

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Making Music in the Real World:
A Professional Practice Portfolio
and Reflective Commentary

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Abstract

This practice-as-research aims to explore the roles and working practice of a contemporary music practitioner. There are two elements included in the research: a musical portfolio and a written commentary. The creation of the musical portfolio is the primary way through which the critical and creative issues associated with studio-based, collaborative practices are explored. The written commentary addresses the fundamental research question that is: how does creativity take place in socially and technologically mediated contexts?

Using Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) systems model of creativity as a framework, the commentary aims to offer insight through reflective critique and observation of the roles I undertake during my collaborative practices. There will be particular reference to the evolution of my individual studio-based working methods (as an example of contemporary professional practice) and to the detailed and specific nature of collaboration as it occurs in varied and differentiated ways.

The main outcome of the practice-as-research is to offer further and deeper understandings of contemporary music practice and to show the interplay between the social, cultural, technological, architectural, musical and environmental forces in the writing and recording of new music.

Introduction

This is a practice-based PhD in composition, with 90% of the submission being recorded original musical works. The creation of the music is the main way that I have explored the critical and creative issues associated with studio-based, collaborative practices: the portfolio of works is essentially a professional practice portfolio and as such interrogates creative practice as contemporary, current, specific and situated. The accompanying commentary provides some context to the writing and recording processes used in the realisation of the works in the portfolio.

I have been a professional guitarist, composer, producer and teacher since graduating from university in 1999, performing extensively nationally and internationally, and working with musicians from the UK, Europe, USA and Australia. I have written, recorded and released 15 albums as a bandleader and a further 26 as co-writer or collaborator; I have also completed commissions for Arts Council England, British Council and Hepworth Wakefield. I am a Principal Lecturer in Popular Music at Leeds College of Music (2011 - present) and Tutor in Guitar for Popular Music at the RNCM (2015 - present), teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. I have delivered masterclasses at the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts, the Universities of Salford, Huddersfield and Hull, and am a Yamaha endorsed artist. In summary, I am a practitioner with established roots within both the music industry and academia.

The portfolio consists of musical works made for a number of professional projects broadly situated in a popular music context (a detailed list is given in Chapter 1 - Portfolio Introduction). To situate the creative practice that is at the heart of this PhD, this commentary comprises five sections:

- Chapter 1 - Portfolio Introduction: A list of the musical works submitted alongside the commentary.
- Chapter 2 - Situating Concepts: Key theoretical concepts that situate the practice and research. Models of my internal workflow will be presented here.
- Chapter 3 - Practical Contexts: Situating the works in relation to their broader field of practice by looking at the relationships and distinctions between existing works and my practice.
- Chapter 4 - Case Studies. Three case studies on works presented in the portfolio containing a reflective description of working methods to explore the roles undertaken, the adaptability of approaches and practical application of my internal workflow models.
- Chapter 5 - Conclusion: A summary of what was achieved, discovered, established and argued, plus potential directions for future research and practice-as-research.

The fundamental research questions addressed in the written element are: 1) How does creativity take place in socially and technologically mediated contexts? 2) What role(s) must I adopt - and how must I negotiate them – in order to facilitate successful outcomes? These questions are relevant to both my own work as a contemporary practitioner and as a teacher. They aim to give some clarity to the roles expected of a modern day musician given the advances in quality, quantity and affordability of home/mobile recording technology, combined with the demise of physical album sales and the traditional infrastructure of the record label industry. During the creation of the music, I adopted many different roles in a variety of

contexts, which is often the reality of creating recorded music in contemporary music practice. The need to be able to flip comfortably between performance, composition and production, to engage fully with skilled professionals from a variety of social and professional groups, and to work autonomously in a home studio and as part of a team in a large professional studio are all hallmarks of the variability and adaptability required of a contemporary practitioner.

All of the works in this portfolio are, in some way, collaborative (even those that initially appear to be solo endeavours). Collaboration, as it plays out in today's professional and technologically-rich context, is at the heart of my doctoral work. The term 'collaborate' (derived from the Latin 'col' together, and 'laborore' to work) 'denotes that combined labour in which the work of one person combines with, changes, complements or otherwise influences the work of another (or others) and is in turn influenced by it' (Clarke & Doffman, 2017:3). For this discussion, the juxtaposition of the notion of the lone, autonomous composer-genius set against the collaborative mode of working (that is so fundamental to my own practice) is instructive. As Born (2015) outlines the issue:

[Lydia Goehr's] study traces a constellation of interrelated changes that gathered pace across the nineteenth century, many of them conforming to the Weberian thesis of the progressive rationalization and autonomization of music (Weber 1958). They include the rise of the romantic principle that musical invention depended on self-expression of the individual composer-genius; the advent of a 'work-based practice' centred on the idea that musical works were perfectly finished and irreducible to any particular performance; the growth of heightened principles of precision in music notation and the vesting of unprecedented authority in the musical score; the rise of moral norms and legal codes that enshrined the composer's originality and the need to

protect him from plagiarism through intellectual property rights; a rigidification and hierarchization of the musical division of labour between composer, interpreter(s) and audience; and the crystallization of new forms of reception, in which concert-goers aspired to being silent, contemplative, motionless and worshipful in order to experience the truth and beauty of the work. (Born, 2015:142-43)

In the same article, Born (2015:142) counters this notion, describing music as a “distributed object that both condenses and is constituted by social relations, material and discursive mediations”.

The writing and production credits for the UK Top Ten at the time of writing provide compelling evidence that the Romantic notion of the lone composer-genius does not describe the reality of practice in today’s contemporary popular music.¹ All 10 tracks were written by collaborative teams and eight were produced by production teams, with the remaining two produced by a single producer. Whilst Born (2015) was discussing Classical music, the description of music as a ‘distributed object’ parallels the evidence of collaboration as the primary working method in the realisation of popular music found in the writing credits for the UK Top Ten.

Much has been written by sociologists and musicologists to evidence the nature of collaboration in the creative process. For example, Clarke and Doffman (2017:3) state that “the creative process is distributed spatially, temporally, technologically and socially in an endless variety of ways” (see also Sawyer, 2007; Sawyer & DeZutter, 2009; McIntyre & Morey, 2011; Bennett, 2012; Bates, 2012; Born & Barry, 2018). The insight that I can offer through reflective critique and

¹The UK top ten listings (2019). Available online: <https://www.officialcharts.com/charts/uk-top-40-singles-chart/> [Accessed 8/7/2019]. Details of writing and production credits were found through searching the tracks on the Wikipedia homepage (2019). Available online: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page [Accessed 10/7/2019]

observation of my own collaborative practices is in terms of the evolution of my individual working methods (as an example of contemporary professional practice) and the detailed and specific nature of collaboration as it occurs in varied and differentiated ways. Whilst this gives a singular perspective, I hope that the practice-as-research will offer further and deeper understandings of contemporary music practice and will show the interplay between the multiple forces in the writing and recording of new music.

Chapter 1.

Portfolio Introduction

The portfolio consists of works from my professional practice dating from 2016 to 2019. The submission is in recorded format and the table below is a list of the musical works in the portfolio, ordered chronologically.

All of the music included was created collaboratively. In order to calculate the length that my individual contribution accounts for in each track, I have taken the percentage of writing credit of each track as agreed with my publisher, Real World Works Limited, and claimed that percentage of the track's total length towards the portfolio submission.² In this way, I align my contribution and claim as an author with the legal framework pervasive in this musical field.

Also included in the table are the key human (musicians and engineers) and non-human ('the click') actors that I collaborated with on the tracks. The significance of the source of the click will become clearer in due course.

² For example, a track five minutes in length on which I have 40% writing credit would contribute two minutes to the portfolio.

Project	Track Title & Date	Track Length	Writing %	Length Claimed for Portfolio	Running Total	Click	Key Collaborating Musicians	Recording Engineer	Mix Engineer
1. Stuart McCallum	The Seventh Tree (2016)	5:55	100	5:55	5:55	Computer generated	Luke Flowers (drums)	Seadna McPhail, Stuart McCallum	Yvonne Ellis
2. The Breath	Child (2016)	5:18	40	2:07	8:02	Computer generated	Riognach Connolly (vocals), Luke Flowers (drums), John Ellis, (keyboards)	Patrick Phillips, Stuart McCallum	Tchad Blake
3. Stuart McCallum / Mike Walker – <i>The Space Between</i>	D1FA (2016)	4:40	50	2:20	10:22	Virtual tempo grid created from samples of live performance.	Mike Walker (guitar)	Patrick Phillips	Patrick Phillips
	D2FA (2016)	4:28	50	2:14	12:36	As above	Mike Walker (guitar)		
4. The Breath - <i>Let The Cards Fall</i>	Ditty (2017)	0:46	45	0:21	12:57	Mapped onto the live performance to add MIDI mapped effects in post-production.	Riognach Connolly (vocals), Luke Flowers (drums), John Ellis, (keyboards), Sam Vicary (bass)	Patrick Phillips	Patrick Phillips

Project	Track Title & Date	Track Length	Writing %	Length Claimed for Portfolio	Running Total	Click	Key Collaborating Musicians	Recording Engineer	Mix Engineer
4. The Breath - <i>Let The Cards Fall</i>	All That You Have Been (2017)	4:33	45	2:03	15:00	As above	As above	Patrick Phillips, Stuart McCallum	As above
	Let The Cards Fall (2017)	5:01	45	2:15	17:15	As above	As above	As above	As above
	Let It Calm You Down (2017)	5:58	45	2:41	19:56	As above	As above	As above	As above
	Trip The Switch (2017)	4:38	45	2:05	22:01	Computer generated	As above	As above	As above
	Untie Me Now (2017)	6:15	45	2:49	24:50	As above	As above	As above	As above
	Hide Out (2017)	4:54	45	2:12	27:02	Mapped onto the live performance to add MIDI mapped effects in post-production.	As above	As above	As above

Project	Track Title & Date	Track Length	Writing %	Length Claimed for Portfolio	Running Total	Click	Key Collaborating Musicians	Recording Engineer	Mix Engineer
4. The Breath - <i>Let The Cards Fall</i>	Will You Wait (2017)	4:03	45	1:49	28:51	As above	As above	As above	As above
	What You Owe (2017)	5:15	45	2:22	31:13	As above	As above	As above	As above
5. Stuart McCallum - <i>Solitude</i>	Alnmouth (2018)	1:14	100	1:14	32:27	None	None	Stuart McCallum	Patrick Phillips
	Saltburn (2018)	3:30	100	3:30	35:57	None	None	As above	As above
	Craster (2018)	3:04	100	3:04	39:01	None	None	As above	As above
	Newton (2018)	4:27	100	4:27	43:28	None	None	As above	As above
	Farne (2018)	6:08	100	6:08	49:34	None	None	As above	As above
6. Immix Ensemble - <i>Bold By Name, Bold By Nature</i>	III (2018)	5:06	50	2:33	52:07	Not in live performance. Initial writing sessions stretched to click to facilitate the writing of instrument parts.	Jennifer Johns (vocals)	Patrick Phillips	Stuart McCallum
	IV (2018)	4:09	50	2:04	54:11	Used in the writing process as drum loop	As above	As above	As above

Project	Track Title & Date	Track Length	Writing %	Length Claimed for Portfolio	Running Total	Click	Key Collaborating Musicians	Recording Engineer	Mix Engineer
						used as the 'seed' to bounce ideas off.			
6. Immix Ensemble - <i>Bold By Name, Bold By Nature</i>	V (2018)	4:36	50	2:18	56:29	As above	As above	As above	As above
	VI (2018)	4:33	50	2:16	58:45	Not in live performance. Initial writing sessions stretched to click to facilitate the writing of instrument parts.	As above	As above	As above
	VII (2018)	9:43	50	4:51	63:36	As above	As above	As above	As above
7. The Breath – <i>Only Stories</i>	Only Stories (2018)	3:53	45	1:45	65:21	None	Riognach Connolly (vocals)	Oli Jacobs	Oli Jacobs
	No You Keep It (2018)	4:31	45	2:02	67:23	None	As above	As above	As above
	Boat Song (2018)	4:47	45	2:09	69:32	None	As above	As above	As above

Project	Track Title & Date	Track Length	Writing %	Length Claimed for Portfolio	Running Total	Click	Key Collaborating Musicians	Recording Engineer	Mix Engineer
8. Stuart McCallum - Solitude Part ii	Corry Strand (2019)	3:44	100	3:44	73:16	None.	None	Stuart McCallum	Patrick Phillips
	Inland (2019)	4:10	100	4:10	77:26	None	None	As above	As above
	When The Fog Clears (2019)	3:23	100	3:23	80:49	None	None	As above	As above
	Hide and Seek (2019)	2:12	100	2:12	83:01	None	None	As above	As above
	The Wanderer (2019)	5:17	100	5:17	88:18	None	None	As above	As above
9. Stuart McCallum - Music for Imaginary Film	Piece 1 (2019)	2:38	70	1:50	90:08	Mapped onto the live performance to add MIDI mapped effects in post-production	Mark Slater (piano)	Patrick Phillips, Stuart McCallum, Mark Slater	Patrick Phillips
	Piece 2 (2019)	2:51	30	0:51	90:59	As above	As above	As above	As above
	Piece 3b (2019)	1:29	70	1:02	92:01	As above	As above	As above	As above

Project	Track Title & Date	Track Length	Writing %	Length Claimed for Portfolio	Running Total	Click	Key Collaborating Musicians	Recording Engineer	Mix Engineer
9. Stuart McCallum - <i>Music for Imaginary Film</i>	Piece 3c (2019)	1:54	70	1:20	93:21	Computer generated	As above	As above	As above
	Piece 4 (2019)	5:15	70	3:40	97:01	Mapped onto the live performance to add MIDI mapped effects in post-production	As above	As above	As above
	Piece 5 (2019)	2:31	70	1:46	98:47	As above	As above	As above	As above
	Piece 6 (2019)	3:22	30	1:00	99:47	As above	As above	As above	As above
	Piece 7 (2019)	3:15	70	0:52	100:39	As above	As above	As above	As above
	Piece 9 (2019)	2:21	70	1:39	102:28	As above	As above	As above	As above
	Piece 10 (2019)	3:55	70	2:45	105:13	Computer generated in certain sections, otherwise mapped onto the live performance to add MIDI mapped effects in post-production.	As above	As above	As above

Chapter 2.

Situating Concepts

The key model that I will draw on to situate my research and provide a framework for the case studies in Chapter 4 is the systems model of creativity by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997). Csikszentmihalyi asserts that creativity results from the dynamic functioning of a system composed of three elements:

- Domain – “which consists of a set of symbolic rules and procedures. Domains are in turn nested in what we usually call culture, or the symbolic knowledge shared by a particular society” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997:27-28);
- Field – “which includes all the individuals who act as gatekeepers to the domain. It is this field that selects what new works of art deserve to be recognised, preserved and remembered” (1997:28);
- Individual – “Creativity occurs when a person, using the symbols of a given domain has a new idea, and when this novelty is selected by the appropriate field for inclusion into the relative domain” (1997:28).

Thus, creativity occurs through the interaction of the *Domain*, *Field* and *Individual* - each element of the system is fundamental, with no one element being more significant or less important than another.

In the writing and production of recorded music, the symbolic rules and procedures contained within the *Domain* comprise many components: the architectural spaces built to house recording studios; the technologies used in the capture and manipulation of audio; and all pre-existing musical works and ideas. Contemporary practitioners must have a knowledge of: musical elements such as melody, harmony,

rhythm, form and instrumentation contained within the pre-existing musical works that have been accepted by the *Field*; digital audio workstations (DAWs) and plug-ins that effect and manipulate recorded audio; techniques for using the studio space and equipment to achieve the required sonic characteristics – for example, knowing the characteristics of microphone type, polar pattern and placement. Pierre Bourdieu (1996:235 cited in McIntyre, 2008:3, emphases in original) states that the “heritage accumulated by collective work presents itself to each agent as a space of possibles, that is, as an ensemble of probable *constraints* which are the condition and counterpart of a set of *possible uses*”. I would also argue that the technology used to distribute recorded music to consumers contributes to the idea of constraints that Bourdieu invokes: for example, the time limit for tracks to fit onto a side of vinyl or to be considered for radio play, or the stylistic aesthetics required to fit into listener behaviour patterns mediated through playlist curation on digital streaming sites act to shape the resultant structure of the music.

The *Field* comprises the social organisations, groups and individuals involved (in this case) in the writing, recording and commercialisation of music. This complex network of experts exerts influence during all stages of the production of the music – each person or group involved in the process may stand proxy for the *Field* at different times. Csikszentmihalyi describes the *Field* as “made up of experts in a given domain whose job involves passing judgement on a performance” (1997:42). In relation to recorded music, these experts include the composer, musicians performing the music, studio engineers, mix/mastering engineers, artist management, record label staff, publishers, PR company, booking agents, concert promoters, radio DJs, music journalists, academics, and the audience/consumers. The musical works in this portfolio submission have all been released by respected record labels or commissioned by

national arts funding bodies. As such, they have been proven to be accepted by the *Field* and exist as part of the *Domain*.

