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Between Freedom and Fixity: Artistic Reflections on Composition and Improvisation

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Introduction

This PhD dissertation focuses on the relationship between freedom and fixity in music: the objects in question are composed works, intended to be played live. The core of this research project is the presentation, analysis, contextualization, and reflections on four of my compositions, on the initial intentions in composing them, and on the ideas that emerged during their composition process and their performance. In and through these works, and by thinking about my experiences as a performer, I will provide a distinct musical perspective that takes the relationship between freedom and fixity as its main point of departure. My aim and hope is that this will be a source of inspiration for other musicians and researchers as well as benefiting listeners in general.

As a composer I am interested in the responsibility to provide compositions with a musical identity which is to some extent fixed. This identity can be established by various factors, such as pitch and rhythm, characteristic sounds, specific roles for the performers and their interactions with each other, overall structure, and so on. In this sense, I have tried to establish a specific aesthetic for each composition: certain musical features which are conveyed in a score (or other performance material: for example, verbal instructions or computer code).

At the same time, the musical identity of my works is also explicitly free: dynamic relations between the musicians and between them and all kinds of other musical agents – the score, the computer, and so on – play a dominant role during the performances. The task of the musicians is not only to reproduce the fixed characteristics of the work but also to invent and generate materials which are not explicit in the score and to do so in real time, that is, while performing. In this sense, freedom is fundamental to the overall result and not just ornamental; it forms an essential part of the identity of my compositions, just as important as their fixed attributes. My current artistic practice thus encapsulates the idea of music as a self-organizing system (rather than a pre-designed blueprint), while simultaneously conveying concrete specifications for the performance.

The aim of this research is to present a distinct viewpoint on music based on artistic experiences and theoretical knowledge. The ideas I will discuss are conceived out of musical necessity, in response to encountering a deficiency in how freedom has been dealt with within the practice of composing and a gap in the knowledge and discourse around the issue. The art of composing has indeed claimed to at least acknowledge the existence of freedom and has, to a certain extent, succeeded in incorporating it into composed works, such as ornamentation in Baroque music, the instrumental cadenza in the Classical period, and indeterminacy in John Cage's works. However, it has failed to integrate freedom more substantially, overlooking its full potential as a functional element which can interact with a composed framework: freedom has seldom been given a structural role, and the possibility of a mutually interactive dynamic with the composed elements has not been fully explored. For example, Baroque ornamentation is explicitly marginal to the structure; the Classical cadenza is confined to a specific moment during the

performance; and the concept of indeterminacy, even though it can be seen as an attempt to address the immanent role of freedom in interpretation,¹ still does not allow the performers to reach their full inventive potential as improvisers. (In fact, indeterminacy was never intended to achieve that goal, as should be clear from Cage's objections to improvisation.)

My approach was not only to understand and use unpredictability and indeterminacy as discrete elements within an otherwise composed framework but to allow musical networks to emerge from the combination of freedom and fixity: dynamic situations and evolving musical processes which constantly oscillate between pre-composed ideas and the performers' real-time input. Moreover, my interest was in studying the potential relationships between freedom and fixity by combining them in such a way that it would be impossible to discern where the one ended and the other began. As a matter of fact, more than being interested in the *combination* of composition and improvisation, I was interested in their *integration*. The *Oxford American Dictionary* defines "integral" as something which is "necessary to make the whole complete; essential or fundamental" (Stevenson and Lindberg, 2011). The idea that freedom can be an integral part of the musical form – a building block, a musical component which not only stands next to composed ideas but also expands and develops them – appeared to me as a creative challenge, an artistic and theoretical hypothesis on which several works could be based.

In order to describe how my approach to composition combines fixed and free elements, I will use a basic division of the components of a musical work into two categories: those which are determined before the performance and those which remain open and have to be invented during the performance. The terms "fixity" and "freedom" were chosen to describe these, respectively. The terminology requires explanation: why freedom and fixity rather than improvisation and composition? Within a musical context, fixity and freedom can be conceptualized as re-assignable qualities, as variables within a formula to which any musical component can be assigned. A wide range of musical elements can be either fixed or free: from the rudimentary example of fixed rhythm or free pitch, to such complex properties as the interactions between a musician and a computer or the way a musical form can be stretched over indeterminate lengths of time. A composed structure, for example, can contain free rhythm and fixed notes or vice versa. A jazz improvisation might have a fixed structural framework, yet the notes and rhythms chosen to (re)create that framework are free. Or, to add just another example, also synchronicity and disintegration can be either fixed or free: I can easily think of music in which synchronicity is created through free, improvisation-based playing, while disintegration could be precisely notated, and thus fixed. In fact, composition and improvisation in themselves can be described as different mixtures of free and fixed elements, since both rely on distinct relations between freedom and fixity. The terms "fixity" and "freedom," therefore, provide a more nuanced vocabulary with which to discuss existing approaches to combining composition and improvisation, to analyze and explore the musical processes involved, and ultimately to move beyond them.

