signification and intention (i.e., what is being listening

to/for). This study—according my interpretation of the interview materials—therefore affirms

Rogerio Costa's (2011, 137) claim in "Free Improvisation and the Philosophy of Gilles

Deleuze," that free improvisation involves a "quest to overcome the idiomatic, the symbolic, the

representational." While studying the role of idiomatic languages and representational

consciousness will no doubt persist within literatures of free improvisation, I argue that

improvisation studies can—and should—do further work to unpack an alternate (and

complementary) approach: one that emphasizes the de-territorializing quality of free

improvisational creative practices. In this regard, I suggest that the Body without Organs—

conceived as a form of sensation and creative experience that both prefigures and exceeds our

understanding of a fixed and cohesive musical system—can provide a model for future research,

and may even be helpful for musicians and pedagogues seeking to workshop, teach, and develop

their improvisational practices.

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[25] Again, I note that this term was proposed by Lori Freedman.

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Appendix:

Prepared Interview Questions

My research questions were framed by the following overarching subjects: (1) listening practices and attention to resonance; (2) listening and thought; (3) improvisational problems; (4) (non)-instrumental relationships and creative processes; and (4) communication and social relationships in free improvised groups. As a whole, the questions were designed with the following concerns in mind: How free improvisers understand and describe their listening practices? Do they recognize patterns and musical structures unfolding during free improvised performances? How do they negotiate with emergent musical and conceptual structures in their work? What do they consider to be the role of thinking, during free improvisation; and how to they understand the relationship between listening and thought? What can be characterized in their relationship to musical and conceptual structures that makes the act of free improvisation potentially distinct from other musics or art forms? How does attention to resonance, and timbrality, sound-texture, and noise, inform their capacity to improvise and to generate new improvisatory musical ideas? How might improvisation—conceived as a way of navigating conceptuality and structure through unique listening strategies—speak to creative processes in a trans-disciplinary context? What is perceived as problematic or disruptive of free improvised creativity? How do free improvisers' relationships to their instruments inform their listening and creative practices? Is free improvisation understood as a 'social' music in which relationships are being developed? Is it a form of social communication, of any kind?

These concerns were expressed with questions such as the following (these questions were selected as appropriate to the direction of each conversation, and were elaborated upon during the interviews):

Part 1: Listening and sound-texture

- When improvising, what do you listen to/for?

- What kinds/ways of listening require the most effort?

- Does attention to sound, timbrality and other aspects of resonance contribute to your ability to move forward and generate new ideas and novel approaches?

- How is sonic detail important to the generation of new ideas?

Part 2: Listening and thought

- What do you think about when you are improvising?

- Do you find that it is productive to avoid 'conceptualizing' or 'understanding' the nature (or structure) of an ongoing improvisation?

- How do your thoughts and intentions shape the way you listen and what you hear?

- Are you interested in understanding the consciousness or the intentions of the other players?

- In what ways (if any) do you mitigate against the entrenchment of existing concepts within your work?

- When an improvisation goes particularly well, when the audience or performers seem to respond positively to the music, are you able to take away ideas: are you able to, for

example, remember what worked well and why? Would you want, or be able, to recreate anything in these performances?

Part 3: Improvisational problems

- What problems do you encounter when an improvisation is not 'working', when you are, in effect, struggling to improvise?

- Do improvisations get stuck on particular ideas? How does this happen? How do you deal with this type of problem?

- Does improvised music sometimes reach a point where the music feels lost: where ideas are not being communicated; where nothing is being experienced emotionally or otherwise?

Part 4: (Non)-instrumental relationships and creative processes:

- Does your relationship with your instrument evolve during the course of a performance?

- Do you ever pause and contemplate, reject, or transform, your relationship to your instrument?

- Do you value the potential for your instrument to produce sounds which you've never heard before, or other noises or disruptive content?

- Do processes of listening to and experimenting with sound (through different instrumental techniques and extended techniques) help you understand how you will move forward and fit in with the sounds produced by other improvisers?

- Do you believe in practicing on your instrument (doing exercises, doing mock performances, or any other form of practice) for free improvised music?

Part 5: Noise, communication and sociality:

- Does the social nature of free improvisation lead to productive misunderstandings during the course of an improvisation?

- Do you ever experience meaningful and opportune disruptions of your ongoing understanding of an improvisation?

- How might sound, as a unique medium, contribute to such misunderstandings and disruptions?

- In a group context, can you think structurally (or about questions of musical harmony and development) while you also attend to the question of how your own voice/instrument sounds?

- When you experience 'noise' or sonic disruptions from others, what sorts of intentions, meanings, and potential outcomes do you envision from such interventions?

- Does improvisation help you embrace or understand the possibility that important aspects of your own subjectivity/sound may be experienced as noise or disruption to others?