The *Individual* is the person responsible for generating the novelty that is accepted into the *Domain* by the *Field*. Through their interaction with the *Field* and *Domain*, they find themselves in a “stream of thought and action that started before they were born” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997:46). McIntyre (2008:3) describes what the *Individual* brings to the system of creativity as “nature, nurture and access”. All of their individual attributes, such as previous life experiences, their gender, social status and any particular biological traits are expressed, along with many other characteristics that would lead them to attain knowledge of particular *Domains* (and not others), and allow them to engage more easily within particular *Fields* (and not others).

The wider cultural context that creative individuals exist and work within has been recognised by practitioners as well as academics. Electronic music composer Brian Eno coined the term ‘scenius’ (a blend of scene and genius) to describe how groups of people as opposed to lone geniuses generate creative ideas. “Scenius is the communal version of genius. I’m interested in situations that produce good outcomes rather than individuals that produce good outcomes. We ought to be thinking more consciously in terms of how those fruitful communal creative scenes work” (Eno, 2009a).³ The *Field* case study in Chapter 4 looks in detail at the influence of the creative ecology surrounding selected works from the portfolio.

In Csikszentmihalyi’s (1997) model, all work is considered to be created collaboratively: the *Individual* cannot exist outside the culture of which they are a part. Collaboration is a fundamental background fact – all creativity is informed by the complex weave of existing artefacts, memories, experiences, objects, influences – and

³ Eno observed that there were ‘very fertile scenes involving lots and lots of people ... who created a kind of ecology of talent. And out of that ecology arose some wonderful work. Scenius is the intelligence of a whole ... operation or group of people.’ B. Eno, *Synthtopia*, (2009b). Available online: <https://www.synthtopia.com/content/2009/07/09/brian-eno-on-genius-and-scenius/> [accessed 10/07/19]

in this sense, collaboration does not require co-presence. However, in the process of realising music as a recorded artefact, collaboration is also significantly founded upon co-present (as well as non co-present) interactions with a number of groups of skilled professionals. The contributing elements to the realisation of this portfolio were the composition and arrangement, the musical performance(s), the studio environments and technologies, the editing and arrangement of final takes, the mix and mastering processes, and the interaction with music industry professionals.

It is unnecessary (and beyond the scope of this commentary) to consider all possible variables in relation to the musical portfolio. To contextualise the musical works submitted, I have mapped the three stages from Csikszentmihalyi's systems model to my own practice. The following definitions explain how these stages correspond to key elements of my practical working environment(s) as a recording artist in the 21st century:

- *Domain* – the performance spaces and technological recording environments in which the recording of the music took place. These environments are the focus of this stage in the commentary as the 'affordances' (Gibson, 1979) they offer are primary influencing factors on both the musical performances and sonic characteristics of the recordings in the portfolio.
- *Field* – the social groups that surround my working practice, focusing on specific individuals within these groups that exerted influence on the direction of the music during its development and the musicians collaborating in the projects contained in the portfolio.

- *Individual* – I am positioned in this stage throughout the commentary.⁴

2.1 Producer-Composer-Performer (PCP) Model

In the creation of the music for the portfolio I adopted three distinct but interacting roles, all of which co-exist within the creative space of – and influence decisions made by – the *Individual*. These are: *Producer*, *Composer* and *Performer*. Within this tripartite separation of roles, the role of *Producer* may be considered to have an over-arching influence. The decisions made by the *Producer* inform the choice of elements from the *Domain* – i.e. the recording spaces and technologies used, and the stylistic area(s) from which to draw musical influences and ideas – which establish the context in which the music is created by the *Composer* and *Performer*. Mike Howlett (2012:1) describes a producer as the “nexus between the creative inspiration of the artist, the technology of the recording studio, and the commercial aspirations of the record company”. Nyssim Lefford (2015) describes how a producer facilitates the process:

Each expert involved needs information to guide how to perform. To facilitate and organise a production is to facilitate and organise the transference of information, thereby enabling human-to-human, human-to-machine or human-to-artifact interaction. In this arrangement, one expert, the producer, is explicitly tasked with co-ordinating contributions and collaboration among participating experts. (Lefford 2015:1)

As *Producer*, I was the instigator of the musical output, the social mediator between different groups of skilled professionals, the organiser of facilities, the link to

⁴ It is important to note that all of the musical collaborators in the portfolio also exist as *Individuals*, within their own *Field* and *Domain* of practice. The focus of this commentary is my *Individual* working practices within my *Field* and *Domain* of practice.

the funding body, and the key decision maker, from initial musical idea to finished recording.

In his PhD thesis, Adam Martin (2014) developed a tripartite model to explore the working methods of music producers. The model focuses on three skill sets required for music production: technical, social, and musical. The model is dynamic, with each skill requiring greater or lesser prominence during the various contexts and stages of the writing and recording processes. In a broad sense I propose that technical skill relates to Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) *Domain*, in that it is essential to the production of music is an understanding of: the musical elements contained within the culture and pre-existing works; the technologies and architectural spaces that mediate the performance of the music and the recorded product, and the technologies that facilitate the consumption of the music. More specifically, social skill relates to the *Field*, in that mediation between different groups of skilled professionals is crucial in the production of music. Musical skill relates to the *Individual* in that I was the artist creating the music by performing during the compositional and/or recording processes. I will use these three areas – *Domain* (technical), *Field* (social) and *Individual* (musical) – to categorise the case studies in Chapter 4.

Similar to Martin's (2014) tripartite model I propose a tripartite model for use within this research to represent the three roles that I undertook in the creation of the music in the portfolio and the connections between them. The choice of the distinct terms – *Producer*, *Composer*, and *Performer* – is the result of a critical interrogation of my musical practice on my part as the researcher. The model is a tool used to support my argument that the production of music as a recorded artefact involves a broad range of technical, social and musical skills spanning different modes of musical activity.

The *Producer-Composer-Performer* (PCP) model (Figure 1) allows exploration of the comparative importance of each of the roles and how their importance may shift

according to circumstance. Each of the roles requires multitasking and as such, the model is not intended as a static representation of a rigid working practice. Instead, it should be regarded as a way to represent how the importance of each role may change dependent on context and the demands of the particular task at hand.

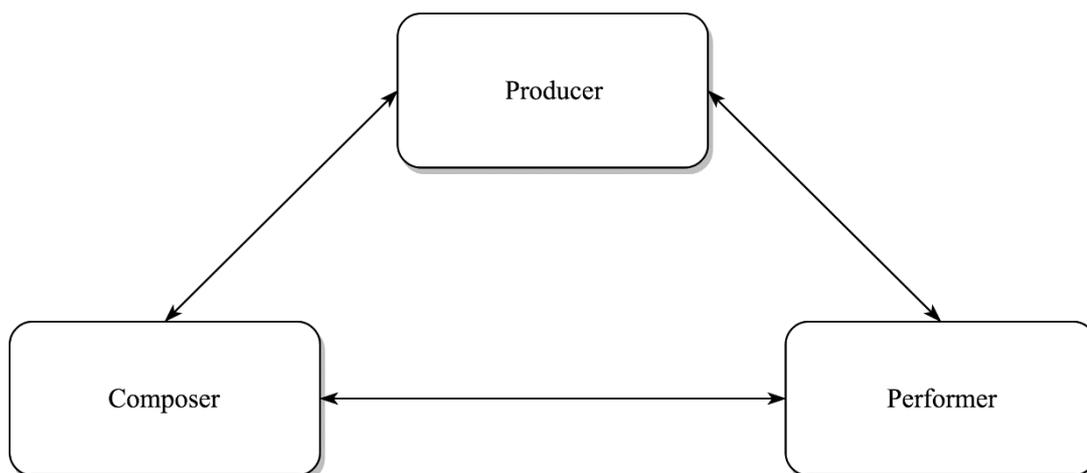


Figure 1. The *Producer-Composer-Performer* (PCP) model

Given the highly fluctuant nature of these roles, the PCP model should be viewed as dynamic - continually adjusting to and representative of different working environments and musical contexts. Considering the dynamic and shifting nature of the model, I suggest that my overall role in the creation of the music is to balance the tasks of these three nodes effectively according to circumstance. Each of the works in the portfolio demands and demonstrates different weightings of the three constituent elements of the model and, therefore, of my practice. The PCP model will be used throughout the commentary as a tool to explore my work as the *Individual* (in relation to Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) model) in the creation of the music in the portfolio (Figure 2).

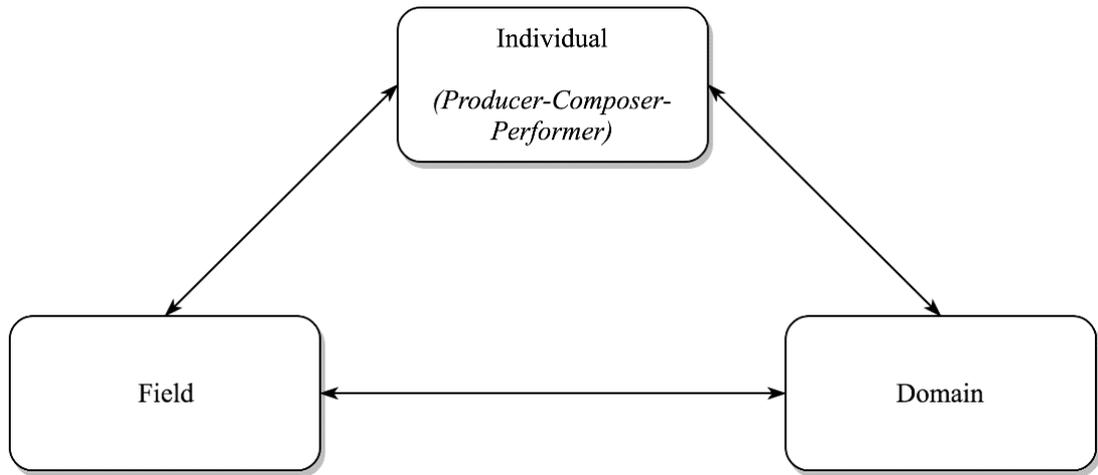


Figure 2. The *Producer-Composer-Performer* as the *Individual* in Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) system model of creativity.

The PCP and Csikszentmihalyi (1997) models will be used in the case studies in Chapter 4 to explore how my role fluctuates between that of *Producer*, *Composer* and *Performer* throughout the creative process.

2.2 Workflow Models

In this section I will look at existing models of the creative process in music composition and recording, and propose my own model as an extension of these, for use in this study, to allow me to critically engage further with my working practice in detail. In his 2012 article, Joe Bennett proposes the 'stimulus-evaluation' model (Figure 3) for collaborative songwriting teams. The stages (stimulus, approval, adaptation, negotiation, veto and consensus) are "non-linear and interacting" (Bennett, 2012:155).

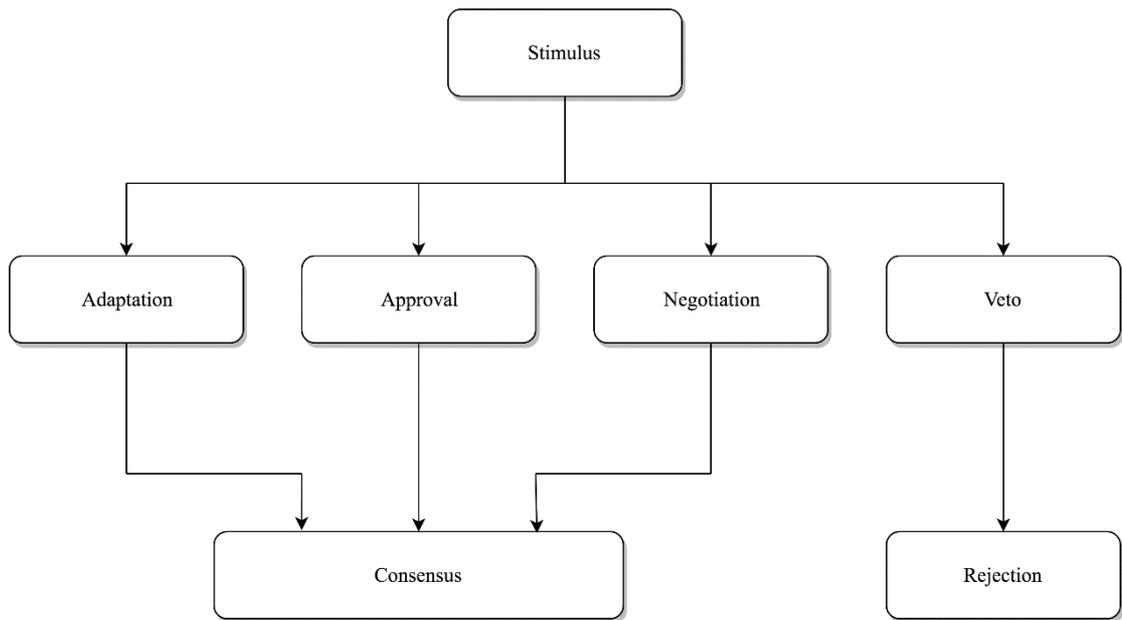


Figure 3. ‘Stimulus evaluation’ model. Bennett’s (2012) model for analysing collaborative songwriting teams

The stimulus in Bennett’s model could be “a chord sequence, melodic phrase, audio sample or drum loop” and is then submitted for “evaluation by the collaborative team” (2012:155). The stimuli recur throughout the writing process as “collaborators continually generate and evaluate new ideas” (2012:155). The collaborative team processes the stimulus with four different potential outcomes: 1) approval allows the idea to pass through the filter unchallenged; 2) adaptation requires the stimulus to be changed until approved or vetoed; 3) negotiation requires one or more of the collaborative team to argue a case for the stimulus to be accepted; and, 4) veto leads to the rejection of the stimulus.

My internal workflow method (Figure 4) is similar to Bennett’s (2012) six-stage model. It intends to assist the understanding of instances of my working practice at any stage, from initial idea to completed piece, and within any of the PCP roles. While this model is derived from a critical reflection of my own *Individual* practice, its elements and structure should be broadly applicable to others working in similar *Fields* of

creativity. Unlike Bennett’s (2012) model, the collaborative element in relation to this model (contained in the works in this portfolio and described in the case studies in Chapter 4) comes not from a collaborative songwriting team. Instead it is from my perspective as the *Individual* during the creation of music, and the interplay between the three roles of *Producer*, *Composer* and *Performer* that I undertake. This three-part interaction underpins all aspects of my creative work – all roles are present in all decisions, although their prominence varies dynamically.⁵

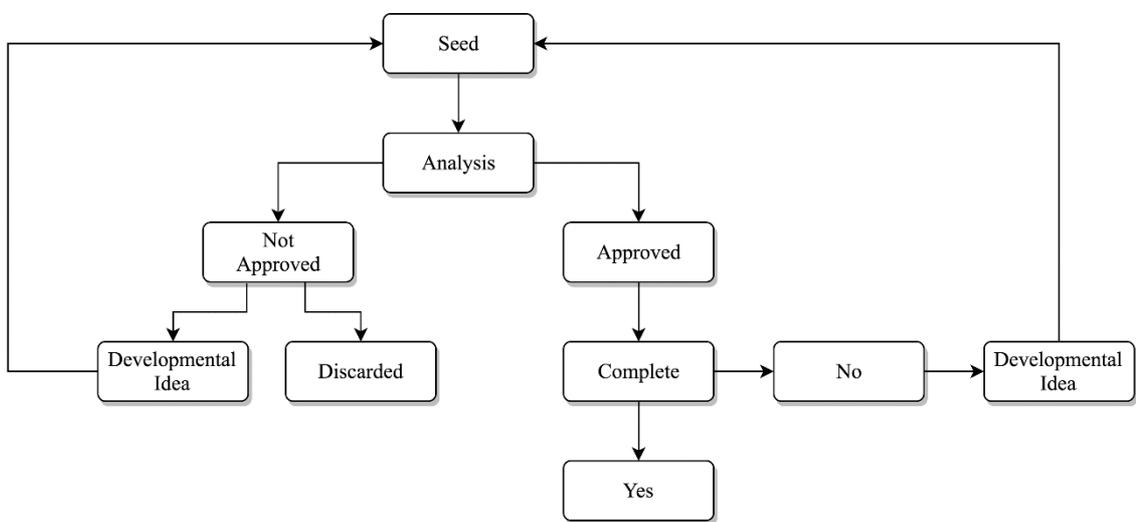


Figure 4. Internal workflow model.

Each stage of this model interacts directly with each of the roles in the PCP model during my decisions as the *Individual* throughout the creative process as depicted in Figure 5.

⁵ Collaborators will also inhabit one or more of the PCP roles during the creation of the music depending on circumstances, but they are acting in their own capacity as *Individuals* in this regard.