¹ As asserted by experimental music composer Cornelius Cardew: "'Indeterminacy' is like a conviction: the relation between musical score and performance cannot be determined. If this is not realized, difficulties will always be encountered in composing, rehearsing, and performing (not to mention listening)" (Cardew, 1961, p. 22).

My initial goal was to try and understand the tensions I encountered between the two aforementioned concepts in my artistic practice – tensions which I felt were often positive, in the sense that they provided creative and productive drives. Sharing my knowledge and experience as a composer and performer interested in improvisation as much as in notation has influenced my ideas as an artistic researcher. Working with the constant oscillation between predesignated and unforeseen elements – making sure they are well articulated and not suppressed in any way – has been one of the inspirations for this research project.

One fundamental hypothesis of this research is that fixity and freedom cannot exist independently of each other. A “pure,” unmixed manifestation of either is impossible: no musical performance is totally free from the influence of its preconditions or unaffected by its musical setting. Nor can a musical score exist which is completely fixed, which does not allow, enable, and in fact require some interpretation, that is, some kind of freedom during a performance. This “impossibility” – which implies a shared responsibility between performer and composer – is another inspiration for this research: it directs the attention to different mixtures of freedom and fixity. The effect of fixed elements on the real-time freedom of a performer, the idea of flexibility as a musical shape which is partially defined and partially open, and the potential of directed improvisations to follow different musical paths are all results of an understanding that freedom and fixity necessarily exist in conjunction with one another.

My research, undertaken through four principal case studies with related examples and associated theoretical considerations, is an attempt to open up and explore a creative space in which freedom and fixity are both present and active. I hope it might serve in turn as inspiration for other musicians and researchers. Finally, through my artistic practice I hope also to be able to formulate some thoughts regarding the concepts of freedom and fixity in extra-musical contexts, such as philosophical or socio-political theories.

Research Questions

The idea of a creative space in which freedom and fixity are both present and active, a space in which they define and determine each other, raises several questions with which I will deal in the subsequent chapters:

1. How can the concepts of freedom and fixity be embodied, practiced, and performed in composing music? Which elements of each of the compositions discussed in this thesis are primarily fixed and which are primarily free?
2. How can musical compositions express the tensions and balances between freedom and fixity and how is this effectuated in each of the four case studies? How do the relations between freedom and fixity shape the performances of these works?

3. What further consequences and ideas – extra-musical as well as musical – can be drawn, regarding the concepts of freedom and fixity and their interrelations?

These questions are a direct result of my experiences as a musician. They concern actual musical works and their performances, and by answering these questions I will establish an approach to concrete musical practices. But music can also provide an excellent basis from which to reflect “outwards,” towards more general ideas: in this case, concerning structure and freedom, the role uncertainty and improvisation play in social structures, or the relationships between content and structure as a general aesthetic question. Providing answers to these questions might demonstrate how improvisation, freedom, complexity, and dynamic relations could play integral roles in pre-set frameworks beyond as well as within musical practices. I will elaborate more on the extra-musical implications of my research in the Conclusion, although these ideas will be described in general terms only, as that is not the basic theme of the present thesis.

Research Context

In order to contextualize my freedom-and-fixity narrative, I will discuss several ideas by musicians and scholars relating to improvisation, composition, notation, interpretation, performance, and musical instruments. Some of these ideas are drawn from the field of music, while others are from extra-musical disciplines, such as philosophy and science. The diversity of this discourse explains and enacts the complexity inherent in the relation between freedom and fixity, by taking into account the myriad elements at play as well as their interconnections. In each of the four chapters, I will apply various ideas which relate to the case studies themselves and provide a more theoretical framework for the musical examples.

