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Transmission Strategies and Blossoming Participants in My Composed Music

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by

Brice Catherin
diplôme d’enseignement du violoncelle (Lausanne)
diplôme de composition (Geneva)
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Abstract

This commentary accompanies a portfolio of six compositions written between 2017 and 2019 with different co-makers. It discusses the core question explored in this portfolio: how the idiosyncrasies of the participants (makers, performers, audience members) are highlighted and enhanced through the experience of the pieces, as well as the importance of the participants' blossoming in this process. The first chapter looks at the compositional and notational strategies that make this enhancement possible. The second chapter defines and explores in detail the nature of the blossoming, by thoroughly discussing each piece and type of participants.

The six pieces of the portfolio are intermedia co-creations. They range from solo to ensemble works and are for performers ranging from professionals to amateurs and students. They all rely on the benevolence of the participants, who are constantly being asked to make important and strategic decisions.

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LIST OF WORKS PRESENTED IN THE PORTFOLIO

Svioloncello, 2017

for voice, cello and luthier

Duration: 55 minutes ± 10 minutes.

Co-composed by Sophie Fetokaki and Brice Catherin with the technical expertise of Robin Jousson.

Brief description: Over the course of 55 minutes, the cellist disassembles a cello with a knife while playing it, exposing both the physical instrument and the source and structure of its sound. This brutal and at times violent process is accompanied by a performed text and some singing. The luthier assists the cellist in the disassembling.

Score: two PDF files. 1) The score itself; 2) The cards for the singer.

Recording: Video of the full performance with minimal editing from the première in Theater Perdu, Amsterdam (Netherlands), September 2017.

***“Make sure you have exhausted all that is communicated through stillness and silence”*, 2018**

for dancer and cellist

Duration: 180 minutes.

Co-created by Ioannis Mandafounis (dancer) and Brice Catherin (musician).

Brief description: Referred to as *Make sure* in the portfolio submission, the show consists of a series of six solos. Each performer has three solos of 20-, 30- and 40-minute durations in any order, alternating dance and music. (The show starts with dance or with music depending on the choice made for each given performance.) Note that the quotation marks are part of the title, which is unusual and might be considered wrong. However, Mandafounis and I wanted to explicitly emphasise that it was a quote. These words from *Notes sur le cinématographe* (Bresson, 1975) are pronounced by Jean-Luc Godard in the first episode of his *Histoire(s) du Cinéma* (1989).

Score: PDF created for the purpose of this portfolio only. There is no actual score for this piece. Its presence in my portfolio is justified by its influence on my following works, as I explain in the commentary.

Recordings: three full audio recordings (in nine MP3 files) recorded in Hull (UK) and Saint-Genis Pouilly (France) in 2018 with three different cellos, all performed by me. For context, the videos of the show are available on this page:

> http://www.akouphene.org/bricecatherin/DPmandafounisEN.php
> [accessed 10/03/2020]

Symphonie pour une femme seule, 2018

for solo trumpet, two ensembles (referred to as ‘improvisors’ and ‘free ensemble’), video, art installation and performance art

Duration: free, but expected to last longer than two hours.

Brice Catherin: composition and text; Mélissa Garcia Carro and Émilia Giudicelli: videos; Irene Gil Lopez: art installation; Manon Parent: performance art.

Subparts (to be performed in any order):

- ‘Four Piano Strings’, parts 1 and 2, for the soloist playing the piano;
- ‘Movement IV’, parts 1 and 2, for all the performers; ‘Movement IV’ is itself divided into the following subparts: ‘Verklärter Tag’, ‘Unknown Combination’ and a series called ‘Unknown Pieces’ that includes ‘Unknown Sound’, ‘Unknown Chord’, ‘Unknown Noise’, ‘Unknown Motive’, ‘Unknown Pair’, ‘Unknown Squad’ and ‘Unknown Instrument’;
- ‘Seven (or more) Hammer Ladies’, for the free ensemble;
- ‘∏’, for the soloist reading;
- ‘Le Baiser par Contagion’, performance art for all the performers.

Brief description: The soloist plays the trumpet and the piano, and also speaks. All the musicians participate in the performance art moment. *Symphonie* consists of a series of pieces of music, a spoken text (‘∏’) and a performance art moment (all listed above as subparts). The different subparts challenge the performers in various ways, from playing their instruments in exploratory ways to singing, playing unknown instruments and kissing each other. *Symphonie* also includes an art installation and videos that do not actively involve or solicit the performers. The score is also constituent of *Symphonie*. It is an artistic object in itself. It serves as an instruction manual for the performers, a journal of the première, and a collection of thoughts, anecdotes, fictions, poems and images by me and various guests.