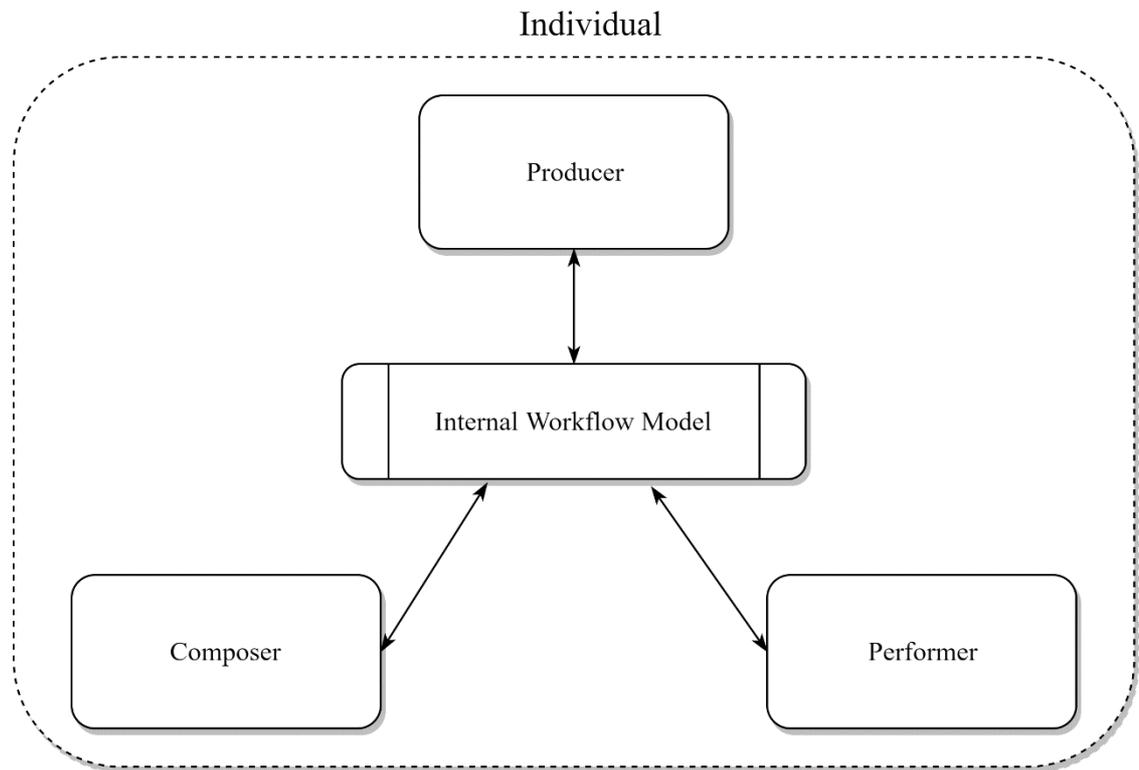


Figure 5. The interaction of the PCP and Internal workflow models within the *Individual*.

In the internal workflow model, a seed is generally created by the *Performer* (although musical, contextual and technological ideas can also be considered as seeds and created by the *Producer* and/or *Composer*), before being analysed, approved, developed, discarded or deemed complete by the *Producer* and/or *Composer* roles. As an example of the model in practice, a seed might be created by the *Performer* (or *Performers* in a group context that I as the *Individual* am a part) and analysed by the *Producer* for suitability within the context of the recording. The kind of analysis needed will vary depending on the stage in the writing and recording processes that the seed is representing (e.g. a harmonic analysis of a chorus section in relation to the verse section, or a structural analysis of how the section changes could be performed more clearly). However, the broad framework that the *Producer* will analyse the seed in – i.e. the intended musical and sonic aesthetic of the particular album/project – will remain constant during the creation of that specific body of work. If the seed is not approved or

discarded, or approved but deemed incomplete, the *Composer* suggests a developmental idea, which would in turn become a new seed. This cycle iterates until the idea is deemed complete.

Mark Slater (2015) proposes a fractus of creativity, suggesting a three-stage model (gestation, validation and maturation) which exist as part of a “fractal stage model” (2015:17) to describe how creative ideas unfold. Just as fractals are identical in all scales, Slater describes how the three stages he proposes are “replicated at every stage of the creative process”, cascading through “all levels of creative endeavour” (2015:18). Similarly, the seed in this model could be of any size and relative importance to the overall piece: an initial melodic fragment; a harmonic structure; a draft of the entire work; a choice of technology such as guitar, microphone or sequencing software; the feel/groove of the piece; the dynamic contour of a section; the choice of performer to interpret the piece; existing repertoire. Thus, as in Slater’s (2015) model, the internal workflow method can be applied across all scales of musical work – from a single fragment to a completed piece of recorded music.

Chapter 3.

Practical Contexts

In this chapter I will describe the practical contexts in which the recordings for the portfolio took place, with particular reference to the PCP model. The overview I will give is very much from my perspective – whilst this may be limited in its approach in terms of the collaborative environment in which the creation of the music often took place, this is necessary to give insight into my working practice as a contemporary practitioner.

How musical works unfold over time may, from a distance, appear neat and ordered, although the reality involves a much more messy and unpredictable unfolding of events. There were countless iterative steps in the process of writing and recording which would be impossible to describe in detail. However, using Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) three categories as a framework, it is possible to look at some elements within the broader context in which the music was created, the influence that these factors had, and how I directed the process at each stage. For example:

- *Domain* – the performance spaces and technological recording environments that were used in the recording of the music;
- *Field* – the musical collaborators and the wider social groups within my professional practice that influenced the creation of the music;
- *Individual* – the *Producer, Composer, Performer* roles that I undertake within each stage of the writing and recording processes.

These three categories will be used to contextualise the different recording environments inaugurated throughout the production of the portfolio material.

3.1 Domain

The *Domain*, in relation to the musical works in the portfolio, includes all of the architectural spaces and technologies used in the creation of the music, as well as all pre-existing musical works and ideas. As discussed previously, it is not possible to examine in detail every aspect of the *Domain* in this commentary. Therefore, I have opted to prioritise the physical spaces used in the recording of the music in the portfolio with particular reference to my role as *Producer*, as well as how this role varied in different working environments. In the *Domain* case study in Chapter 4, I explore how my interaction with the digital recording technology has developed during the research and the resulting impact this change in relationship has had on the music created.

The studio recordings for the portfolio took place in a variety of settings: purpose built recording studios (Rosehill and Airtight studios in Manchester, Duality Studio in Hull, and the Big Room/Wood Room at Real World Studios in Box); and spaces using a mobile recording studio setup (my home studio, Studio 7 at the RNCM in Manchester, and the Chapel and Middleton Hall at the University of Hull). The Immix Ensemble *Bold By Name, Bold By Nature* (2018) recordings were part of a live concert at St George's Hall in Liverpool. The primary reason for the choice of spaces used was the sonic qualities they offered – they “have a sound, a vibe” (Bates, 2012:1). A host of other reasons, including availability (of both the studio and the musicians), the engineers based at the studios, geographical location and financial cost were also influencing factors. Each of these architectural spaces impacted on the music recorded within them, in terms of the sonic imprint they had on the audio and the effect on the social groups working within them (Bates, 2012:2).

In the professional, purpose-built studios (Airtight, Rosehill and Real World) a recording engineer was present who had knowledge of the acoustic characteristics of the

spaces and microphone types/placement, and was responsible for setting up and adjusting headphone levels and running the Pro Tools sessions. As in Clarke and Doffman's (2017) description of collaboration – "the work of one person combines with, changes, complements or otherwise influences the work of another (or others)" (2017:3) – each engineer's imprint on the sonic qualities of the audio captured was considerable. Their choice of microphone and its position, and how they processed the audio (through EQ and compression) all affected the sound of the recorded audio. In these purpose built studio spaces the control room, where the engineer and producer monitored the sound, was separated from the performance space by glass – this separation has an impact on the interaction between the social groups of musicians/performers and engineers/technicians (Williams, 2007). A key function in my role as *Producer* was to mitigate between the two social groups and ensure a relaxed and well-paced working atmosphere.

In the spaces using a mobile recording setup I needed to undertake the additional role of recording engineer (choosing and placing microphones, positioning the instruments within the room, setting up headphones and adjusting the mixes within each performer's headphones, and operating the Pro Tools session). In preparation for this, at the start of my practice-as-research, I spent time experimenting with microphone choice and placement within these spaces to better understand their acoustic characteristics. This experimentation was informed by knowledge gained through working with professional recording engineers and as such is an example of non co-present collaboration. When using the mobile studio setup there was no physical separation between the performer(s) and engineer/ *Producer* – this lack of constraint of "lines of sight" (Bates, 2012:3) gave more immediacy to the social interactions within the recording process. Direct physical communication between the *Producer* and performer of subjects such as musical ideas, headphone level adjustment, and small delays due to

organising files/setting up new tracks within Pro Tools, was possible, as opposed to the *Producer* communicating with the performer from the control room via the engineer through headphone talkback, as would be the case in a purpose-built studio environment. This direct human contact allowed for more natural communication between me and the studio musicians, but demanded that I focused on many additional technological and musical aspects.

3.2 Field

There are many different social groups in my professional working practice: musicians, recording/mix/mastering engineers, record labels, management, venue owners, promoters, DJs, audience members, academics and students. In the *Field* case study in Chapter 4 I will describe the specific social groups who influenced the creation of the two solo guitar albums, *Solitude* (2018) and *Solitude Part ii* (2019). The focus here will be on the musicians that I collaborated with on the other recordings in the portfolio, the method of collaboration and how this relates to the internal workflow method (Figure 4) and PCP model (Figure 1).

All the musicians involved are long-time friends and collaborators. Through growing up together musically within a scenius (Eno, 2009a), our musicalities are entwined through years of common experience, similar subjective tastes in music and our professional working lives. As such, there is an interpersonal, dynamic complexity that feeds into the music making. As the *Producer* of the music I am able to guide the direction of the development of musical ideas and performance in a number of ways: by giving guidance as to the overall context of the music being recorded (this could be as broad as the sonic qualities of the genre area, to the tuning of a snare drum in a particular section); and by analysing what is happening in real-time and suggesting new musical ideas (both verbally and through musical suggestions), which via a shared

musical language the musicians will follow by adapting what they are playing. I am also able to express my approval (or not) of musical suggestions and/or performances through the way I play in the moment within the ensemble and in my use of body language and other non-verbal cues.

In relation to the internal workflow model, when working in collaboration with other musicians the model remains effectively the same, although the seed instigating workflow can be either internal (me) or external (other musicians), as well as a combination of the two. When considering who to collaborate with on a project, I (as the *Producer*) choose musicians whose subjective tastes and performance styles I feel are most aligned with the context/genre. This group of musicians, in which I am included, will provide seeds that I will analyse (as the *Producer /Composer*). Depending on the method of collaboration, the '*Performer*' creating the seed ideas could be a full band or any number of permutations of the musicians in each project, spontaneously improvising ideas through a collective stream of individual consciousness. In such a situation, as the bandleader (and the *Individual* in relation to Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) model) I am able to steer the direction of the music by analysing what is happening in real-time and suggesting new musical ideas which, through a shared improvising language that has evolved over decades of making music together, the other musicians will follow by adapting what they are playing.

3.3 Individual

The focus of this section is to critically analyse the distinct stages of creating recorded music within my own practice in relation to the PCP model, in order to give an overview of my general process. There are five stages during the creation of recorded music in my working practice: creation of seed, development and orchestration, recording, post-production and mixing/mastering. There is a sense of chronology within

this order, although this is not always the case, with numerous stages of review and iteration often present between stages. Figure 6 gives an overview of the stages and the cyclical nature of the processes.

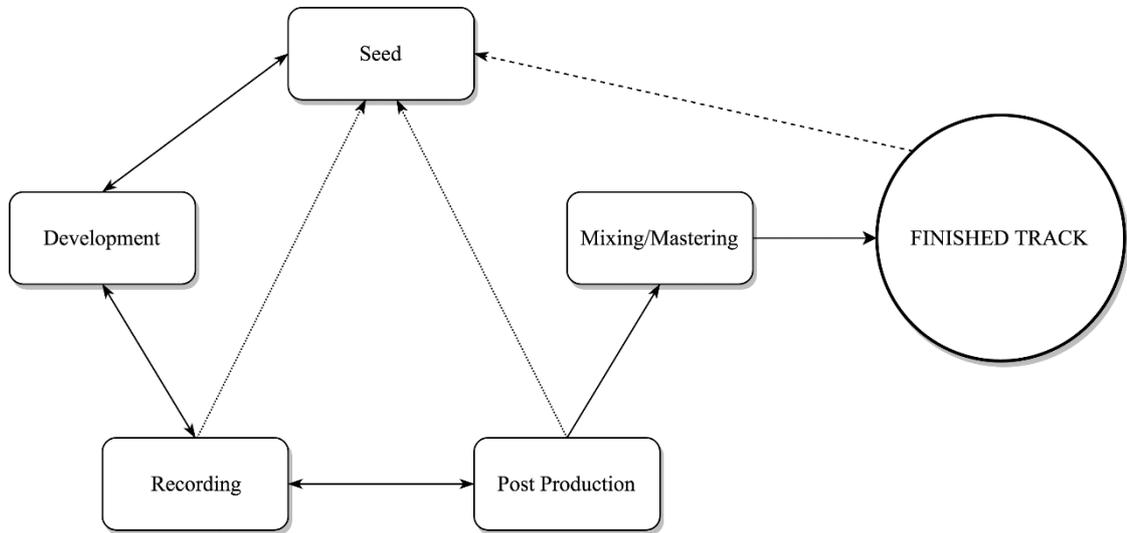


Figure 6. Overview of the cyclical stages. The five cyclical stages of realising a recorded musical work

Figure 7 incorporates the PCP and internal workflow models to show the interaction I have as the *Individual* with the five cyclical stages. The following sub-chapters elucidate the tasks undertaken at each stage of the five stages of the realisation process; rather than provide an exhaustive list of every single event ensued, they afford a holistic overview, and examine how PCP role interaction occurs – and differs – at each stage in the music making process. It is important to note that the tasks outlined below can be applied to the variety of settings in which I work to create music: solo or collaborative projects based in either a purpose built or mobile recording studio.

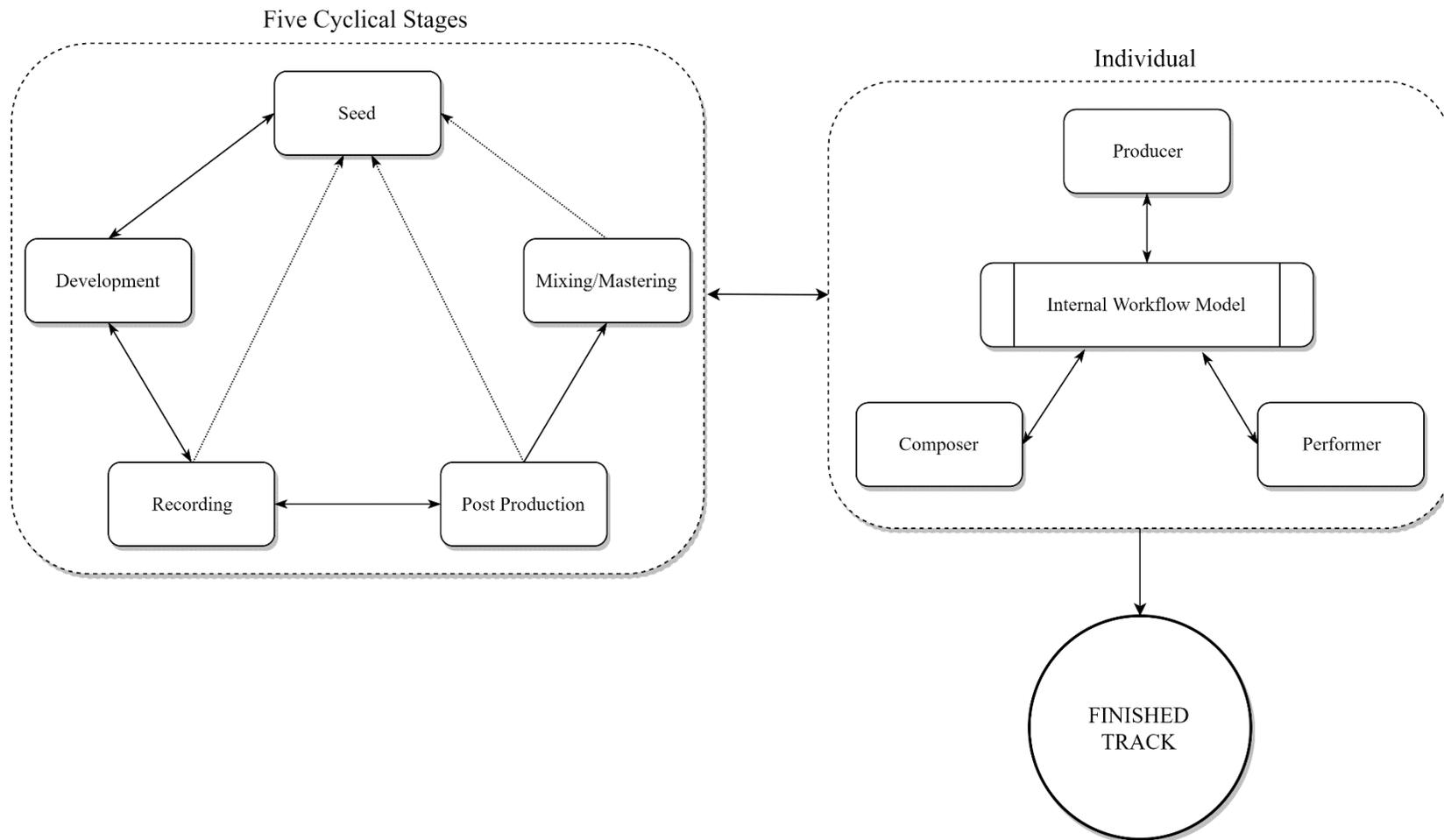


Figure 7. The interaction of the *Individual* with the five cyclical stages in the creation of the music.