An important concept in this dissertation is improvisation. Improvisation is often described as flexible or fluid – an interactive network of continuously shaped and re-shaped musical situations. The philosopher Marcel Cobussen and the musician-researcher David Borgo regard improvisation as a complex system in which musical, individual, and socio-political actors and factors interact with each other. A different approach is suggested by the philosopher Gary Peters, who describes improvisation as an ongoing struggle by the musician to remain open “against” the inherent demands of music to become fixed, thus counterposing a perpetual search for new, not-yet-explored musical territories with the tendencies of musical material to crystallize and form a stable identity. Another viewpoint is presented by the composer and performer Richard Barrett, who sees free improvisation as a musical framework that emerges in real time rather than being pre-set. In relation to Barrett’s approach, I will also discuss some ideas of Erlend Dehlin, a researcher who has focused on the significance of improvisation within organization and management theories and practices. Dehlin’s approach demonstrates the relevance of the concept of improvisation in an extra-musical context. These different perspectives on improvisation are important in order not only to establish a comprehension of the subject as a distinct phenomenon but also to understand the role of freedom within composed works: it interacts with the structure and the material and thus has an essential function in shaping the result.

Alongside improvisation, notated composition is also an integral part of the discussion. The term “work-in-movement” was introduced by the semiotician Umberto Eco to indicate a notion of incompleteness in composed works and was further developed by the musician-researcher Henrik Frisk as a way to create an ongoing dialogue between composer and performers. The philosopher Andy Hamilton links freedom not only to improvisation but also to interpretation, by pointing out the differences between what he terms macro- and micro-freedom. The philosopher Bruce Ellis Benson places improvisation at the core of the composition process as well as of the interpretation of notated works, thus creating a direct link between composition and freedom. These different approaches establish the musical work as a dynamic hub of interpretive freedom and pre-composed elements. In this sense, the role of the score and of musical notation is not only to fix certain elements of a composition, but also to evoke real-time freedom. The implication of these different approaches will be demonstrated in and through my various compositions, by examining the choices made in each concerning notation, structure, musical materials, and performance instructions.

Another theoretical and practical point of departure for this research is the use and influence of technology. Three of the four compositions use a computer as a musical instrument: in *Modo Recordar*, *Modo Olvidar* a computer and a MIDI keyboard are used to link improvisation and structure; [*Untitled*, 2012] is based on a pre-recorded electronic soundtrack which forms the composition’s timeline; and in *The Instrument* the musical structure is generated live through an interactive system which connects the computer and the performers. The relationship between technology, structure, and freedom is thus an integral part of my practice and thinking. In this connection I will discuss ideas by the sociologist and philosopher Bruno Latour and the digital-studies scholar Aden Evens. Both value technology for its open-ended quality, that suggests multiple paths rather than providing determinate means to a particular end. As such, the computer becomes a tool for creating musical freedom. I will introduce the possible roles the computer might have as an autonomous improviser and as an interactive instrument in my discussion of *Voyager* by the composer, improviser, and researcher George Lewis and the writings of electronic musicians and researchers Robert Rowe and Simon Emmerson. Their suggested terminology establishes a distinct relationship between the freedom and fixity embodied in technology: a combination of the computer’s output as an autonomous improviser, as a responsive system which reacts to a (human) musician, and as a tool for producing pre-composed structures.

Alongside my four compositions, I will also bring notated or recorded works by other composers and improvisers into the discussion, which will help to broaden the context of the research. For example, free-improvisation duets from an album by the bass player Peter Kowald will shed light on the idea of improvisation as a dialogue between musicians, musical material, and freedom. I will focus on the self-organizing quality of the interactions within these duets as an example of musical freedom and emergent fixity. I will also reflect on musical examples I have performed myself, drawing conclusions from my experience as a player and reflecting on the role of freedom in these works.

The Structure of The Thesis

Each one of the four case studies presents a distinct perspective on the freedom-and-fixity axis:

- i. *Modo Recordar, Modo Olvidar* (for viola, contrabass, and computer) addresses the relation between structure and improvisation. How can the two be integrated in order to create a performance in which the improvisations form organic continuations of the composed ideas? As a way to integrate improvisation and composed structure, I will introduce in this chapter the idea of a flexible timeline.
- ii. *[Untitled, 2012]* (for bass and pre-recorded soundtrack) brings fixity into focus as a central compositional thread. Through the pre-recorded soundtrack, the idea of “total fixity” is considered. The existence of a fixed electronic timeline is thus complementary to that of the flexible timeline in *Modo Recordar, Modo Olvidar*. However, the question I will deal with in this chapter is how freedom can be woven around a fixed electronic timeline? In order to contextualize this problem, three other works for fixed media and live performance will be discussed: *Plex* by Agostino di Scipio (1991), *Bump* by Amnon Wolman (2005), and *Bokeh* by Janco Verduin (2014). I will discuss these works from the point of view of a player, having performed each of them several times. As such, an additional perspective, interpretation, is added to the research alongside composing.
- iii. *The Instrument* (an interactive electronic system, for any instrument(s) or sound source) focuses on the idea of the computer as a musical instrument, an interactive system, and an autonomous improviser. The central question in this chapter is how the concepts of freedom and fixity are embodied in this live-electronics composition.
- iv. In *hasBara* (for ensemble) the discussion will focus on free improvisation and on notation and improvisation as two contrasting elements. A comparison between this composition and *[Untitled, 2012]* can be made: while in the latter fixity is the main thread, the former highlights the significant role of freedom as a main thematic element around which the musical structure unfolds.

Each of the four case studies presents different relationships between freedom and fixity. Together, they form a multilayered investigation into possible correlations between these concepts, appearing at different stages of the musical process – while notating, performing and designing the electronics, during human-computer interaction, and so on. For this investigation to materialize, I have used texts, scores, and audio-video materials. The reader is invited to follow the path I have been forming – or, in fact, wandering – during the research, from one composition to another in chronological order.² This thesis reveals my journey as an ongoing oscillation between two channels of creativity, freedom and fixity, and as an

² Of course the reader can also move freely between the chapters – to read the composed text in an improvisational manner – establishing their own path between the various freedom-and-fixity musical perspectives.

investigation of the dynamic interrelationships between them: how they are mutually complementary rather than contradictory, each being inevitably present and integrated in the other. This thesis reveals my journey as an ongoing oscillation between two channels of creativity, freedom and fixity, and as an investigation of the dynamic interrelationships between them: how they are mutually complementary rather than contradictory, each being inevitably present and integrated in the other.

An overview of my artistic research path can be described as follows: *MRMO* was my earliest attempt to investigate how notation can shape improvisation, and how the latter can be integrated in a pre-composed musical form. In this initial experimental step I chose to use a particular mix between traditional notation and a more loose, graphical blueprint of the structure, by leaving large parts of the score blank and the timeline flexible. I tried out several options until I found a solution which seemed appropriate, in the sense that the score could present both improvisation and precomposed structure in a clear way. The way Hatzatz (the group with which I have been performing this work) worked with this composition – growing more and more free in their performance, and further “away” from the written score – led me to imagine alternative possibilities for notation: a much more detailed – “fixed” – approach (see the case study [*Untitled*, 2012]); or an opposite approach, using notation that is much more open as a result of abandoning the idea of a structural blueprint, and letting the musical structure emerge as an outcome of free improvisation rather than being directed by the score (see *The Instrument* and *hasBara*).

The function of the electronics in *MRMO* is to sample the musicians in real time and play processed sounds based on this sampled material. The computer is controlled by a performing musician (playing a MIDI keyboard), and, as such, the electronics cannot be regarded as an autonomous system but, rather, as a human-controlled instrument. During the preparation work on the computer part of *MRMO*, I was already imagining a more elaborate system that could allow the computer to demonstrate both responsive and autonomous features, thereby also embodying freedom and fixity by combining interactivity with the musicians and pre-programmed, computer-generated output.

In the next composition, [*Untitled*, 2012], I decided to work with a detailed score that would place different demands on the performing musician. [*Untitled*, 2012] was an experiment with a “high-resolution” approach to notation, to investigate a question with both artistic and theoretical dimensions: how can freedom exist in a thoroughly fixed musical environment? It was important to try and push myself towards the furthest possible point on the continuum between freedom and fixity by dealing with the idea of *absolute* fixity: a pre-recorded soundtrack that functions as a “hard-coded” structural element within the work, around which I could weave notational ideas that would create freedom for the performance. I tried to establish this kind of performative freedom at a musical “micro-level,” that is, as a rhythmic synchronization between the playing and the soundtrack.

In this case study, I show how the concepts of musical time scales and groove helped to establish an approach to notation that could indeed suggest freedom while simultaneously marking pre-composed details. The performing musician adapts their part to the fixed soundtrack by making rhythmical micro-

fluctuations. However, I tried to extend this idea so that it would enable more than just interpretive freedom, becoming instead an opportunity for an improvisation-based performance. In connection with this approach, I refer to the terms macro- and micro-freedom, as suggested by the philosopher Andy Hamilton.