Score: PDF of the self-published book. Due to the Covid-19 situation, it is impossible to submit the physical version of the book. The cello solos mentioned in the table of contents of the score are actually the recordings of *Make sure* (see above).

Appendices: pictures of the physical book; selection of scores written by the participants of ‘Le Baiser par Contagion’.

Recordings: The second performance in Huddersfield exceeded my expectations, surpassing the quality (in my view) of the première that had taken place in Hull a few days earlier. Unfortunately, the video quality of the former is terrible, while the video quality of the Hull version is excellent. Therefore, I have submitted the following: a video selection of my favourite moments of the première in Hull (December 2018); the full video with its extremely poor sound and video quality of the performance in Huddersfield (December 2018); my own studio recording of ‘Four Piano Strings’ in MP3 (Hull, 2018).

***Clitorides and Zebroids*, 2019**

for any two improvisors, mediator and audience

Duration: free.

Co-composed by Brice Catherin and Émilie Girard-Charest.

Brief description: In this piece, the audience members are invited to draw and write (on their phone, tablet or laptop) on a shared screen showing a number of performance/improvisation parameters. A mediator selects freely the audience's suggestions and shares them with the improvisors. The whole process takes place while the improvisers are performing, which makes it what I call a 'live composition by the audience'.

Score: PDF of the self-published book.

Appendix: the three pictures that were used on the online whiteboard for the première.

Recording: Full video recording of the première, performed by the composers, with Maria Sappho as the mediator (Huddersfield, 2019).

Watching Paint Dry, 2019

for any soloist or small ensemble.

Duration: free.

Co-composed by Brice Catherin and Maria Sappho (the composers are referred to as Mariabrice Sapphocatherin).

Brief description: The piece has two movements. In movement 1, the soloist paints on a large piece of paper using acrylic and/or India ink. In movement 2, the soloist improvises, strictly following rules of the game that depend on how the paint and the water dry. The piece ends when the painting is completely dry. With enough experience, the performer can anticipate the duration of the whole piece by using the appropriate amount of paint and water for them to dry approximately as planned. In the case of a small ensemble version, the performers follow the same instructions and perform simultaneously.

Score: the only correct version is the online version (Google slides): https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1MC4yaW9JNqTbU1O_EgT_5wOPAYfNBtAEefVVDoCNY5k/edit?usp=sharing [accessed 23/03/2020] No other format (PDF or other) could satisfyingly embed YouTube videos and GIFs. The Google slides document is also constantly up to date for all the holders of its link, unlike a PDF document that can become obsolete after revision from the composers. I added a PDF version in the portfolio for preview purposes only, as well as video files of all the Youtube videos available in the online score.

Recordings: Numerous video recordings of both parts are available within the score itself (in the online version only) by Maria Sappho (piano versions), Brice Catherin (cello versions), Eva Stavrou (flute versions) and Laurent Estoppey (saxophone versions). The links to these versions are:

Maria Sappho (piano):
https://youtu.be/NV83L8T7hY8
https://youtu.be/j6SOiI67nEM
https://youtu.be/jxsaCZKGpUQ

https://youtu.be/WCm60ihLtbw

Brice Catherin (cello):
https://youtu.be/FobVWCoij0Y
https://youtu.be/Fs7hbqygCTQ
https://youtu.be/dHh86rjB4Y0
https://youtu.be/G12qhBi5zxo

Eva Stavrou (flute):
https://youtu.be/Pcl-4jeRFTM
https://youtu.be/wJsg1OJSdv4

Laurent Estoppey (saxophone):
https://youtu.be/D_gjAEJYbJw
https://youtu.be/HqQmeeS6e2g
https://youtu.be/yEJZwwPE7Pc
[All accessed 19/05/2020]

***Kinderlebenslieder*, 2019**

for a class of flautists and their teacher

Duration: free.

Composed by Brice Catherin, with the participation of Mélissa Garcia Carro for the dance part and Maria Sappho for the visual arts part.