3.3.1 Seed

The seed represents the idea that is under consideration. As in the internal workflow model (Figure 4) and Slater's (2015) fractus of creativity, the seed is an idea to be fed into the model and its size is variable. This includes elements such as melodic/harmonic/rhythmic content, lyrical narrative, structure, mood and dynamic shape. For example, a melodic fragment that serves as the start of a piece such as the first four bars of the main theme (1:03-1:08) of 'The Wanderer' (Figure 18), or a finished track which generates an idea for a new piece such as 'Fog Lane Park' as described in section 4.2.2.⁶

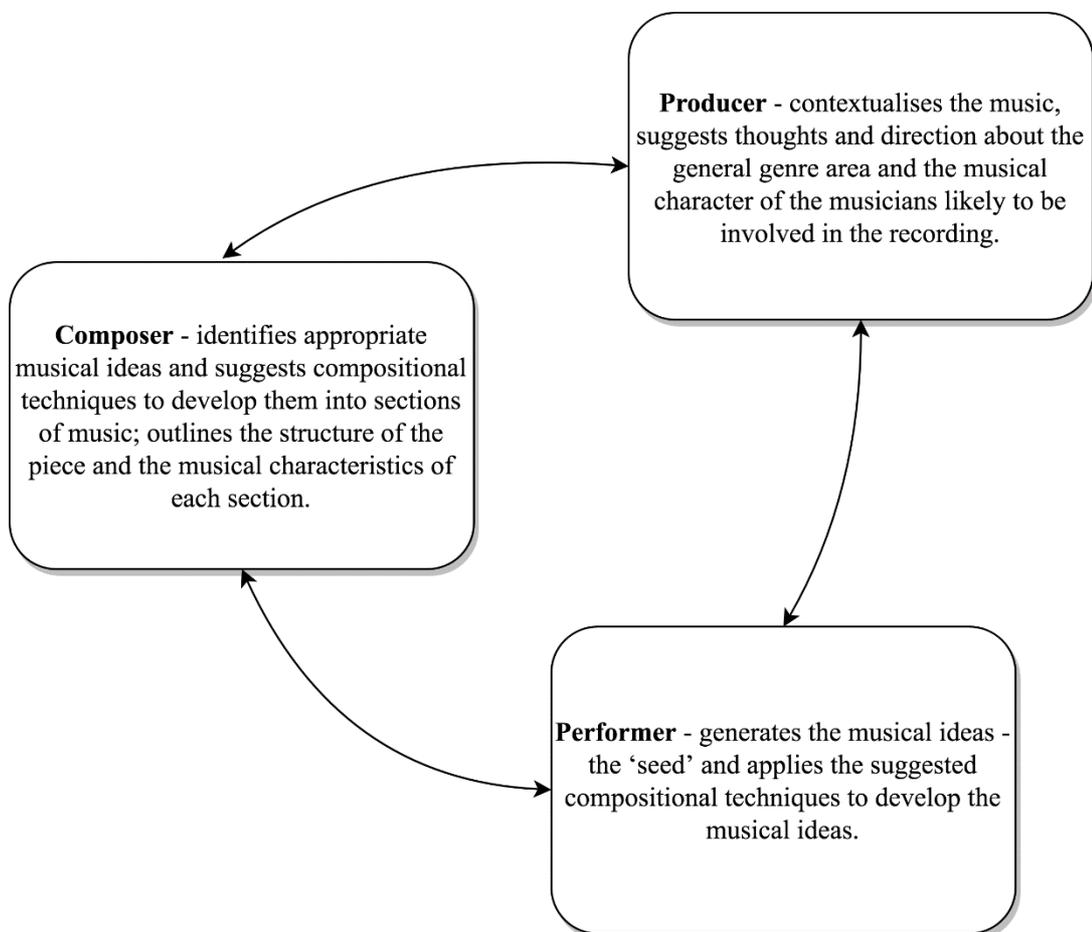


Figure 8. Seed.

⁶ S. McCallum, *Fog lane park* (2006). Available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbTqkRk7fCo> [Accessed 01/08/19]

3.3.2 Development and Orchestration

The development and/or orchestration of the seed idea(s) takes place in this stage. The term orchestration can be interpreted in different ways depending on the context. For example, writing orchestral parts from a guitar score such as 3:15-3:30 in the Immix Ensemble piece ‘V’, or developing textural ideas using both acoustic and electronic elements, such as the addition of delay in the introduction section (0:00-0:30) of ‘The Seventh Tree’. In a collaborative setting other musicians may be involved in the development of the music at this stage.

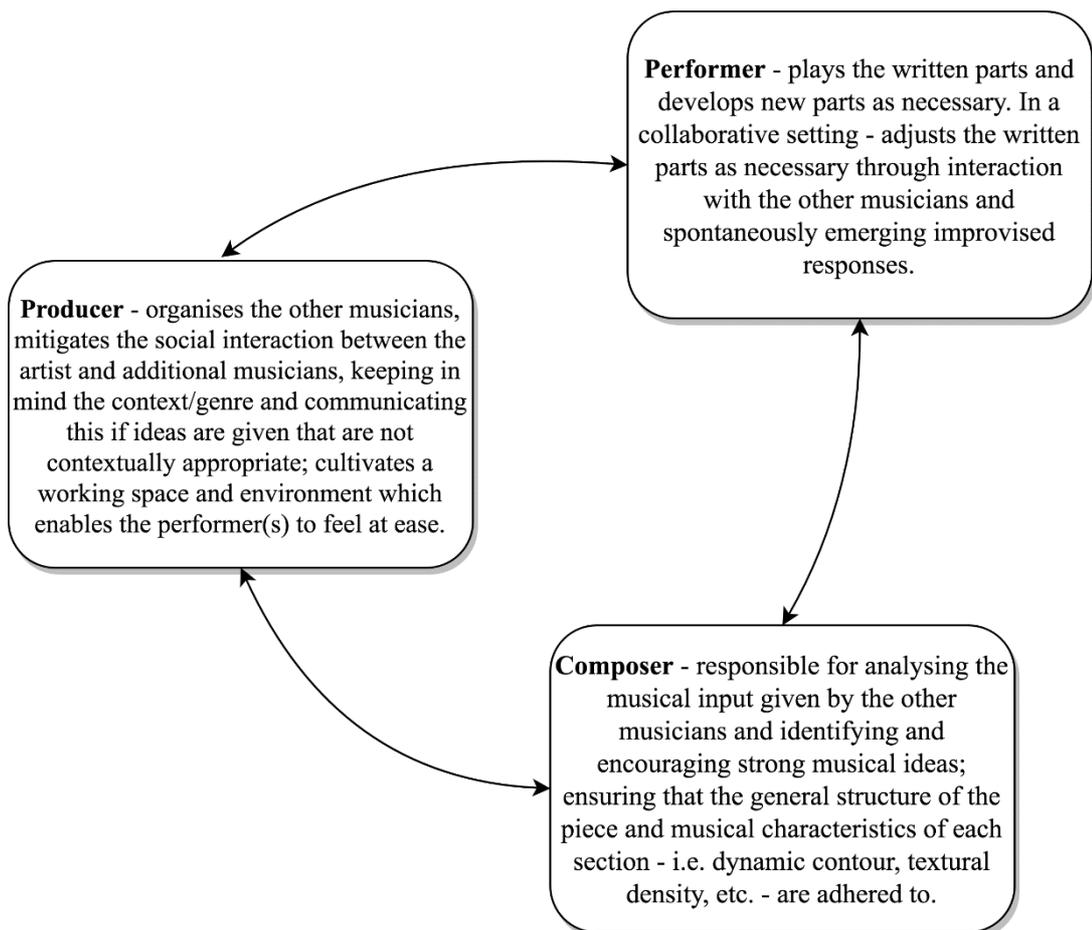


Figure 9. Development and orchestration.

3.3.3 Recording

The recording of a performance of the musical material takes place in this stage, with all musicians performing simultaneously, individually or in varying combinations. For example ‘Child’ was recorded over several different sessions in a number of studios. The original version of the track was recorded individually at Rosehill Studios, after which the core ensemble instruments (guitar, keyboards, bass and drums) were re-recorded simultaneously on top of the original vocal tracks at Real World Studios. Additional vocals were recorded individually at my home studio before layers of strings and woodwinds were recorded simultaneously and individually at Rosehill Studios. This approach was used to try and capture the essence of a live performance from a very large ensemble within the constraints imposed by the recording budget.

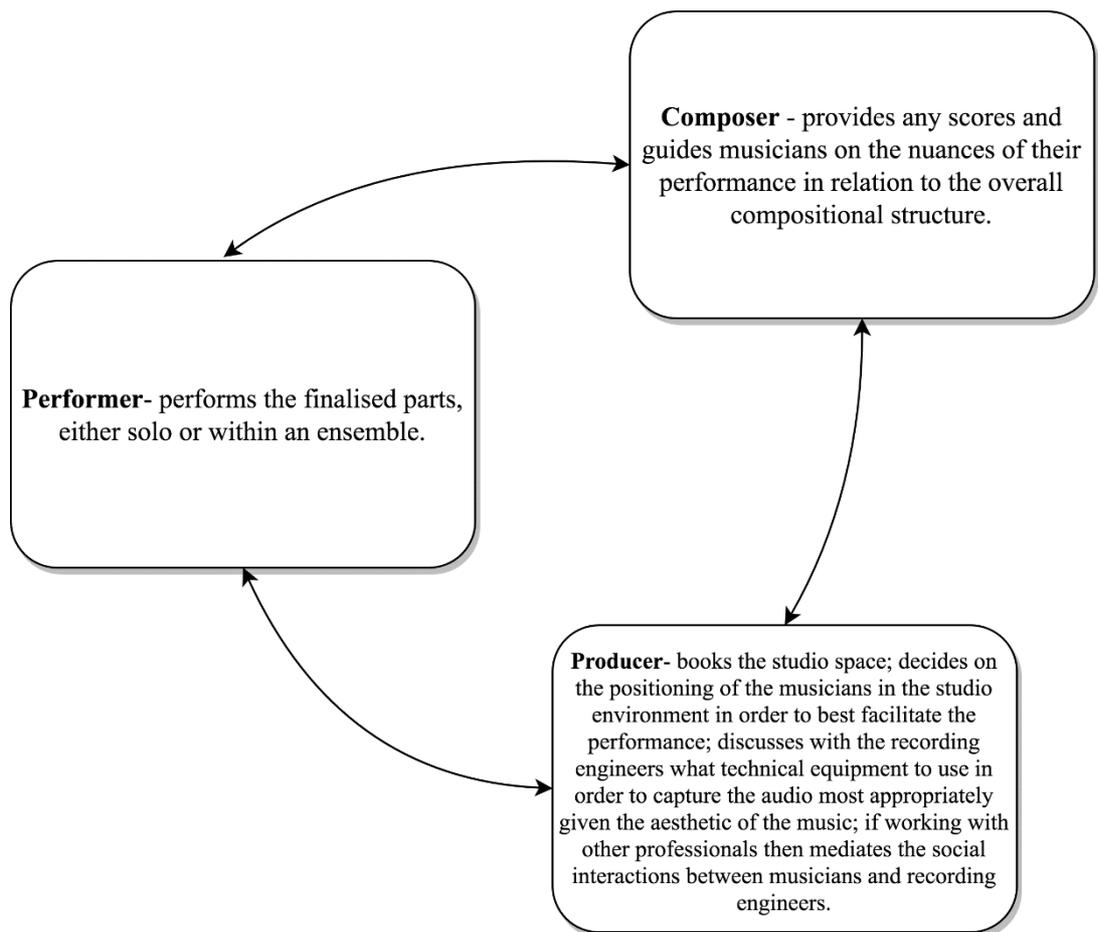


Figure 10. Recording.

3.3.4 Post-Production

In this stage takes of the captured audio are pieced together to create a ‘master’ take. Additional elements, such as more instruments and audio effects may be added. For example, the final section of ‘D1FA’ (from 1:43 to the end) was created entirely by sampling audio from the 0:00-1:43 section. This audio was looped, effected and/or manipulated to create new sections of audio and synthesised sounds.

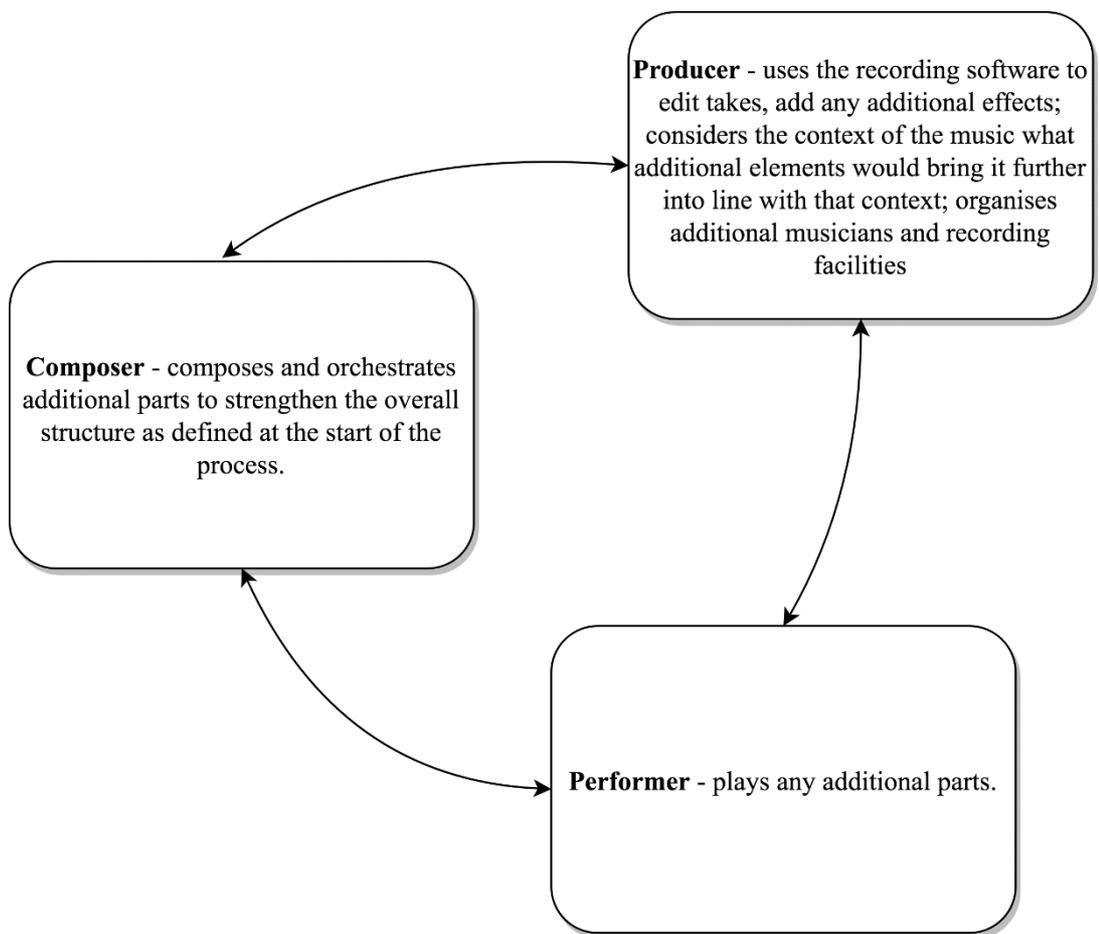


Figure 11. Post-Production.

3.3.5 Mixing/Mastering

In this stage the EQ, dynamic levels and stereo positioning of all instruments are set and the music is prepared for release. For example, in ‘Trip The Switch’ the phasing effect on the snare drum is balanced with the acoustic sound of the drumkit, and the string quartet (0:00-0:24), which was recorded in a different studio at a different time, is equalised and balanced to sound as if it was recorded in the same space as the core instruments of the ensemble.