With [*Untitled, 2012*], the process of experimentation through repeated performances is lacking, since it has been performed only once. Instead, my path of experimentation was formed here by my experiences as an interpreter of other composers' works. I elaborate on my experiences of playing three other works that, like [*Untitled, 2012*], include a fixed soundtrack and notated score. Playing these works has provided me with a chance to investigate the idea of micro-freedom. Each reveals a different approach to synchronization between score and soundtrack: either entirely free (in Amnon Wolman's *Bump*, in which the musician plays together with a 4-channel soundtrack but without any direct reference to it), "anchored" in several structural moments but free for the rest of the composition (in Agostino di Scipio's *Plex*), or in precise alignment (in Janco Verduin's *Bokeh*).

Performing these pieces, as well as discussing with the composers how they understand the role of freedom in their work, raised the need to develop my own ideas in another direction. My aim became to create a direct relation between the instrument's part and a soundtrack, and, at the same time, to provide the performing musician with enough space to stretch, twist, or play around with the material. The realization that freedom could exist also in such a supposedly strict environment, implied by the concept of micro-freedom, has thus shaped [*Untitled, 2012*].

The next piece I composed is called *The Instrument*. Here, freedom and fixity are embodied in computer code rather than in a notated score. The musical structure unfolds during a performance as a real-time interaction between the improvising musicians and the computer, and, as such, *The Instrument*'s structure is subject to a higher degree of unforeseenness than the previous two compositions. The computer code provides only a basic plan for the structure – mainly the order of sound events and certain responsive characteristics – so that the final result depends to a great degree on interaction with the musicians; possibilities for length, shape, density, and other characteristics of the music are in principle unlimited. My initial decision not to use a notated score liberated me from the obligation to render the musical ideas I imagined as graphic representation. Leaving out notation – a medium which was essential in the previous two works – meant I could now reach a more elaborate degree of structural freedom. Also, the concept of musical material – in *MRMO* referred to as local "style" or "idiomatic consistency" – does not exist here. The musicians explore the possibilities and limitations of the computer system rather than following a pre- or semi-determined path. Hence the performance pertains more to free improvisation than to a conventional interpretation of a notated work.

The Instrument marked a turning point in my working process: the computer system now became the main medium of composing (using the programming language SuperCollider). The tools I had been developing for several years (while working on *MRMO* and on [*Untitled, 2012*], and even earlier) in

order to be able to use the computer as a musical instrument were sufficient to form a solid compositional “vocabulary.” The role of the computer in *The Instrument* made me realize how essential the concept of a musical instrument could be: alongside agents such as composer, performer, score, and so on, the instrument plays a crucial role in investigating and (trans)forming relationships between freedom and fixity.

The evolution of *The Instrument* can be noticed on several levels: the repeated process of recording new samples (used for the real-time computer processing); the transformation of the musical structure (by adding newer samples or replacing older ones, and re-programming the code, thus implying new structural possibilities); the expansion of the responsivity of the computer system by adding new features, for example the idea of two operating modes – a direct mode, in which the computer triggers sounds in response to the performer’s audio input, and an indirect mode, in which the computer constantly emits sounds, their rate of occurrence being determined by the performer’s activity levels. The transformations of *The Instrument* occurred during the repeated performances, and according to the different circumstances each occasion implied: it was presented as an installation, a concert piece, and a free-improvisation set. The ideas of work-in-movement and the computer as musical instrument, the latter relating to the concept of technology, provided crucial abstractions with whose help I was able to reflect on freedom and fixity from several perspectives.