Subparts (to be performed in any order):

- ‘Kinderlebensworte’, instruction for all the performers to write texts that will be spoken by one or more performers;
- ‘Melody and extended humours’, for all the performers;
- ‘Πίστευε στην Γκαλίνα Ουστβόλσκαγια και μη ερεύνα’ (‘Believe in Galina Ustvolskaya and doubt not’), for all the performers;
- ‘Torsion for kids’, for the most advanced performers;
- ‘Kinderlebensbilder’, instruction for all the performers to take selfies;
- ‘Kinderlebenskunstwerke’, instruction for all the performers to make visual art;
- ‘Kinderlebensunheimliche’, instruction for all performers’ parents and guardians to not interfere;

Brief description: *Kinderlebenslieder* (for ‘songs on the life of children’) follows the same principles as *Symphonie*, except that the pupils have to participate more in the writing of the pieces and the making of the visual artworks. It consists of a series of different pieces too. ‘Melody and extended humours’ explores extended techniques and collective improvisation. ‘Πίστευε στην Γκαλίνα Ουστβόλσκαγια και μη ερεύνα’ (‘Believe in Galina Ustvolskaya and doubt not’) requires the pupils to handle structures and durations. ‘Torsion for kids’, for the advanced pupils, explores physicality, by asking them to dance while playing. In ‘Kinderlebensbilder’ and ‘Kinderlebenskunstwerke’, the pupils are asked to take photos following certain instructions, make art in 2D and 3D, conceptualise art without necessarily making it, and write their thoughts on pain, death, love and freedom. Eventually, they are in charge of organising all these different visual arts and sonic objects together.

Score: the only correct version is the PDF, that can be read on any device (computer, tablet, smartphone). Exploring the PDF (browsing, zooming in and out) is part of the process. I printed out a poster of a previous version of the score, which is more for decoration or amusement, as I discuss in the commentary in section 1.8. It was 156.25 × 150 cm instead of the 180.63 × 173.41 cm specified in the full-size PDF file because of the limitations of the largest available printer at the University of Huddersfield.

Appendix: A photo of the poster of the previous version of *Kinderlebenslieder*, slightly smaller than the PDF specifications, with the composer for scale.

Absence of recording: The lockdown due to Covid-19 was announced just a week before the planned première of *Kinderlebenslieder*. This means that no performance could take place, but the piece had already been extensively rehearsed by Eva Stavrou, the commissioner of this piece, and her students. Therefore, through email and text message conversations, Eva Stavrou has been able to provide a number of comments that I have used in this commentary, but no recording can be included in the portfolio due to the restrictions in place during the pandemic.

COMMENTARY

Research aims and introduction

All the pieces of my portfolio orbit around questions of idiosyncrasy. These questions rose at different stages of my personal musical journey. Raised as a strictly classical musician, holder of two conservatoire diplomas as a cellist and a composer, I discovered almost simultaneously in my early twenties works and practices that totally transformed my understanding of music. I was amazed by how Morton Feldman and John Cage (most notably in his number pieces) would challenge temporality and create music that seemed atemporal. I understood with Galina Ustvolskaya and Iannis Xenakis the importance and fascination for the exploration of new, radical sonic territories. Even though I quickly distanced myself from Georges Aperghis and Maurizio Kagel, they taught me the benefits of colliding music with other artistic practices, which led me towards more and more collaborative works. While I was discovering free improvisation as a practitioner thanks to my friends (I played it before I had heard any of it, or even knew it was a thing), I also encountered Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Aus den Sieben Tagen* (1968), again, as a performer rather than a listener. (I listened to his own recordings only years later.) This score was an epiphany in terms of how music can be created from stimulating the performers rather than from delivering ready-made, detailed (in a traditional way) music scores. It also opened up for me the immense spectrum ranging from strictly notated music to free improvisation and triggered the desire to explore it, as well as to reflect on transmission. I understood only later that most of the friends I was improvising with had a background in jazz and free jazz (with influences ranging from John Coltrane to John Zorn), which might be the origin of many of the tools and ideas I use and develop: extended and, more importantly, idiosyncratic instrumental techniques and musical ideas, as well as the ability to think and make music as a group, in opposition to the classical idea of a performer at the service of a omnipotent lone composer (whichever side of this contract I would be on, whether I'd wear my cellist's hat or my composer's hat). Naturally, rejecting the omnipotent composer / servant performer norm forced me to reflect on the creative responsibilities and qualities of the performers. Eventually, my personal history led me, as a composer, to consider the idiosyncrasies of all the participants—the co-makers, the performers, and the audience members—which are explored through four main questions in this commentary:

1) How does a music project relate to and celebrate the participants and their idiosyncrasies?

In order to explore this question, my works try to highlight and magnify the participants' idiosyncrasies, as well as address, understand and celebrate what these idiosyncrasies bring to a composed music project. Therefore, they should first of all offer to the participants the opportunity to blossom (enhance, and possibly discover their idiosyncrasies) through them.

2) How does this celebration of idiosyncrasies impact the participants' positions and responsibilities?

I use a number of strategies to address this question and answer it in various ways. Each piece puts the performers and the audience in different situations and results in a systematic and ongoing exploration of these positions and responsibilities.

3) Why are intermedia works and collaborations helpful and necessary for the blossoming of participants?