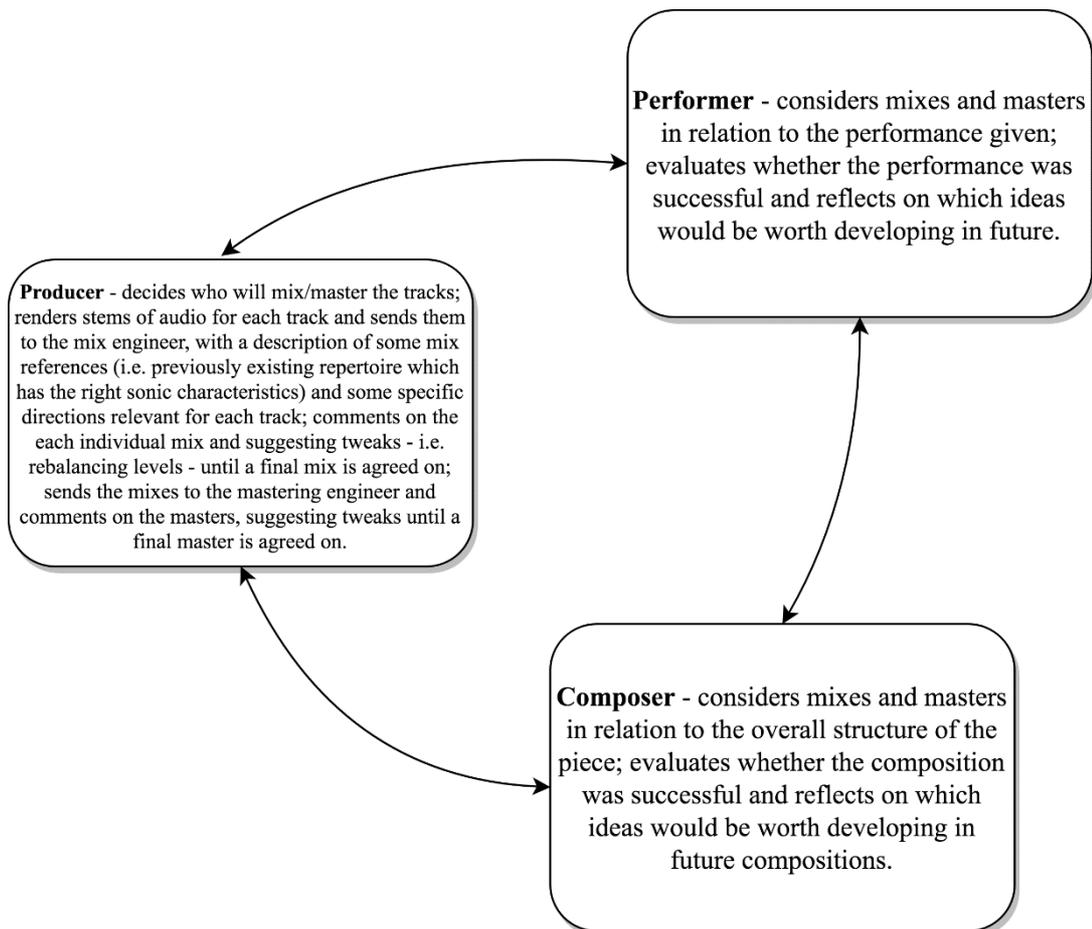


Figure 12. Mixing/Mastering.

In summary, understanding the roles undertaken at each of the five stages presented above in relation to the PCP model gives some clarity to my overall process when creating a recorded musical work. This comprehension has improved the workflow in my creative practice and has been useful tool in my teaching practice.

Chapter 4.

Case Studies

The case studies in this chapter will be framed under the three headings from the Csikszentmihalyi (1997) model – each study will focus in detail on a specific element within each area. The first investigates the ways in which I respond to to a specific aspect dictated by the *Domain* – i.e. the necessary engagement with modern recording technology – and how this impacts upon and informs my role(s) as *Producer*, *Composer*, *Performer*. The second focuses on the influence(s) I have drawn from specific people within my *Field* of practice and the effects these had on the music created for the *Solitude* (2018) and *Solitude Part ii* (2019) albums. The third concentrates on two key events that shaped my musicality, and how the understanding of my working practices as the *Individual* gained in this research impacted on the music created for the *Bold By Name, Bold By Nature* (2018) and *Music for Imaginary Film* (2019) projects. Whilst the three categories – *Domain*, *Field* and *Individual* – provide the framework for the studies, there is an inherent inter-connectedness between them. As such, although the studies in this chapter each pivot around an single category, there will be a need to reference all categories within each study.

4.1 Domain Case Study

In this case study, the *Domain* will be considered as the totality of the environment – physical spaces and recording technologies – in which the performances of the music in the portfolio took place. Focusing on this specific element of the *Domain* allows an investigation into: the evolution of my engagement with recording environments and technologies during the creation of the portfolio; how and why these

changes have occurred; and how this influences my roles as *Producer*, *Composer*, *Performer*.

Recording technologies have “impacted upon music and its associated practices from all angles. Such technologies are not passive objects; they have, rather, been entangled with music in a complex relational plot that has changed music in all its aspects” (Slater, 2020). The central technology used in the capture of audio during this research is Pro Tools – the industry-standard digital audio workstation (DAW). It functions as an ‘in the box’ studio, allowing the user to record and manipulate audio in a digital workspace software, as opposed to the analogue (and much larger) hardware workspace of the traditional recording studio. Using this industry-standard software has allowed me to move seamlessly between purpose-built recording studios and those spaces that can become recording locations thanks to mobile recording technologies. It has also given me the necessary technical understanding and vocabulary to allow me to communicate with and mediate between studio engineers/technicians and the musicians involved in the projects.

4.1.1 The Click

A fundamental change in the way I engage with recording technology has occurred during my research. My music has always balanced electronic and acoustic elements, however my approach to recording prior to this research was always heavily influenced by working within a digital recording environment. The music created at the start of the research is more deeply rooted with an electronic aesthetic, based on an “additive approach to recording” (Eno, 2004) within a computer-generated temporal grid, with all audio processing and effects mapped to this grid. In contrast, the music created at the end of the research is more heavily embedded with an acoustic aesthetic, with the primary focus being the capture of live performances without a computer-

generated temporal grid. There were many factors that caused this transition in aesthetic, such as the influence of the constantly evolving creative ecology, or scenius, that I am a part. However, the focus in this case study will be on the move away from using ‘click’ during the recording process.

As companies developed a greater range of digital instruments and workspaces in the early 1980s, manufacturers saw the need to establish an industry-standard way of allowing devices to communicate with each other. Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) is a universal, royalty-free digital communication system to allow a wide variety of electronic musical instruments, computers, and related audio devices to interface seamlessly. It is the “de facto standard for digital instrument communications networks” (Thèberge, 1997:83). One of the parameters controlled by MIDI is tempo: this “underlying predetermined temporal grid” (Brøvig-Hanssen & Danielsen, 2016:51) can be created by the DAW and communicated to not only all the third party technologies linked to the DAW, but also to the musicians in the form of a metronome, or ‘click’, throughout the recording process. As such, the click becomes an important non-human actor in the capture of recorded music. Whilst allowing synchronisation across digital technologies, the lack of flexibility in timing impacts on the human performances during the recording. In performances played within a silent space (i.e. without a click) the tempo will not be constant – there will be intentional and predictable, as well as inevitable and random, variations in timing. The click breaks this silence with a regular pulse, introducing an inherently mechanistic feel. This “hyperaccuracy in the temporal domain” can be thought to bring about a “sonic clarity or realism in the sound” (Brøvig-Hanssen & Danielsen, 2016:51) or can be used to create “wonky” microrhythmic feels which undermine the grid but are entirely dependent on it (Brøvig-Hanssen & Danielsen, 2016:115). Depending on the musical context, the desired aesthetic, and the

abilities of the musicians, the presence of this non-human actor can either aid or hinder the performance.

Despite primarily coming from an acoustic music background (my early career was very much focused on jazz and improvisation)⁷ the main influence on my approach to working within a DAW came from my experience of playing guitar in and co-writing with the Cinematic Orchestra between 2004 and 2012.⁸ The Cinematic Orchestra are an internationally-renowned electronica-jazz band and their high profile success made a great impression on me. I based my approach to computer-based composition on theirs as I assumed (because of their success) that the process they used to create music was the method I should emulate.⁹ The bandleaders have a background as electronic music DJs and use samples as the seed for their compositions, recording snapshots of previously-recorded and commercially-available music into a DAW before stretching them to fit within a regular tempo grid. Playing to this grid through the use of click in the headphone/speaker monitoring system, layers of live instruments, vocals, software synths and audio effects would be added around the samples and the arrangement built through many iterative stages over a long period. This use of the “studio as a compositional tool” enables composers to arrive at a studio with “a bare skeleton of the piece, or perhaps with nothing at all” and be reliant on “constructing a piece in the studio” (Eno, 2004:129). It is commonly used in electronic music composition and can be a method used by composers and musicians who have not undergone formal music education (such as the leaders of the Cinematic Orchestra) to create music. This computer studio-based approach is the method that I used on my early studio albums,

⁷ P. Booth, *No looking back* (2007). Available online: <https://open.spotify.com/album/6AmiPqeilP5JOL0UeuC2Gw?si=mvRHILXISLCXe0VSnCcNoA> [Accessed 01/08/19]

N. Yates, *Little orme* (2004). Available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mI8Q_LtqII4 [Accessed 01/08/19] – examples of my early jazz career.

⁸ The Cinematic Orchestra, *Ma fleur* (2007). Available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAYuMygPkbI&list=PLPaztBWnatcgy68k7a24qhY3pYVuoyuC9> [Accessed 01/08/19]

⁹ This is an operation of the influence of the *Field* and *Domain* and evidences the inter-connectedness of the categories within the Csikszentmihalyi model.

Stuart McCallum (2009) and *Distilled* (2011), as well as on the live albums *Distilled Live* (2012) and *City Live* (2017).¹⁰

In relation to the PCP model shown in Figure 3, my lack of understanding of the role of *Producer* in these earlier recordings, combined with a lack of technical skill in the use of DAWs to capture and manipulate audio without a computer generated temporal grid, resulted in the *Producer* component being afforded a dominating role at the expense of the *Performer* role. Whilst this dominance may have been appropriate within music with a bias towards electronica, as my approach to recording became more rooted in an acoustic aesthetic this imbalance of roles became apparent. (This will be explored in more detail in section 4.1.2). The creation of the PCP model during this research allowed me to separate the distinct roles I needed to undertake in order to better understand how they are distinct as well as how they interact. This led me to understand the role of *Producer* within an acoustic context more clearly – i.e. to facilitate an environment that affords the best musical performance and to capture and present this performance with the most appropriate sonic qualities. This resulted in a change in use of the DAW to capture audio away from it acting as the master, controlling the timing of the track and the musicians throughout the layering of performances during the recording process, to it acting as a slave to the capture of performances. This latter approach was used in the recording of *Solitude Part ii* (2019) and will be described in detail in section 4.2.2. As a tape machine would be used in an analogue studio, the best performances of each section, with all their subtle variations in timing, are spliced together within the DAW to create a master take upon which any

¹⁰ S. McCallum, *Stuart McCallum* (2006). Available online: <https://open.spotify.com/album/0AWbOfIM3wDxp7Yg3Qce6R?si=JQPicoPFSoy2KF8KWLnHA> [Accessed 01/08/19]. S. McCallum, *Distilled* (2011). Available online: <https://open.spotify.com/album/3jrBvbPAPP0bnpquIBiyDQ?si=pMIN6bphS52-YMWIGhw-fQ> [Accessed 01/08/19]. S. McCallum, *Distilled live* (2012). Available online: <https://open.spotify.com/album/6RL15nZdYQf6JrdRSIUdRd?si=X67Gkxa4TKunOne1J1PrAg> [Accessed 01/08/19]. S. McCallum, *City live* (2017). Available online: <https://open.spotify.com/album/43CQO5XtnvHdczGpmOJj5l?si=MjHJ3fyCRoa1cDfAbuMJcA> [Accessed 01/08/19]

additional layers would be added. As such there was a change in the schematic between the master/slave relationship of the human and technological actors in the capture of performance as shown in Figure 13.

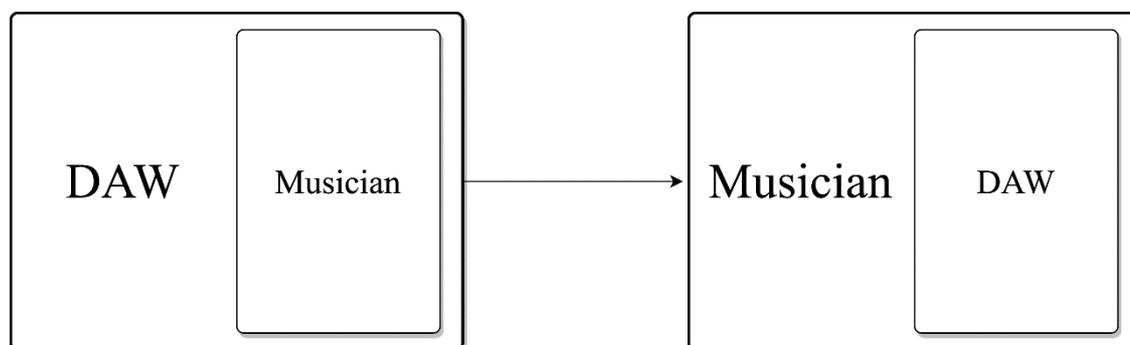


Figure 13. DAW / Musician schematic change as used in the recording of *Solitude Part ii*.

4.1.2 Portfolio Examples

Examples from the portfolio demonstrate this change in approach and the resultant aesthetic. Early tracks such as ‘The Seventh Tree’ and ‘Child’ use a click-based additive approach and are much more electronic in nature: densely layered with a combination of electronic and acoustic instruments, and synchronised audio effects such as filters and modulations all working to a computer generated tempo grid. ‘DIFA’ starts with an improvised jam (the aim of the recording of this track was to capture the improvised nature of the duo’s live performances) before moving into a looped sample of the jam from 1:43. The length of this repeated loop created a virtual tempo grid, and the remaining three minutes of the piece were created from sampling and manipulating the captured audio from the original live improvised performance. This duality of approaches, where freedom of performance is not hindered by technology, and technology is not hindered by freedom of performance, represents a shift away the

Producer dominating the PCP model during the musical performance, in favour of the *Performer* being given dominance at the time of recording.

Further examples of the *Performer* establishing dominance at the time of recording are contained in the portfolio. All of the tracks on the *Solitude* (2018) album were improvised – the aim here was to capture the essence of live solo concerts in which much of the material was improvised. The improvised performances were captured in the studio and edited into final master takes, before additional effects, ambient sounds and subtle layers were added. The *Composer* role was present throughout the process, making decisions and offering suggestions in real-time during the improvisations, as well as suggesting structural and textural ideas during the editing and overdubbing stages.

Solitude Part ii (2019) is a combination of through-composed material and sections that were improvised in the studio. The aim of this recording was to document a different element of my solo concert performances: the use of loop pedals to build and layer sections. The social interactions with the *Field* that occurred to give me the confidence to apply this approach in my studio practice are described in section 4.2.2. Here the focus will be on the ways I used recording technology to facilitate this process in the studio.

The recording process on this album became more vertically focused – i.e. instead of recording full takes of the core elements of the track from start to finish (left to right in the DAW session), each section was recorded individually and built vertically – all core elements recorded and additional elements overdubbed – before moving onto the next. This change in method maps the generative approach used in the improvised loop-pedal passages of my live performances, rehousing it within the DAW context.

There are a number of similarities to live performance that this recording approach offers. Sequentially, fully completing each section before moving onto the

next aligns the studio-based improvised compositional process with the live environment. Being able to create, perform and record compositional ideas instantly is fundamental to improvised live looping. Layering ideas and building textures to create well balanced loops requires fast-paced compositional judgement of elements such as register, timbre, dynamic and textural density. This concentrated focus that live performance stimulates in me as a *Performer* was something that I aimed to incorporate into my studio practices through using this fast-paced, generative approach.

The studio affords many possibilities that are not viable live. Microphones are used to capture the acoustic guitar performance in addition to the piezo pickup used in live performances. Studio recording is in stereo (as opposed to mono signal path that I use for live performances) which affords techniques such as double tracking to spatialise textural elements. Correcting mistakes through editing and/or re-recording, balancing dynamic levels, tracking percussion sounds individually (or collectively before replacing the each of collective sounds with individual samples), taking a break and reviewing with a (possibly) more objective perspective, and spending time adjusting effects pedals to manipulate the sound are all possible in the studio environment, unlike a live performance setting.

This merging of live and studio based practices evidences the *Producer* role creating a recording environment that facilitates an improvisatory live performance approach as a compositional strategy. In relation to the the internal workflow model, this approach is suggested by the *Producer* as a seed to stimulate compositional ideas. As such, it has evolved into a pre-existing idea that now forms part of my '*Domain of practice*'.