After having composed and performed *The Instrument* I received an invitation to compose a work, *hasBara*, for the ensemble [Musica Nova Consort](#). In the first version of *hasBara* the score included a part for live electronics (performed by me). However, here my ideas took yet another direction: a dialogue between solo musician and group, each developing their own path, oscillating back and forth between notation and improvisation. In this work I wanted to explore free improvisation as a musical manifestation or materialization of freedom, transcending my composed instructions – however “open” they could be – and inciting negotiations between supposedly “absolute” indeterminacy and composed material. Free improvisation thus started playing an active role as a thematic element within *hasBara*’s structure. In response to an invitation from another group of musicians (ensemble MUTU) I continued to develop these ideas, and created another version of the score. The interplay between free improvisation and pre-composed structure created a dynamic experience also on repeated performances. The evolution between the first version and its later version revealed a process of “stripping down” the score, starting from a more elaborate version in which there is a greater degree of pre-composed “intervention,” and ending with a more concise version (consisting only of a two-page score) relying more on decisions made by the musicians in real time to generate a musical structure. The development between the two versions revealed the path I traveled during the composing process, based as much on my experiences as a performing musician as on my experiences as a listener: in the final version (so far) I trusted that free improvisation, initially a less important element in this work, could also provide *hasBara*’s structure. In other words, the musical structures of both *hasBara* and *The Instrument* rely on free improvisation – a decision which I was not able to make in earlier works such as *MRMO*, even though in the latter the

process of “abandoning” the score (Hatzatz playing a free version of the structure) already revealed a similar approach.

The evolution between the four compositions presented in this thesis thus reveals a development in my thinking and working, regarding the nature of the concepts as well as their musical manifestations. However, to perceive the works merely as nodes on a research path would do injustice to the practice of music. The composer also has a responsibility for the works themselves, and not only for the evolution of artistic knowledge. What makes a work “complete”? What makes a composition “successful”? And what is the relation between artistic integrity and research? As will be clear by now, the main focus of this research is on the practice of composing with an emphasis on specific works written by myself and other composers, works intended to be played live. While creating them, composers take a certain responsibility for the musical act. To a certain extent, composers choose to foresee – or, better, to set in motion – a probable future, alongside the process of reflecting on past decisions by describing and discussing their artistic-research path.³

In this sense, my compositions provide a comprehensive working model of freedom and fixity and of the interaction between them. Creating “finished” works instead of experiments that are aimed only to raise questions is, for me, an essential goal. Without such works, musical practice would become meaningless, and artistic research would lose its solid ground. In other words, my contribution to knowledge should perhaps not be primarily evaluated on a theoretical-ontological level but rather on a practical level: proposing ways to put concepts into practice, however abstract the former may be, and working with ideas by others, thereby re-working them. As should already be clear from this Introduction, I have used several methods, several research strategies, to put these concepts into practice and to rework the ideas of others: a continuous (re)composing through an iterative process – making changes and adaptations between the various performances of a single work; using shifting perspectives in order to listen to my work both as an audience member and as a performing musician; creating feedback loops between theory and practice, the conceptual and artistic permanently affecting one another; evaluating and analyzing previous works in order to develop new ones.

However, as much as my work is committed to the realities and practicalities of musical practice, it can still pose questions regarding these concepts and ideas. In other words, although my direct concern is with compositional systems, this approach can provide insights at levels other than purely musical ones.

³ The relation between experimental thought and composition is described by Virginia Anderson, a scholar and practitioner of experimental music and free improvisation:

The point at which an experimental composition can be considered to be “complete” depends on the composer and his or her compositional method. Sometimes . . . the composition is notated before performance in almost a traditional manner. . . . Sometimes . . . the final composition presents the traces and activities themselves: a collection of research data to be collated, ‘written’, and released by performers as experimental colleagues. And in a few cases, such as the Scratch Orchestra Research Projects, performers, given only the topic, have to amass the traces and create the experimental activity themselves. (Anderson, 2013, p.65)

The fact that music can evoke artistic and theoretical challenges – questions and solutions, suggestions and assumptions, explorations and experimentations – as much as it can demonstrate tangible models for conceptual ideas, is an essential assumption, upon which this thesis in artistic research is based. The direct conclusions I will draw are concerned more with the “how to” of freedom and fixity, rather than with their “what is”: how improvisation might be integrated in a composed structure; how structural features might be notated together with their intrinsic potential for flexibility, augmentation, and opening up of unforeseen paths; how ideas might be transmitted to (improvising) musicians without restricting their real-time freedom.⁴ By allowing reflection on and through my experiences as a practitioner, artistic research is enabled to contribute in its own specific ways to theoretical discourses. By transposing my knowledge from a practical domain to a more academic one and back again, I hope to offer some new perspectives which can play a part in future discussions, taking into consideration the personal and collective responsibility for both freedom and fixity, with the potential to remodel the way we think about dialogue and exchange of information, not only in the musical domain but also in more general, creative processes and discourses of many kinds.

⁴ See for example, improviser/educator Stephen Nachmanovitch: “One rule that I have found to be useful is that two rules are more than enough” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 83).