I explain why I think collaborations, both with other musicians and with artists of other disciplines, are an efficient tool for the exploration and the connection of idiosyncrasies. I show why they spontaneously became my compositional prerequisite by default, to the extent that all the works of this portfolio are and can only be the fruit of collaborations. Most of these collaborations result in intermedia works which I also describe as 'polyphony of media'.

4) How can I notate scores that highlight, depend upon and foreground the idiosyncrasies of all the possible participants and for all future possible performances?

The term 'composed music' used in the title of this commentary implies transmission through scores and possibly other documents. My fourth question raises a number of sub-questions. How can I account for the fact that the same participants will be different (older, in a different mood, in a different atmosphere) from one performance to the next? How do I make pieces that are the same but different every time they are repeated? How can I celebrate and transmit impermanence? How do I give the participants the confidence to explore new territories, or explore the same territories in new ways, at each iteration of a piece? How do I take into account the knowledge (and its possible limitations) of all the participants? How can I write down and transmit all these strategies?

In this commentary, I organise these questions into two separate chapters for clarity: 1) Compositional and notational strategies; and 2) Blossoming participants. I also explain how these topics require and allow each other. Most of these questions are inspired by my practice of experimental music, from Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Aus den Sieben Tagen* (1968) to Moss Freed's *Micromotives* (2018), free improvisation (with small and large ensembles), as well as my reading of ethnography (Devereux, 1980a, 1980b; Levi-Strauss, 1955). I use the expression 'experimental music' Along the lines of John Cage's explanation. I find it usefully inclusive and open, while still setting a strong frame:

> [Experimental music happens when] attention moves towards the observation and audition of many things at once, including those that are environmental—becomes, that is, inclusive rather than exclusive—no question of making, in the sense of forming understandable structures, can arise (one is tourist), and here the word "experimental" is apt, providing it is understood not as descriptive of an act to be later judged in terms of success and failure, but simply as of an act the outcome of which is unknown. (Cage, 1973:13)

As for the expression 'free improvisation', I use Derek Bailey's statement for the same reasons:

> Freely improvised music is an activity which encompasses too many different kinds of players, too many different attitudes to music, too many different concepts of what improvisation is, even, for it all to be subsumed under one name. […] Diversity is its most consistent characteristic. It has no stylistic or idiomatic commitment. It has no prescribed idiomatic sound. The characteristics of freely improvised music are established only by the sonic-musical identity of the person or persons playing it. (Bailey, 1992:83)

In the first chapter, I describe some of my compositional strategies and how they are specific to my work. I mostly focus on global strategies: how to think, organise and generate a work in its entirety—its global form—rather than in parts. In the second chapter, I explain why I would like each project to be enriching for the performer who is both an instrumentalist (a technician) and an individual (a human being with a personality and a soul). I discuss why I think that this is important for the performers of a music project, as well as all the other participants (composers, audience members) and for the sonic output—the music—itself.

I illustrate each chapter with concrete examples from my portfolio. I use mostly examples from *Svioloncello* (2017) and *Symphonie pour une Femme Seule* (2018).[1] In *Svioloncello*, most of these concepts were already present, and then developed in my other works. Furthermore, I can use this piece to talk from both the composer's and the performer's point of view, which allows for different types of insights. Since we performed it a number of times, the different versions also led to significant observations. With *Symphonie*, I am able to demonstrate how I transmit the concepts that I discuss in this commentary to fellow performers. In a way, *Symphonie* is almost a manifesto for my music, since it includes and develops most of my ideas, while *Clitorides & Zebroids* (2019) as well as *Watching Paint Dry* (2019) explore only very specific aspects of my work. *"Make sure you have exhausted all that is communicated through silence and stillness"* (2018)[2] served as a preparatory work for *Symphonie*. Most of what I learnt from *Make sure* was pure serendipity but proved to be a stepping stone in my work. I use examples from *Clitorides & Zebroids*, *Watching Paint Dry* and *Make sure* whenever they illustrate a point better than *Svioloncello* and *Symphonie* would, or whenever they illustrate a new one. As for *Kinderlebenslieder* (2019), it is somewhat like an instruction manual for how to build one's own *Symphonie*. It further develops the concepts I have explored during my PhD and in *Symphonie* in particular. It also throws light on some of the mechanisms of my craftsmanship. I discuss *Kinderlebenslieder* in various parts of the commentary and more particularly in the final section 2.5 *The children trusted will always be blossoming*. Here, I explore the idiosyncrasies of children and students, as well as the way the celebration of such idiosyncrasies can become a powerful pedagogical tool.

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[1] I refer to *Symphonie pour une Femme Seule* as *Symphonie* in the rest of the commentary.