This fusing of the live and studio practices is particularly evident in 'The Wanderer' and 'When The Fog Clears'. The main theme of 'The Wanderer' (0:00-1:56) was pre-composed – the variations in interpretation of the theme were improvised

and additional textures layered in the studio as part of the improvisatory process. The middle sections (1:56-4:01) were fully improvised in the studio as they would be in a live performance. Each improvised chord sequence loop was recorded first, followed by any melodic and/or textural elements for that particular sequence. Sections were completed individually before moving on, mirroring the process used in live performance. The final re-interpretation of the main theme (4:01-4:51) was layered, with each element of the theme, originally performed simultaneously (0:00-1:56), being performed separately to create a more relaxed feel.

The improvised solo section in ‘When The Fog Clears’ (1:36-2:45) is based around a pre-composed chord sequence. In live performance settings I record and loop a single chord sequence without layers and improvise a melodic solo over the loop - an approach rooted in a jazz aesthetic. In the studio, before adding a melodic solo element, additional chordal layers were double tracked to widen the spatialisation (1:58-2:45) to give a sense of development within the stereo image structure of the piece. In my *Producer* role, I was keen to ensure that instead of a traditional jazz melodic solo, the ‘solo’ would be more abstract, without a single instrument being the melodic focus. To create this effect I used effects pedals in two distinct ways to alter the sound of the guitar. Firstly, I recorded several loops (into a loop pedal) of the guitar playing rubato chords and melodies (in the key of the piece), before reversing this loop, playing back at twice the speed and recording into the DAW. These loops were edited and organised to create an abstract textural layer (1:56-2:45) for the ‘solo’ to take place over. Secondly, I recorded several takes of the guitar through a reverse delay, before compiling a master take which can be heard as the ‘solo’ instrument (1:36-2:45).

The pieces in the *Music for Imaginary Film* (2019) album evidence further my use of this studio-based improvisatory compositional approach, but on this occasion in a collaborative setting. The tracks were collaboratively developed in the studio from

musical sketches recorded on voice memo apps. The *Composer* role (in both me and my collaborator Mark Slater) quickly led to decisions on ways to vary the musical character of sections and formulate the structures. A performance of the acoustic guitar and piano was captured without the use of click. This performance would act as a nexus around which other instruments and melodic ideas would be added.

Due to the rubato nature of some sections of the original duo performances a click was later mapped onto the recorded audio. This helped to provide a clear and consistent tempo grid when recording the strings and harp. This represents a significant shift in approach: the temporality of the technology was made to resonate with the variations in timing inherent in human musical performances. The layering of additional instruments, in order to create the illusion on the recording of a single musical performance by all the instruments, did not need the technology to define the tempo from the start of the recording process. The tempo was defined by the duo performance and the technology was subservient to this, providing a tempo to the later additional performers as defined by the original human actors.

The notable changes in approaches on *Solitude Part ii* and *Music for Imaginary Film* albums are demonstrations of my growing technical skill within Pro Tools and my maturation in the role of a *Producer*. The performance environments created by the *Producer* directly impact how the *Performer(s)* can operate and therefore the resulting musical output. These elements relate directly to knowledge gained in my working practice in the *Field* through the experience of working with skilled engineers such as Patrick Phillips at Real World Studios.¹¹

¹¹ Patrick Phillips profile and biography: <http://realworldstudios.com/the-team/> [Accessed 03/09/19]

4.2 Field Case Study

This case study will pivot around examples of the influence of my '*Field of practice*', or *scenius*, and the ways in which they have impacted on the types of musical works and ideas that I have drawn from my '*Domain of practice*'. The social groups and persons that will be included in the study are: professional musicians working within my *scenius*, high level industry professionals, concert promoters, academics and students. The people contained within these groups form a significant proportion of the social environment within which the creativity has unfolded. During the course of the research there has been an evolutionary development of ideas and processes: each project was not created in isolation from the others, or in isolation from the wider creative ecology. It is this inter-connectedness of social groups, all existing works (including my own current and existing repertoire), and the dynamic between them that will be the focus of this study.

I will identify the core people within my creative ecology that exerted influence on the compositional and production approaches for the solo guitar albums: *Solitude* (2018) and *Solitude Part ii* (2019). References to key musical works will also be made. However, it is important to note that this is a study of my relations with people in the *Field* who have helped facilitate a connection to those works, and the influence that those works had on the resulting compositional or production approach. It is not a direct study of the influence of the works themselves and, as such, it evidences the inherent inter-connectedness of ideas between the *Domain*, *Field* and *Individual*. The two solo guitar albums culminated from small, iterative changes in my approach to performing, writing and recording music - the evolution in these methods began many years before and came from a variety of sources.

4.2.1 Solitude

At the start of the process of recording this album, in my role as *Producer*, I set the overall context: the album was to primarily consist of solo guitar improvisations. Whilst some editing would take place to create the master takes and additional audio effects and subtle overdubs would be added, in the first instance all of the material would be completely improvised. This demanded that in my role as *Composer* I would make compositional decisions in real time during the recorded performances. My role as *Performer* (in collaboration with the *Composer* role) was to improvise music on acoustic and electric guitars, in standard and DADGAD tuning, using loops and other pedal-based effects as in a live setting. As *Producer* I would facilitate a recording environment that was conducive to the capture and later manipulation of improvisations. Whilst there were an innumerable number of influences which led to the decision to use these approaches, it is possible to identify specific people in my *Field of practice* who exerted significant influence. They are shown in Figure 14 and are the focus of this section of the study.

In my formative years as a guitarist I used only one tuning – the standard tuning of EADGBE. In 1999, fellow Manchester guitarist Pete Mason (of Manchester-Irish folk-rock band, Toss the Feathers) introduced me to DADGAD tuning. This open-string, modal tuning is widely used in the folk genre and offers a different sonic quality to standard tuning, with the open strings providing drones. I first wrote a solo acoustic piece, ‘Forlorn’, in DADGAD in 2003 and used it again in a solo acoustic introduction to the track, ‘Indigenous’, in 2006.¹² French acoustic guitarist, Pierre Bensusan, is well known for his use of DADGAD and through Mike Chadwick, the programmer at

¹² S. McCallum, *Forlorn* (2003). Available online: <https://open.spotify.com/track/6TVKpVvVmD6ZyKHjR4pEv7?si=pxqYFuLzOOaPe9dfXaciWw> [Accessed 03/08/19]
S. McCallum, *Indigenous* (2006). Available online: https://open.spotify.com/track/5lncVpHFIAJQRZW2R9BpOp?si=T_HuotDyTw2LDq-JctDXGA [Accessed 03/08/19]

Manchester venue, Band on the Wall, I arranged a lesson with Pierre to extend my knowledge of the tuning. In the lesson he suggested ways in which I could develop my facility in DADGAD which, over time, I have incorporated into my musical vocabulary in both my *Performer* and *Composer* roles. DADGAD is used on ‘Saltburn’ and ‘Craster’ on the *Solitude* album, and on ‘Corry Strand’ and ‘Inland’ on the *Solitude Part ii* album. During the lesson Pierre Bensusan also demonstrated a tapping technique which directly influenced the improvisation of the track, ‘Alnmouth’.¹³

I also use DADGAD tuning extensively in The Breath – a project I lead with vocalist, Rioghnach Connolly. Rioghnach comes from a traditional Irish music background, so my use of DADGAD (which is often the primary tuning used for traditional Irish music) is an essential part of our combined musical vocabulary. A conversation with the band’s manager, Kerstan Mackness, following the release of the first album *Carry Your Kin* (2016),¹⁴ about the musical direction in which the band should go fed into my confidence to record the solo guitar albums. He suggested that the band’s music would have more clarity and focus if we adopted a more stripped-back folk style. Over the following two albums, *Let The Cards Fall* (2018) and *Only Stories* (2019)¹⁵ the band’s music has transitioned from a big-production, electronica-infused acoustic band, to a pared-back folk duo. This change in approach with The Breath fed directly into the *Producer* role setting the context of improvisation on solo guitar prior to recording the *Solitude* album.

¹³ Video of Pierre Bensusan demonstrating how he incorporates a tapping technique into his playing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUngIbRcB4Y> [Accessed 03/08/19]

¹⁴ The Breath, *Carry your kin* (2016). Available online: <https://open.spotify.com/album/4UDIT0aVVtuzR0o5c9u4eW?si=9DkzV4orQb6OOSEoqNmY6A> [Accessed 03/08/19] N.B. This album does not form part of the portfolio submission, although ‘Child’ was recorded during the same sessions.

¹⁵ The Breath, *Let the cards fall* (2018). Available online: <https://open.spotify.com/album/4RyCcmBOBGVL1AIGCSaGxm?si=qRpmi-0nThGHo-tfuAKJLg> [Accessed 03/08/19]

The Breath, *Only stories* (2019). Available online: <https://open.spotify.com/album/7czjpkwlbDHzKQg74Tf34o?si=dzaDLywNTxeHN9IGD6PsCQ> [Accessed 03/08/19]

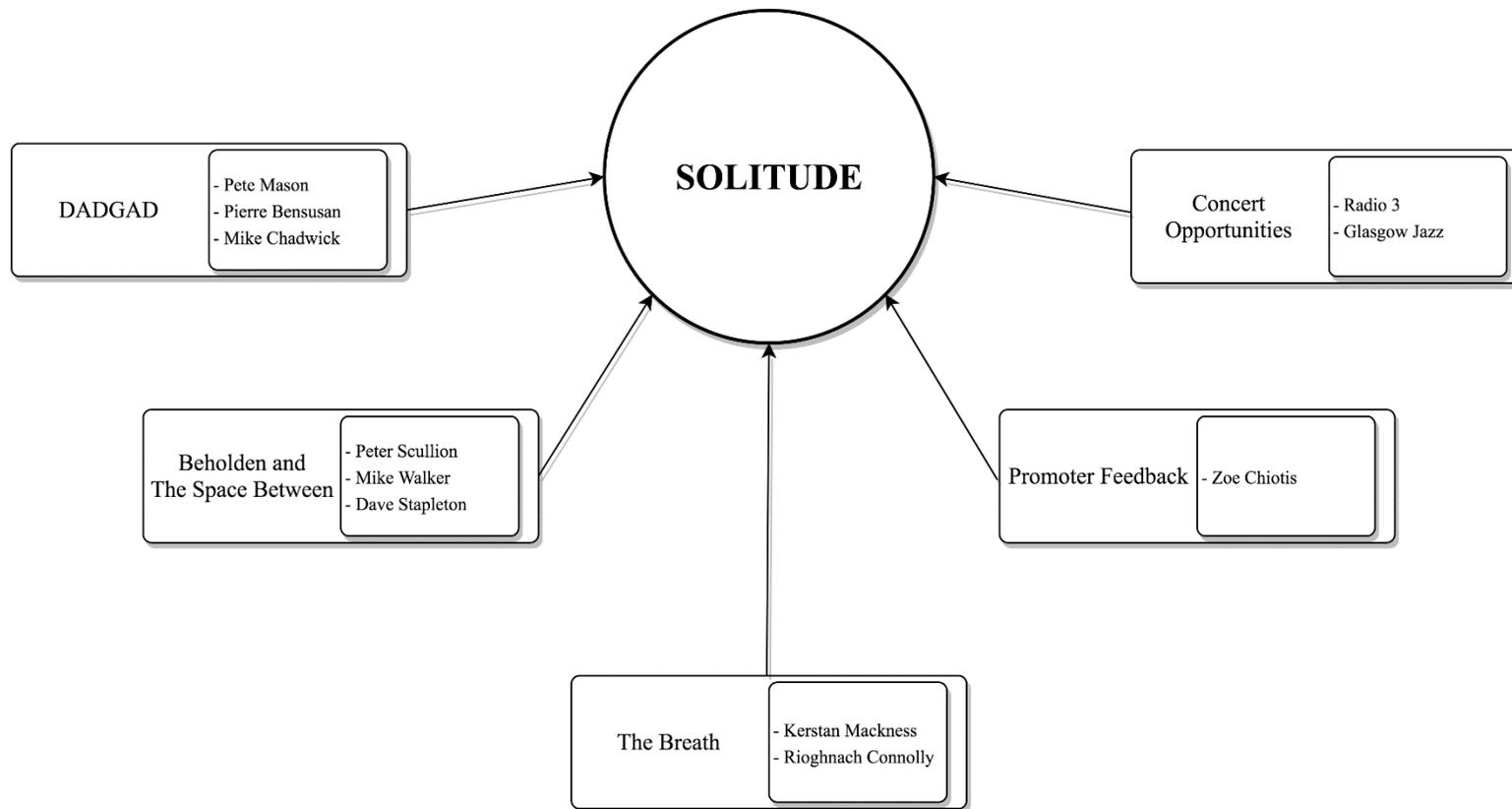


Figure 14. Influences from the *Field* on the *Solitude* album.

Mike Walker was my guitar teacher at university from 1996-1998 and as such has been a huge influence on my guitar playing and musicality. We had little contact after I left university until, in 2012, we were both invited to a mutual friend's (Peter Scullion) birthday celebrations where we were asked to improvise some music together. We both felt an immediate musical bond between us – our approaches were similar and complementary, although our styles divergent – and we decided to record an album. In my role as *Producer* I insisted that we both play acoustic guitars. We were both known for our work on electric guitar, so I considered that this distinction in the final musical outcome would generate interest in the *Field. Beholden* (2014)¹⁶ was self-released but distributed through Edition Records, and an Arts Council England funded UK tour followed the release.¹⁷ This was the first album on which I had solely played acoustic guitar and as such was a significant step towards the Solitude albums.

The Space Between (2016)¹⁸ was the second release of the duo with Mike Walker. Edition Records invested some money in the release of this album. Whilst the aim of this album was to capture live full takes of the duo and then add further instruments and FX on some tracks, the label's manager, Dave Stapleton, was keen to have some stripped back singles for the digital release of the album. He suggested that there were several playlists on streaming sites that would favour this approach. This further embedded the idea that there was a market for stripped back, guitar-led music and influenced my decision to record the *Solitude* album. Mike and I were keen to include as much of a live feel as possible on the album. 'D1FA' (included in the portfolio but not released on the album) starts as a fully improvised track before moving into a more produced section at 2:01 where, in my roles of *Producer* and *Composer*, I

¹⁶ S. McCallum & M. Walker, *Beholden* (2014). Available online: <https://open.spotify.com/album/6TS2nVxdg0iTI417G6kRvy?si=9ArhIVdeQv-G3SQIMawwfg> [Accessed 04/08/19]

¹⁷ S. McCallum & M. Walker tour dates: <https://www.jazznorth.org/eleven-date-northern-line-tour-for-stuart-mccallum-mike-walker/> [Accessed 04/08/19]

¹⁸ S. McCallum and M. Walker, *The space between* (2016). Available online: <https://open.spotify.com/album/2xarg15iLiH8c29Jx9Of25> The tracks 'D1FA' and 'D2FA' which are included in the portfolio submission are unreleased tracks from this album.

created a virtual temporal grid from a loop of the acoustic guitar and added processed samples created from the improvised track. This method of capturing a live improvisation and using production skills to create further musical ideas fed directly into the production and compositional approaches used by the *Producer* and *Composer* roles on the *Solitude* album.

There were two concerts that were major influences on the decision to record the *Solitude* album. In 2010 I was asked to perform a 20-minute solo set live on BBC Radio 3's flagship jazz show, 'Jazz on 3'. I composed a series of pieces using electronic backing tracks and electric guitar which were very well received and included in the show's 'Best of 2010' yearly round-up programme. The second solo concert was at Glasgow Jazz Festival in 2014 and came about when Mike Walker became unavailable for a duo gig booked at the festival. I suggested to the promoter that I could do a solo performance on acoustic guitar. She was supportive of this idea and this validation by her of my ability to perform solo in a high profile setting boosted my confidence. These interactions with promoters as well as the emerging, unforeseeable event relating to my co-performing collaborator Mike Walker, are examples of the *Field* directly impacting on the musical direction that followed.

The final example of the *Field* exerting influence on my musical direction for the *Solitude* album was from Zoe Chiotis, the promoter of Song Swap: a bi-monthly music night in Manchester. Following on from the Glasgow Jazz Festival solo concert, I asked Zoe for the opportunity to play solo at her night so I could further explore playing in that context, and have since performed there on several occasions from 2015-2019. After a performance in May 2017 Zoe described how, whilst she had enjoyed all of my set, the sections she preferred were the improvised passages. Although this was an unprompted and off the cuff comment, it made a significant impression on me and

strengthened my resolve to use improvisation as the primary compositional approach in the creation of the *Solitude* album.

In summary there were a number of types of influence from the *Field* that shaped the work of *Solitude*. Musical influences from fellow musicians relating to instrumental techniques and approaches; industry influences from record label and management relating to the stylistic aesthetic; and influences from live performance opportunities and subsequent feedback from promoters relating to stylistic and compositional approaches.

4.2.2 Solitude Part ii

The first *Solitude* album was digitally released in 2018 and received some critical acclaim.¹⁹ The track ‘Saltburn’ was included in the Spotify playlist, Acoustic Concentration.²⁰ As a result of this inclusion, at the time of writing (September 2019), the track has had 1.35 million streams on Spotify. This is a drastically higher figure than any guitar-led track that I had released before (my second most popular track has had only 42,000 at the time of writing) and this validation from the audience/consumers was the impetus from the *Field* to create a second solo acoustic guitar album, *Solitude Part ii*. The following diagram (Figure 15) shows the key influences from my *Field* of practice that shaped the writing and recording processes used and therefore the resulting output.