[2] I refer to it as *Make sure* in the rest of the commentary.

1 Compositional and notational strategies

1.1 Co-creation and interdisciplinarity

A few years ago, I sent a recording of my cello concerto *Winterreise* (2010) to a famous and generous professor of a French National Conservatoire who agreed to give me some feedback. He loved the piece, and particularly its beautiful colours. When I sent him the score, he found out that the ensemble part was open to any number and types of instruments. He was shocked. ‘But how can you control the colours this way?’ I trusted the performers with improvising the colours, the dynamics and the live orchestration following simple instructions. It seemed to work, since the professor loved the recording. But he was not happy with this answer. A similar discussion took place a bit later with a fantastic composer and professor at a famous American university. She had been following my work and encouraging me for a few years, until I showed her *Svioloncello* (2017), a collaboration between two composers and a luthier. Her words were ‘you cannot control the piece if you’re not writing it alone’. In the world where I come from, the myth of the lone genius is still very strong, and the idea of control surprisingly rigid. These are ideas I had to fight against. It does not matter that musicians have been working otherwise for a long time. In his popular book *Group Genius*, Keith Sawyer (2008) debunks methodically the myth of the lone genius by using examples from the arts, the army and the business world. He makes his view very clear already in the introduction of the book: 1) ‘collaboration drives innovation’ (p. xi); 2) ‘the most effective collaborations are improvisational’ (pp. xi - xii); and 3) even ‘[Scientists]’ve shown how we all can tap into the creative power of collaboration to make our own insights more frequent and more successful.’ (p. xiii) *Distributed Creativity: How Collective Creations Emerge From Collaboration*, an article Sawyer wrote with Stacy DeZutter (Sawyer & DeZutter, 2009), demonstrates how ‘distributed creativity’ specifically works in an improvised theatre context, and in artistic contexts in general. In the introduction of *Distributed Creativity: Collaboration and Improvisation in Contemporary Music*, Eric F. Clarke and Mark Doffman (2017) brush a landscape of contemporary music that strongly resembles mine. Then through the book itself, they share and discuss a collection of informal personal experiences and thoughts by practitioners. They eventually demonstrate, similarly to Sawyer and DeZutter for experimental theatre, the importance and specificities of collaboration in contemporary music, just like their title promised. My journey was entirely practical, not theoretical, and it is through practice that I arrived empirically to the conclusions that Sawyer, DeZutter, Clake and Doffman reached academically.

Why, then, do I put myself together with other makers? Why are all the works of my portfolio the fruits of collaborations? Why, consequently, do I use the pronoun ‘we’ a lot? Through experience, I came to understand how co-composition in the context of contemporary written music might offer me some advantages that solitary work does not. Collaborations bring me to paths of thought I would never have embarked upon spontaneously because I would never have imagined them on my own. They confront me with new challenges and make me invent new ways of writing, as well as new solutions to new problems. They also unearth some of my own idiosyncrasies and those of my collaborators that I find exciting to explore. Collaborations allow me to use my skills in new contexts, to expand these skills (probably more than whatever I could achieve on my own), and also to offer to performers new challenges that we, collaborators, could only think of by challenging each other in the first place.

An inspiring precedent I need to mention is choreographer Ioannis Mandafounis’s work, especially on *Nu* with Emilia Giudicelli (2017) and *Sing the positions* with Manon Parent (2017). These shows were very different from Mandafounis’s other shows that I knew. They were also different from both Giudicelli’s and Parent’s personal works, as I would understand later when discovering them. Both *Nu* and *Sing the positions* used Mandafounis’s very peculiar movement vocabulary and technique. But Giudicelli had arranged a very unique setting for their performance: the two artists were dancing in two separate rooms, for one audience member at a time; both dancers and audience members were totally naked. It is perhaps needless to explain that the situation created a very special atmosphere and relationship between the spectator and the dancer. In *Nu*, the emphasis switched from the dancers themselves to the relationship and the intimacy between the audience and the artists. This relationship had always been a part of Mandafounis's concerns in all his shows, but Giudicelli challenged him by making it the core of the performance rather than a simple element. As for Parent, she made Mandafounis and herself dance and play music with various instruments, electronics and voice, at the same time and for one full hour. This extraordinarily virtuosic performance had all kinds of unforeseen effects: bodies moved differently when holding instruments; breathing was different when one was singing or playing the recorder; and the music was impacted in various fascinating ways by the moving, jumping, rolling, running, exhausted bodies. What I witnessed in these two shows was the alchemical products of these different, sometimes contradictory, but always benevolent minds interacting together on stage. In a private conversation, Mandafounis (2020) confirmed my assumptions: both *Nu* and *Sing the positions* brought him to places where he 'would not have dared to venture alone'. In these works, he brought twenty years of experience and talent, but also learnt new skills (for example, Mandafounis is not a musician and had to learn to play all these instruments from scratch), as well as new ways of being on stage and interacting with the audience. In my opinion these shows are exemplary models of collaboration: they bring the makers to new creative places and generate new social interactions between both colleagues and audience. They flourish on the benevolence of all the parties. Their outcomes are more unpredictable than anything the parties might anticipate.

Co-creation also helps us understand what can only be achieved alone. The most obvious example is also possibly the most complicated one to grasp and define: identity. In my collaborations, I abandon the idea of making a musical object that has my identity, or my collaborator's identity, just like in Mandafounis's aforementioned shows. It has a new identity, which is the product, and not the sum, of the makers' identities. This is why Maria Sappho and I created the name Mariabrice Sapphocatherin to sign *Watching Paint Dry* and some other works that I mention in this commentary: to identify and personify this new two-headed creature, Maria Sappho times Brice Catherin. If we want to keep our stylistic identity, we do not need collaborators but assistants, dividing the tasks clearly. This is what we did on *Kinderlebenslieder*: it is my piece, with the participation of Maria Sappho for a specific piece of the show, ‘Kinderlebenskunstwerke’. The layout of the score of *Kinderlebenslieder* has been designed by the same two people, but because it is an actual collaboration, as opposed to an independent participation, it is signed ‘Mariabrice Sapphocatherin’, as it reads on the score itself vertically on the white stain on the right of the pink box. These different types of collaboration also helped me understand and explore my idiosyncrasies, such as my use of time, the exploration of timbre and my interest for untrained voices. Without the dialectic between my collaborators and me, I would not have dug so deeply into these questions that I discuss later in this commentary.

All the works of my portfolio provide different answers to the questions ‘what do my collaborators bring that I could not figure out by myself?’ and ‘what do I bring to my collaborators that they could not figure out by themselves?’. These collaborators make me write in ways I would not were it not for them, as I discuss throughout this commentary. However, *Symphonie* is a bit more complex. Asking other artists to design the performance art moment, the installation and the videos was not simply a matter of technicalities. I write art performances myself[3] and produce visual artworks at times.[4] For both *Symphonie* on stage and *Symphonie* as a score, it was a matter of consistency: a work about being individuals together needed to be co-designed by individuals together. It was also a matter of contrast: I wanted *Symphonie* to be as colourful and extravagant as possible. This approach is very similar to John Cage’s idea of the ‘total spectrum’. On this topic, Michael Nyman writes that ‘Cage’s intention with this “total spectrum” was “to hold together extreme disparities, much as one finds them held together in the natural world, as, for instance, in a forest or on a city street”’ (1999:65). The city street of *Symphonie* calls all these different passers-by on stage, and all these other passers-by in the score as a visual and textual art item. It was also a matter of questioning contexts: what is the meaning of an art installation in a musical work? What is the meaning of an art performance for musicians? What is the meaning of a seven-minute-long text in a two-hour-long musical work? Eventually, my role as a composer expanded to include at least three layers: organising the counterpoint between musicians; organising the counterpoint between art forms (music, text, video, art performance, installation); and organising the counterpoint between makers of the work on stage, makers of the work as a score, and performers. Just like a counterpoint of notes is more than the sum of its individual voices, I tried to demonstrate that a good counterpoint of media and makers can create a complex and somehow mysterious polyphony of media, ideas, and poetry, following Cage's idea of the 'total spectrum'.

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[3] For example, *Série Patriarcale*, signed as Mariabrice Sapphocatherin (2019b).

[4] For example, *Edible Series*, 100 tattooed paper, as Mariabrice Sapphocatherin (2019a).