In my role as *Producer* I considered that a change in approach, focusing on pre-composed material, would give the album a different feel. Since the recording of *Solitude*, solo concerts had become a much greater part of my performing schedule at

¹⁹ D. Hovenga, *Solitude ep review* (2018). Available online: <http://www.writteninmusic.com/jazz/stuart-mccallum-solitude-ep/> [Accessed 04/08/19]

²⁰ Spotify playlist Acoustic Concentration: https://open.spotify.com/user/spotify/playlist/37i9dQZF1DXcLDm348RRYK?si=IQVs_ZHgRO2oUu8g2ksD4g [Accessed 04/08/19]

small venues in Manchester (The Hillary Step, Mash Guru, Matt & Phreds, The Wonder Inn), Leeds (Cafe Lento, Sela Bar) and Halifax (Wainsgate Chapel, The Lantern), as well as more high profile venues in London (Kings Place, Jazz Cafe) and Manchester (Band On The Wall, Bridgewater Hall). As a result I had started to write and arrange pieces for solo guitar to have a wider range of material to play at these concerts. This PhD research gave me time to focus specifically on composition and compositional approaches. In the role of *Composer*, I set about sourcing new influences in line with the aesthetic for the album, that I had put in place in my role as *Producer*. These would give me compositional ideas for solo guitar that would challenge my instrumental facility in my role as *Performer*.

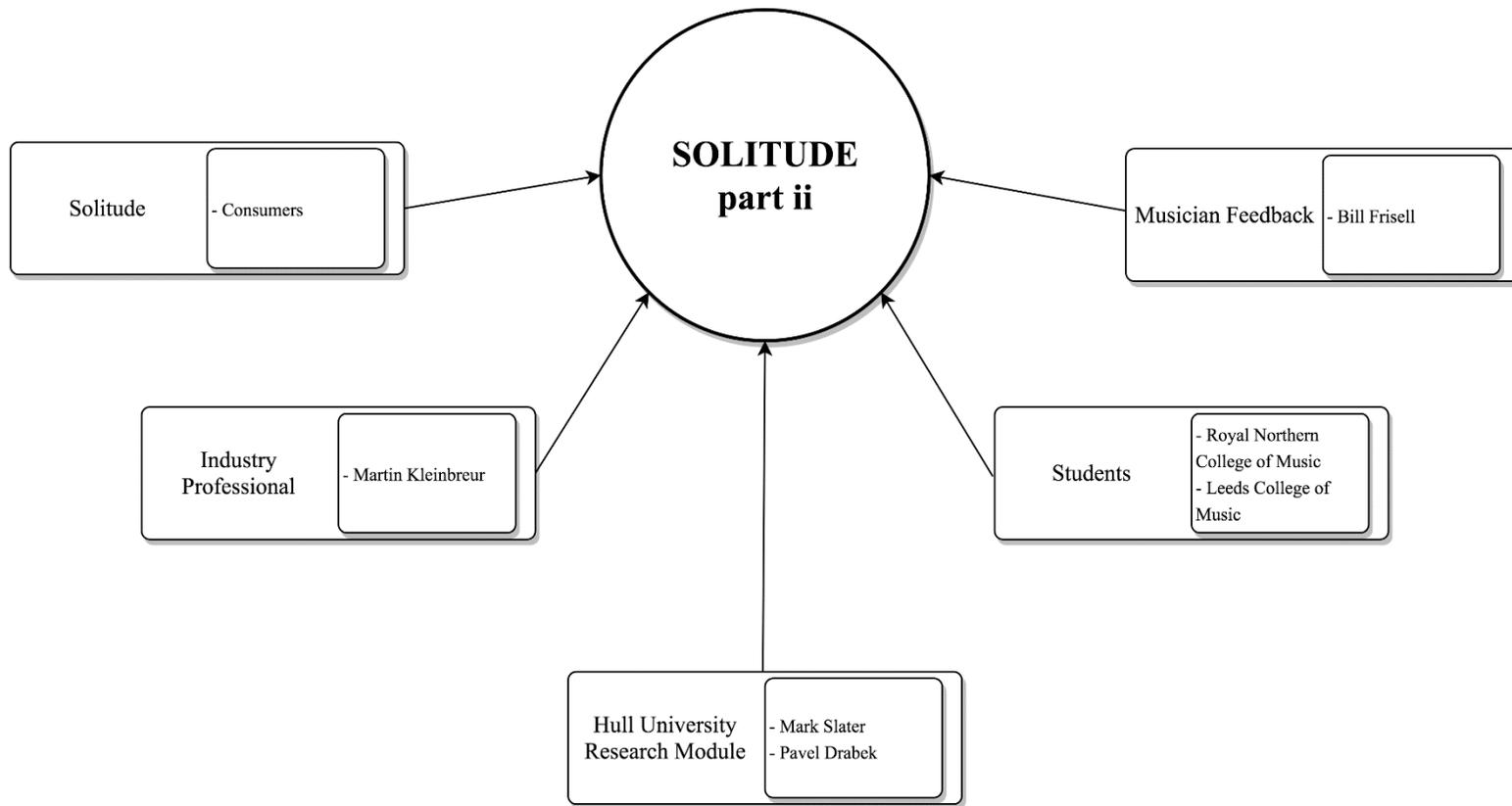


Figure 15. Influences from the *Field* on the *Solitude Part ii* album.

As part of my research training at the start of this PhD I took a module, run by Professor Pavel Drabek, requiring me to present a project outline and proposed methodology. The focus of study, agreed with my supervisor, Dr Mark Slater, was to develop instrumental technique and musical material for polyphonic solo guitar playing. This was the first time I had researched compositional ideas before starting to develop musical material. Prior to the research module my approach to composition was to develop ideas freely through improvisation, without any pre-conceived direction. This new approach, being more conceptual than experimental, more pre-determined than reactive, fed directly into the development of the PCP model, giving distinction to the roles of *Composer* and *Performer*.

The research for the module lead me to a video of pianist Brad Mehldau demonstrating shifting harmonic patterns around a sustained pedal note.²¹ I used this idea to develop some compositional fragments:



Figure 16. Sustained note composition fragment.

²¹ Brad Mehldau masterclass video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8xE08BnEzU> [Accessed 01/08/19]

By incorporating this idea into a harmonic fragment from an earlier work, ‘Fog Lane Park’²² (0:17-0:21), I extended the harmonic and melodic content and composed ‘When the Fog Clears’. The instigation of both my concept of the *Composer* role in the PCP model and this composition are directly linked to undertaking the research module set in place by the academic staff at the University of Hull. The resulting music took direction from social interactions with the academic staff and further evidences the influence of the *Field* on my working practice.

Another example of my academic work directly influencing my working practice is how I have discovered existing composers and works through my one-to-one guitar teaching at the RNCM and Leeds College of Music. A postgraduate student at the RNCM introduced me to *Douze Etudes* (1948-53) by Villa-Lobos way of a resource for developing right hand finger style technique on the guitar. In my research for compositional ideas that would challenge my performance technique, polyphonic writing for solo guitar was a key area for development identified by the *Composer* role. ‘Etude No. 5 in C major’ has a melody, bass and an ostinato figure occurring simultaneously (Figure 17).

²² S. McCallum, *Fog lane park* (2006). Available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbTqkRk7fCo> [Accessed 01/08/19]

Figure 17. Excerpt from Villa-Lobos Etude No. 5 in C major. Bars 1-12

In my role as *Performer* I learned to play this material, which became the seed for a new composition. The main theme in ‘The Wanderer’ 1:03-1:28 (Figure 18) uses a similar idea of two additional parts of bass line and an inner ostinato figure of descending thirds underpinning the melody:

The image displays a musical score for 'The Wanderer' in 4/4 time, featuring three systems of piano accompaniment. Each system consists of three staves: a treble clef staff, a middle treble clef staff, and a bass clef staff. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The first system shows a melody in the treble staff with notes G4, A4, Bb4, and C5, and a bass line with notes G2, Bb2, and D3. The second system continues the melody with notes G4, A4, Bb4, and C5, and a bass line with notes G2, Bb2, and D3. The third system features a more complex melody with notes G4, A4, Bb4, and C5, and a bass line with notes G2, Bb2, and D3. The fourth system shows a melody with notes G4, A4, Bb4, and C5, and a bass line with notes G2, Bb2, and D3.

Figure 18. Excerpt from ‘The Wanderer’. Main theme bars 1-16, 1:03-1:28

‘Corry Strand’ was inspired by the energy and feel of ‘Gardens’, a solo guitar piece by American guitarist Julian Lage,²³ whom I was introduced to by an undergraduate guitar student at Leeds College of Music. The main theme of ‘Corry

²³ J. Lage, *Gardens* (2015). Available online:

<https://open.spotify.com/track/3B62UifhGvOg4fAWtGwIdr?si=pA7XREteTnKVr2mSGWCO> [Accessed 06/08/19]
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GoLK4Gq3wMA&t=173s> [Accessed 06/08/19]

Strand' (0:00-0:16) was initially improvised during a one-to-one guitar lesson with a student at the RNCM, whilst I was demonstrating playing a melody on one string. I captured that idea as a voice memo, revisiting it to add harmony and develop further sections after the lesson.

'Hide and Seek' was inspired by a video of 'Salty and Sweet' by John Smith²⁴ that I played to a student at Leeds College of Music during a one-to-one guitar lesson. In my role as *Composer*, I analysed the key musical elements of the John Smith track: a constant root-fifth movement in the bass, the harmonic movement from chords I to IV, and the melody played on top and within the open string chord voicings (facilitated by the use of a capo). These elements are commonly used in singer-songwriter/country music and became the compositional ideas that were the seed for Hide and Seek. These social interactions with my students as their teacher, in combination with existing music from the *Domain*, are further examples of a productive element of the *Field*.

Relating the interactions with the *Field* described above to the roles in the PCP model: the *Producer* had set a specific context for the album – that more of the music should be pre-composed; the works listed above were discovered directly through my interaction with the *Field* and these works set in place specific internal validation structures for the *Composer* to inform the compositional approaches used; the *Performer* created seed ideas for validation or rejection, which the *Composer* assessed based on these internal validation structures.

The overall approach of including pre-composed material gave a different identity to *Solitude Part ii* compared with the first *Solitude* album. However, as in the first *Solitude* album, the element of improvisation was maintained in the recording process to give a sense of consistency between the two albums.

²⁴ J. Smith, *Salty and sweet* (2013). Available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dp2qcyDqYwQ> [Accessed 07/08/19]

As previously discussed, in my role as *Producer* I proposed mirroring my live use of loop pedals within a studio-based, DAW context. There were two specific social interactions that had taken place prior to the recording of *Solitude Part ii* which gave external validation to my live use of loop pedals. These validations acted as a stimulus for the *Producer* role to facilitate a recording environment conducive to using this live improvisatory loop-based approach in the studio.

In February 2019 I played a solo concert at the Jazz Cafe in London as the support act to American guitarist, Bill Frisell. When preparing for the concert I had felt unsure about using loop pedals at all. Bill is a jazz guitarist of international repute and has been a huge influence on my guitar playing. I was keen to impress him and was not sure if he would approve of the way in which I used loop pedals live: to essentially build live backing tracks during the performance. I made the decision to not change my approach for this specific situation. After the concert Bill spoke to me and described how he thought that my seamless integration of the loop pedal was an original and defining feature of my performance.

Yamaha artist relations manager, Martin Kleinbreuer, attended a concert I performed with The Breath in Hamburg in March 2019. After the show Martin commented on how he felt I had a mastery of subtle use of effects and loops: that he had found it difficult to discern when I had created a loop due to the coherent assimilation of the technology into the live performance. The support of my use of loop pedals by these two high level industry professionals validated my conviction to use my loop based performance style as a compositional approach. These endorsements imply acceptance by the *Field* and an augmentation of existing musical ideas and processes within the *Domain*.

In summary, there were a number of interactions with the *Field* prior to the writing and recording of the *Solitude Part ii* album which influenced the compositional

and production approaches used. The external validations of the quality of the work exhibited by the *Performer* and *Composer* roles in a live setting underpinned the production approach when recording the album. The internal validation structures set in place for the *Composer* role during the composition of the music were significantly influenced by musical works and ideas that had been discovered directly through interaction with the *Field*. Thus, a wide range of social interactions with many different social groups within my *Field* of practice give significant direction to my creative work as the *Individual*.

4.3 Individual Case Study

This case study focuses on me as the *Individual*: the significant events that shaped my musical identity; the understanding of my working practice that I have gained from carrying out this research; how this understanding impacted on the musical works in the *Bold By Name, Bold By Nature* (2018) and *Music for Imaginary Film* (2019) projects. As with the previous case studies I will discuss this with reference to the PCP model.

4.3.1 Early Career

My early career (1996-2004) was focused on developing my own identity as an improviser within the contemporary jazz genre. Whilst my creative process is still rooted in using my skills as an improviser to develop ideas, the aesthetic of the music I am creating is not jazz. Broadly speaking, two significant events occurred which, over time, changed my perception of who I wanted to be as a musician.

The first was a meeting with Ari Hoenig, a New York based drummer, at Smalls Jazz Club in Manhattan in February 2005. I was inspired by Ari's performance at the club and spoke to him after the show, asking if he would be interested in coming to

Manchester to perform some gigs with me and record an album together. A few months later, in September 2005, we played a run of gigs in Manchester and spent three days in the studio recording *Stuart McCallum*.²⁵ The experience of playing with someone at Ari's level of ability was inspirational, but put into perspective both my own ability and that of my peers within the geographically-located music scene that I was a part. I began to realise that I was never going to achieve the ability in contemporary jazz that I wanted within the Manchester music scene, as there were no musicians of Ari's ability to regularly collaborate with and learn from. Consequently my musical aspirations as the *Individual* needed to adjust from a global perspective, which had been acquired through engaging with recordings, going to gigs and eventually collaborating with people of that level, to engage more directly with my geographically-located *Field* of practice.

4.3.2 Cinematic Orchestra

The second event which significantly impacted on my musicality was working with The Cinematic Orchestra between 2004 and 2012. Their pieces are mostly based within a single tonality and required a different approach to improvisation than that of the predominantly cycle-of-fifths based, quickly modulating harmonic structures of contemporary jazz. I began to explore a greater variety of sounds, using long delays, reverbs and filters to create guitar parts and improvised passages that fitted the electronic aesthetic of their music.²⁶ This shift away from harmonically-driven playing towards a more timbrally-focused approach resulted in the melodic lines in my improvisations becoming simpler to accommodate the change in decay of the notes

²⁵ S. McCallum, *Stuart McCallum* (2006). Available online: <https://open.spotify.com/album/0AWbOfIM3wDxp7Yg3Qce6R?si=oA7X-ygMSmCO17EBH4fxDw> [Accessed 16/08/19]

²⁶ The Cinematic Orchestra, *Live at the Royal Albert Hall* (2008). Available online: <https://open.spotify.com/track/2sj6wAbko2akvUHxBlrctW?si=ggEdCAOfQleqADHXmNPaeA> [Accessed 16/08/19]

created by the delay and reverb pedals. The development of a more unique improvising language and sonic identity was a result of mediation with new technology. This evolution in my musical identity is an example of the *Domain* exerting influence on the *Individual* as result of a social circumstance created by the *Field*.

These two events resulted in two realisations: that I needed to compose music that would create musical environments for the new improvising language that I had developed with The Cinematic Orchestra; and that this was achievable at a high level within the Manchester music scene. The underlying point here is that it is not possible to consider the *Individual* in total isolation from the *Field* and *Domain*. The three elements are intrinsically linked by a flow of values, attitudes and aesthetics. These realisations resulted in the creation of the *Distilled* album (2011) which was, on reflection, the first album I had made where my distinct roles of *Producer*, *Composer* and *Performer* started to become clearly defined: the *Producer* set the context for the music; much of the material was composed before going into the studio to record; the core material was performed live with other musicians.

4.3.3 Immix Ensemble

The music I created for the Immix Ensemble, *Bold By Name, Bold By Nature* (2018), is a good example of a practical application of the PCP model to give focus and improve workflow. The time constraints on the project were apparent from my initial meeting with the ensemble's leader, Daniel Thorne, and the singer-songwriter, Jennifer John. The suite of music needed to be 40 minutes long. Jennifer and I were the songwriters and I would arrange the parts for the ensemble. We were able to write together on just three evenings to develop the song ideas and I had a subsequent eight days to structure and arrange all the material.