Organising the counterpoint between makers of different disciplines led to asking the participants to handle more than one discipline: the makers and the performers become interdisciplinary artists in *Symphonie*, *Watching Paint Dry*, and, more radically, in *Kinderlebenslieder*. Many artists throughout history have been active in more than one discipline: Michelangelo also wrote poetry;[5] Victor Hugo was an incredible illustrator.[6] But it seems that it became normal practice for artists to demonstrate this diversity in single pieces of art only much later, with the rise of intermedia practices. Before the Fluxus movement in the mid-1960s popularised intermedia works (Higgins & Higgins, 2001), Erik Satie pioneered and utilised fully the concept of counterpoint of practices. His ballet *Relâche*[7] (1924b), after a libretto by Francis Picabia, includes a film called *Entr'acte*.[8] This film was directed by René Clair and stars Erik Satie and Francis Picabia. The score of this film, *Cinéma* (1924a), was composed by Erik Satie, and is to be performed by the orchestra in the pit.[9] A composer and a writer act in a film titled *Entr'acte* that plays during the interval of a ballet called *Relâche*. The puns, the artists traveling from one media to another, the connections, and the content itself of the ballet and the film create a vertiginous counterpoint of practices. Closer to us, qb, an intermedia duo by York-based artists Lynette Quek and Gaia Blandina, created their *Collage 3* in 2018. In this totally undocumented project[10] that I had the chance to see and hear in Hull, Quek and Blandina put together video (that they shot and edited themselves), poetry (by Blandina) and music (saxophone, cello and lo-fi electronics, performed by both artists) in what was one of the most consistent, poetic and refined shows I have ever seen. Particularly impressive is the complexity of the counterpoint they created between their practices with a setting that they could bring along by train: a video projector, two portable speakers, two laptops and their instruments.

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[5] *The complete poems of Michelangelo* (2000).

[6] *Dessins* (1985).

[7] *Relâche* means 'rest', for 'no performance today', in the specific context of theatres and opera houses.

[8] *Entr'acte* means 'interval' in the context of performances.

[9] It is also believed to be the first film score ever and the first use of a film in a ballet, according to Ornella Volta (2000).

By asking my performers to be, like Erik Satie or the members of qb, interdisciplinary performers, my wish is to create new counterpoints between sound and action (‘Le Baiser par Contagion’ in *Symphonie*), sound and image (*Watching Paint Dry*, *Kinderlebenslieder*), sound, text and instrument making (*Svioloncello*), as well as sound, text, and visual art (*Kinderlebenslieder*). I do not want to propose universal ontological reasons to create interdisciplinary works. I can only speak intuitively and naively for myself: each discipline I explore triggers emotions of different natures. Each of my projects develops a theme (often secret). Sometimes, this theme requires to be observed using different lenses corresponding to different types of sensitivity. Different types of sensitivity allow different types of emotions that can be born only from those different disciplines. For example, the secret theme of *Symphonie* is a ‘partial portrait of the artist during the summer of 2018’. It required me to make music and words, to talk about things and people that I love, but also make and offer time and space for these things and these people that I love, both on stage and in the score. This could only be achieved through a multiplicity of disciplines, with the idea of *femme seule* as a centre of gravity around which everything revolves.

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[10] Their first two *Collages*, without live music (unlike the *Collage 3* that they perform when on stage) are in the list of references under Quek (2017).

In *Kinderlebenslieder*, the (not so) secret theme is ‘partial portraits of the performing children on the day they perform’. I do not wish to reduce these pupils to their function—being apprentice musicians—but instead I am interested in them as young humans. I want to give them time and space to tell us whatever they want to share with us: what do they think (‘Kinderlebensworte’)? Who do they love (‘Kinderlebensbilder’)? How do they move (‘Torsion for kids’)? What art can be born in their hands (‘Kinderlebenskunstwerke’)? Both as a maker and as an audience member, I am more interested in seeing humans rather than technicians on stage. The more I know about these specific people performing on that specific day, the more I can identify (or not) with them. Through our differences and our similartities, I can understand a bit of what defines me and a bit of what defines human nature. In a nutshell, I try to show that interdisciplinary works can build complex, rich emotional and empathetic bridges between human individuals.

1.2 Time

After this global overview of my works, let us now go back to basic parameters and state the obvious: time is the heart of the matter in music. In *The Time of Music*, Jonathan Kramer summarises it efficiently:

> Does music exist in time or does time exist in music? This question is not simply a semantic game. If we believe primarily that music exists in time, then we take time as an absolute, as an external reality, as somehow apart from the experiences it contains. […] If we believe in the time that exists uniquely in music, then we begin to glimpse *the power of music to create, alter, distort, or even destroy time itself*. (Kramer, 1988:5, emphasis as in the original)

As musicians, we are trained to manage time. As performers of written music, we choose *tempi* by mixing knowledge and intuition: the knowledge of what we assume was the composer’s expectation; the intuition of ‘what will sound best’ according to our experience and our taste, assuming we have the technical facility to do so. As improvisers, we can explore a given situation for the amount of time that we feel is meaningful and leave this situation when we feel it has been exhausted, or it has been explored enough, again, according to our taste and experience. Bailey’s canonical book *Improvisation* dedicates thirty pages to free improvisation (1992:83-112), in which he mentions styles, forms, instruments, recording, reacting, practicing, but not once time. Browsing through the eight available volumes of John Zorn's *Arcana* (2001-2017), the topic is not discussed extensively by any improvisor either. This tends to demonstrate that such a parameter is not typically questioned nor challenged by improvisors.