In my role as *Producer* I ensured that we made key decisions such as the lyrical narrative, collaborative songwriting method, and instrumentation before the writing process began. The lyrics were to be focused around the history of Liverpool: the name of the project – *Bold By Name, Bold By Nature* – was a reflection of Jennifer’s view of Liverpool as a resident and inspired by Bold Street, a road in central Liverpool where we had our first meeting. Whilst Jennifer and I had worked together previously as performers, we had never written music together. I decided that the jamming method of collaborative songwriting, where a “band creates live ideas in the rehearsal room, forming the song from individual contributions” (Bennett 2010:7) would be most appropriate given the time constraints and our individual skills as improvisers. I provided the recording technology and captured all of the ideas that we improvised. The instrumentation I would arrange the music for was mostly pre-determined by the lineup of the ensemble, although I also suggested that drum loops could be used to facilitate the writing process, as well as to add textural variety to the music.

My role as *Composer* became prominent in the collaborative writing sessions. I quickly identified ideas that were worthy of development, suggesting ways in which they could be expanded and what could be changed to create new ideas to form contrasting sections. My aim was to come away from the session with three distinct sections for each track that we had worked on. This would enable me to work independently, editing the ideas together to form the basic song structures and generate the overall textural and dynamic arcs of the tracks. Once these were in place, I was able to arrange the ensemble parts quickly to fit within the pre-determined structures.

During both the collaborative and independent writing sessions the *Performer* role improvised within the parameters set in place by the *Producer* and *Composer* roles to come up with the musical material. In the rehearsals with the full ensemble in the run up to the performance, my role as *Performer* was to develop a variety of sounds for the

electric and acoustic guitar parts to ensure that they contributed to the dynamic and textural arcs of the tracks. During the performance, in tracks ‘III’ (0:00-0:59) and ‘VII’ (2:57-5:53), I improvised extended passages in my role as *Performer*, interacting with my role as *Composer* in real time. To facilitate the recording of the concert, in my role as *Producer*, I organised a live recording engineer who recorded a multi-channel feed from the front of house desk, as well as additional ensemble and room microphones, adding equalisation to enhance the sound. I edited the stems to correct mistakes and tighten the ensemble performance, before balancing the levels and rendering a stereo mix.

4.3.4 Music for Imaginary Film

The way in which the *Music for Imaginary Film* project evolved is another illustration of how the clear definition of roles in the PCP model aided the creative process. This project, a ten-track album, is a creative collaboration with composer and pianist, as well as my PhD supervisor, Mark Slater. The genesis of this music was a comment made by Mark after the recording of a three-part layered acoustic guitar part for his Nightports project. Mark said, as a throwaway comment, that we should record some film music. I agreed and suggested that we book some studio time. In my role as *Producer* I suggested hiring recording engineer, Patrick Phillips, (with whom I had previously collaborated on *The Breath* and solo guitar albums), to engineer the session. His presence ensured smooth operation of the studio technology and setup, allowing Mark and I to focus on the composition and performance of the material.

The initial aim of the session was a little unclear: there was little focus other than that the music should have a filmic quality. We individually had some compositional fragments that we thought would work well for acoustic guitars and pianos, and a vague notion of how we might get the first sketches started. The session

began with the recording of a more complete compositional idea that I had brought to the session and, after finishing work on this track, I proposed the title, *Music for Imaginary Film*. This seemed appropriate to the aesthetic of this first track and in the over-arching role of *Producer*, this set the context for the music and quickly established a focus and direction to the subsequent tracks. Although we had gone into the recording session with the filmic function of the music as the foundation, the word ‘imaginary’ in the project title provided a lot of creative freedom: a liberation from any narrative, structure or character that an actual film would bring. Drawing on our compositional experience, we quickly set structures in place to give an overall shape to the tracks in keeping with the project’s newly-defined objective. The recorded duo performances of these structural ideas became the nucleus of the finished tracks.

Several months after the initial duo recording session I returned to the project. In the interim period I had spoken with my publisher, Real World Works Ltd,²⁷ about what key musical features would improve the chances of the tracks to being considered for television and film use. In the publisher’s opinion, a crucial element to include would be a dynamic arc that peaked in the middle of tracks before fading away. The duo performances of several tracks (in particular ‘Piece 4’, ‘Piece 5’, ‘Piece 7’ and ‘Piece 10’) fortunately had a semblance of this arc in place. This gave us a vehicle to create the arcs more succinctly. This aim, to create stylistically appropriate dynamic arcs, determined much of the editing and orchestrational work that followed, and is an example of the inter-connectedness of the *Domain*, *Field* and *Individual*.

In the role of *Producer*, when editing the recorded material into the master takes, I maintained the focus on the overall aesthetic aims, changing instrumental microphone combinations to give sonic identity to sections, adding hypnotic effects and suggesting

²⁷ My composer profile on Real World Works Ltd website: <https://realworldmusic.com/composer/stuart-mccallum/> [Accessed 01/08/19]

the addition of strings to root the tracks more deeply in the film music genre.²⁸ In the role of *Composer* I focused on writing grand string melodies for tracks ‘Piece 4’ (3:19-4:01), ‘Piece 5’ (1:23-2:01) and ‘Piece 7’ (1:49-2:24), re-worked one of the tracks into two new tracks (‘Piece 3b’ and ‘Piece 3c’), and wrote two new pieces (‘Piece 9’ and ‘Piece 10’). In the role of *Performer* I performed electronic effects using the touch-pad interface on a Kaoss Pad, as well as re-recording and augmenting many of the original guitar parts.

The string arrangements for tracks ‘Piece 3b’, ‘Piece 3c’, ‘Piece 4’, ‘Piece 5’, and ‘Piece 7’, and the writing of the string parts for tracks ‘Piece 1’, ‘Piece 2’, ‘Piece 6’, ‘Piece 8’, ‘Piece 9’ and ‘Piece 10’ were done by Mark.²⁹ We had worked successfully like this before on tracks for The Breath and Jordan Rakei,³⁰ so it seemed logical that we would assume similar roles on this project. After the string session, in the role of *Producer*, I felt that there was more that could be done to strengthen the film music aesthetic. Whilst the soaring string melodies on tracks ‘Piece 4’ (3:18-3:53), ‘Piece 5’ (1:28-2:02), ‘Piece 7’ (1:48-2:25) and ‘Piece 10’ (2:19-2:55) worked well, an instrument with a faster attack, such as glockenspiel or harp, could be used to double the melodies to give them more focus and clarity. We decided that harp would be more in keeping with the overall aesthetic. Due to time constraints prior to the harp session, neither Mark nor I composed written harp parts. Instead, I produced a lead sheet (consisting of chords and melody) for each piece. In our role as *Composers*, Mark and I developed the harp parts from the lead sheets during the recording session, giving verbal instructions to the harpist, relating not only to which notes should be played, but

²⁸ Mark and I had worked together with strings on several earlier projects, so their inclusion was as much an expression of our shared musical aesthetic as a production idea.

²⁹ I later edited and shaped the final arrangements of the string parts once all additional instruments had been added.

³⁰ Albums that Mark and I had collaboratively written strings for:

The Breath, *Let the cards fall* (2018). Available online:

https://open.spotify.com/track/5KcGZWhrGgHli8nsW444Z0?si=h635ocTSc-jYTsv0cD_zQ [Accessed 01/09/19]

J. Rakei, *Origin* (2019). Available online:

https://open.spotify.com/track/2QKBZ0Yq9sNixBy7sq70Kk?si=8RBvAhOLSJugP7tmi_ZfxA [Accessed 01/09/19]

also to performance techniques and guidance on the interpretation of the music. In our role as *Producers*, we used different microphone combinations to give additional variety to the tonal colour of the harp parts.

This collaborative mode of composition and production is an important point to address. In projects where I collaborate with musicians with a similar mode of practice, (such as my work with The Breath, Richard Spaven and Slowly Rolling Camera),³¹ the PCP roles are also being carried out by the collaborator (in case of *Music for Imaginary Film* the collaborator is Mark Slater). This collaboration, overlap or sharing of roles does not undermine their salience in my (or any other *Individual's*) working practice. Instead it evidences the robust nature of the PCP model, as it allows a way of describing practices and roles that overlap and are complimentary. For example, in terms of microphone selection in the *Music for Imaginary Film* project I made a lot of the final choices in the editing process. However, Mark and I had chosen to adopt the multi-microphone approach and discussed its use in depth, specifically in relation to colour and character, during the recording sessions. This overlap of functions within the *Producer* role is an internal validation structure. Similarly, whilst I composed material for strings on several tracks, it was the specialist technical knowledge in the arrangement of the string parts that Mark brought that differentiated us. Both are compositional modes of working, but nuanced.

In summary it is the interaction between the roles adopted as the *Individual*, with the *Field* (i.e. my musical collaborators) and *Domain* (i.e. the recording technologies, architectural spaces and pre-existing musical works and ideas) and so forth that

³¹ The Breath: <https://open.spotify.com/artist/6bH7BxdRG9RwGmTQXd2Y3F?si=nVwjy1qEQ5m01bNr1Y4oKg> [Accessed 01/09/19]
Richard Spaven:
<https://open.spotify.com/artist/1vPmwfwyztzhoK1cXXWzQWI?si=vYzX0WVbSXOnggYJnCABNQ> [Accessed 01/09/19]
Slowly Rolling Camera:
<https://open.spotify.com/artist/5kH36nIamIV0iSe6ESDWvb?si=wtPMCNs5QVOKjLMBwEY3sw> [Accessed 01/09/19]

underpins my creative work. Considering the PCP model in a collaborative setting, in which both Mark and I were separately acting as *Individuals* and interacting with our respective *Fields* and *Domains*, such as this demonstrates its effectiveness in providing a framework to understand the multiplicity of decisions and interactions that take place. As evidenced here, the continual reassessment of the aimed musical aesthetic during the writing and recording processes was a key role undertaken by the *Producers* in the creation of the *Music for Imaginary Film* project. The *Composers* suggested ways in which this aesthetic could be represented musically and the *Performers* came up with the musical ideas for assessment by the *Producers* and *Composers*. This working practice, in a cycle throughout the process from start to finish, is an excellent example of a practical application of the PCP model.

Chapter 5.

Conclusion

The musical portfolio is, by definition, a contribution to contemporary music culture. The vast majority of the works submitted have been distributed globally, thus reaching an international audience. Whilst limited due to the necessarily mono-perspectival view that I have as both the practitioner and researcher, the commentary provides valuable insight into creative thinking in music in a real world, professional setting. The critical evaluation of the evolution of my own working methods (as a contemporary practitioner) and the detailed and specific nature of collaboration as it occurs in varied ways materialises in the music itself. However, the commentary offers a ‘behind the scenes’ perspective and as such presents an understanding of contemporary music practice, showing the interplay between the social, cultural, technological, architectural, musical and environmental forces in the writing and recording of new music. The integration of live improvisatory practices as a compositional strategy in a DAW context is the underlying development in my production methods. The popularity of the music (via streaming sites) and the endorsement by high level industry professionals suggest that my musical ideas contained in the portfolio have been accepted into the *Domain* by the *Field*.

A specific usefulness of this research lies in its potential to be used as a pedagogic tool in higher education. The PCP model (Figure 1) should be of value in the teaching of contemporary music students, offering them an insight into a professional working practice. The skill set demanded of contemporary practitioners goes far beyond that of just instrumental facility. The PCP model gives an understanding of the eclectic nature of the roles and skills that are required of a modern day recording artist. The internal workflow model (Figure 4), and its subsequent use in the analysis of the tasks

undertaken during the five stages of the production of music as a recorded artefact, offers some clarity on the complex nature of contemporary music production. As such, it will be of use to students, academics and practitioners alike.

I will disseminate my findings in my teaching practice at the Royal Northern College of Music and Leeds College of Music, as well as at masterclasses in universities across the UK. To offer further insight into the social forces at play in the creation of new music I aim to write a paper on the stylistic evolution of the musical output of The Breath. This paper will be to explore the influence that the band's manager and record label have exerted on the stylistic direction of the studio albums and the impact this influence has had on the project's commercial success. I also plan to write a paper on the collaborative practices involved during the writing and recording processes, in the creation of the *Music for Imaginary Film* album. In preparation for this paper, retrospective think aloud commentaries with my collaborator, Mark Slater, have been recorded throughout the process. The paper will focus on the influence of the architectural spaces on the resulting musical output – the recording environment and its influence on the social groups involved – as well as the sonic characteristics afforded and their imprint on both the performances and the music.

I will also continue to work on many of the musical projects contained within the portfolio. The Breath will record and release a new album in 2020, with the focus of the recording pivoting around the vocal and acoustic guitar elements. *Solitude Part iii* will be more electronic, concentrating on developing percussive and textural sounds from the acoustic and electric guitars. *Music for Imaginary Film Part ii* will use more complex harmonic ideas as the seed for future music to give it an identity distinct from the *Music for Imaginary Film* (2019) album.

In conclusion, the key understanding that I have gained during this research is the development of the PCP model, which functions as an explanatory tool for my

ongoing practices. Understanding the complexity of the particular processes involved has allowed me to take an overview of the whole process of realising music as a recorded artefact. This broader perspective has both increased and given more variety to my musical output as I am able to make key decisions early in the writing/recording processes which gives more immediate shape and focus to each project. Furthermore, this model has clarified the multiple roles that I undertake in the creation of new music, at what stage(s) in the process each needs to be given more dominance, and how they need to be adapted to suit different musical situations.

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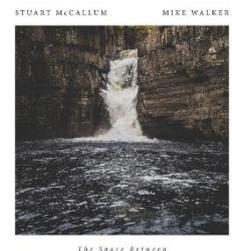
Appendix - Portfolio Credits

- Stuart McCallum – Seventh Tree
 - Stuart McCallum – guitars and programming
 - Luke Flowers – drums
 - Phil France – bass
 - Jamil Sheriff – piano
 - Ben Cashell – Cello
 - Tanah Stevens – Viola
 - Thol Mason – violin
 - Produced by Stuart McCallum
 - Recorded by Seadna Macphail at Airtight Studios, Manchester
 - Mixed by Yvonne Ellis at Rosehill Studios, Manchester

- The Breath – Child
 - Riognach Connolly – vocals
 - Stuart McCallum – guitars
 - John Ellis – piano
 - Robin Mullarkey – bass
 - Luke Flowers – drums
 - Iain Dixon – clarinet, bass clarinet, flute
 - Steve Cordiner, Dee Dee Roberts – violin
 - Tanah Stevens – viola
 - Rachel Shakespeare – cello
 - Rachael Gladwin – harp
 - Produced by Stuart McCallum
 - Recorded by Patrick Phillips at Real World Studios, Box
 - Mixed by Tchad Blake at Full Mongrel



- Stuart McCallum & Mike Walker
 - Stuart McCallum – acoustic guitar and programming
 - Mike Walker – electric guitar
 - Produced by Stuart McCallum
 - Recorded and mixed by Patrick Phillips at Real World Studios, Box



- The Breath – Let the Cards Fall
 - Riognach Connolly – vocals
 - Stuart McCallum – guitars
 - John Ellis – piano
 - Sam Vicary – bass
 - Luke Flowers – drums
 - Emma Sweeney – violin



- Ben Cashell – cello
- Caoimhin O Raghallaigh – hardanger fiddle
- Simmy Singh, Laura Senior – violin
- Lucy Nolan – viola
- Peggy Nolan – cello
- Produced by Stuart McCallum
- Recorded and mixed by Patrick Phillips at Real World Studios, Box

- **Stuart McCallum – Solitude**
 - Stuart McCallum – guitars
 - Produced by Stuart McCallum
 - Recorded by Stuart McCallum at CSR, Manchester and Duality Studio, Hull
 - Mixed by Patrick Phillips at Real World Studio, Box



- **Immix Ensemble – Bold by Name, Bold by Nature**
 - Jennifer Johns – vocals
 - Stuart McCallum – guitars
 - Daniel Thorne – saxophone
 - Simmy Singh – violin
 - Maya Kashif – cello
 - Michael Walsh – Oboe
 - Paul Duffy – trumpet
 - Jonathan Guy – bass clarinet
 - Produced by Stuart McCallum
 - Recorded by Patrick Phillips at St Georges Hall, Liverpool
 - Mixed by Stuart McCallum at CSR, Manchester

- **The Breath – Only Stories**
 - Rioghnach Connolly – vocals
 - Stuart McCallum – acoustic guitar
 - Produced by Stuart McCallum
 - Recorded and mixed by Oli Jacobs at Real World Studio, Box



- **Stuart McCallum – Solitude part ii**
 - Stuart McCallum – guitars
 - Produced by Stuart McCallum
 - Recorded by Stuart McCallum at CSR, Manchester
 - Mixed by Patrick Phillips at Real World Studio, Box



Stuart McCallum – Music for Imaginary Film

- Stuart McCallum – guitar
- Mark Slater – piano
- Stephanie Helsey – harp
- Simmy Singh, Laura Senior – violin
- Lucy Nolan – viola
- Peggy Nolan – cello
- Produced by Stuart McCallum and Mark Slater
- Recorded by Patrick Phillips, Stuart McCallum and Mark Slater at The Chapel, Duality Studios and Middleton Hall, University of Hull
- Mixed by Patrick Phillips at Real World Studio, Box