So, what happens when the performers of a musical work do not control time, and particularly the duration and pace of each musical element? My pieces address this question of challenging time habits in at least two ways.

1) By asking the performers to continue exploring a given situation even and particularly after they feel it has been exhausted. This way, they have to find more material, solutions and variations for whatever they are doing than they would have spontaneously found had they stopped when it felt comfortable. This is the case in *Make sure*, *Symphonie* and *Kinderlebenslieder*. In the instructions to 'Movement IV' of *Symphonie*, I write: 'Do not change any sound before it is done living a long, happy, sometimes epic life. But transform it constantly, let it bloom. Trust your sound, let it live the life it wants to live, just accompany it the best you can' (pp. 19-20). A few pages later, I add a tongue-in-cheek comment for the soloist: 'If at any point you think you have been transforming your material slowly enough, and you developed it long enough, you are probably wrong! Keep it longer and transform it more slowly!' (p. 22).

   In some pieces, I indicate a minimum duration for the whole or for each part. For example, the first part of 'Four Piano Strings' in *Symphonie* has a duration of '7 minutes or more' (p. 10). Such durations rely on nothing more than my years of experience and my intuition and might be lived very differently by different performers. Intuition escapes analysis by definition. I can only say that I often adjust these intuitive minimum durations by experimenting them, alone or with a group of performers, before I write them down on a score. Such durations correspond to the moment when I believe (according to these experiments and experience) that the performers will be likely to get out of their habits, and the music will escape from rhetorical form, as a series of events building up towards a climax, and switch to some kind of timeless form in which each event exists for itself: each moment is its own climax.

2) By letting time be controlled by a totally foreign and unpredictable third party: a mediator (*Clitorides & Zebroids*); or paint drying (*Watching Paint Dry*). This way, the performers are on the edge, constantly ready to jump to another sonic situation if time is interrupted (*Clitorides & Zebroids*, in which the two performers must react musically and without delay to any suggestion shared by the mediator), or ready to keep on exploring a given situation if time is unpredictably suspended (*Watching Paint Dry*). In the score of *Watching Paint Dry*, we, Mariabrice Sapphocatherin, write:

   > The duration is dependent on the speed of drying of the water on the card. This duration will vary according to different parameters: humidity and temperature of the venue; amount of water you will use to paint; type of card you will use. Practice for the needs of your specific duration. If you want the piece to be about 15 minutes long, make enough experiments to be able to estimate the appropriate amount of water. Error may occur, and therefore, you might also decide a maximum duration and not go beyond it even if the water is not totally dry.

   In spite of all these precautions, and because we have recorded a number of versions, we (the composers) know by experience that it is virtually impossible to anticipate how quickly the paint and the water will dry. Even more challenging is the quasi impossibility for the performers of mentally projecting the two parameters they are asked to focus on over such a long period of time: the density of the improvisation and the blurriness of the sonic material (see p. 10 of the score for detail). This is the situation that makes, in my experience, time feel unpredictably suspended.

During informal conversations I had with the performers of all these pieces, including Ioannis Mandafounis, the dancer of *Make sure*, they all agreed that the time constraint was the most difficult one to manage due to its unusualness, and the most inspiring one. They all had to dig deeper than usual into their own practice.

In *Svioloncello*, time management is somehow more traditional than in the other pieces of the portfolio. Sophie Fetokaki and I aimed to keep a constant dramatic tension. This meant that a single sonic situation could not be explored for too long. The situations do build up towards a climax: the moment when the cello becomes voiceless, or 'stringless'. Thus, one could speak of a rhetorical form for *Svioloncello*. Nevertheless, we did indicate durations for each part that seemed necessary and long enough for the performers to explore, if not thoroughly, at least meaningfully each of these sonic situations for themselves, as their own climax. By 'meaningfully', I am thinking of a duration that goes beyond the gimmicky aspect of dismantling an instrument. Such durations, and what we perceive as 'exploring meaningfully a situation' rely purely on our experimentation over several weeks with the dismantled cello and our subjective perception.

1.3 Exploring sound

Influenced by instrumental drone music that I have performed as a member of the Insub Meta Orchestra since 2010[11] and *musique concrète* such as Heinz Holliger's *Trema* (1981) and *Studie über Mehrklänge* (1971), most of the pieces of my portfolio are mostly about exploring sounds over long durations. All of them except *Clitorides & Zebroids* create a situation and let it evolve as organically as possible. (*Clitorides & Zebroids* is excluded from this list because it explores situations for unpredictable and highly variable durations.) By 'organically', I mean as naturally as possible, as opposed to a rhetorical form that relies on contrasted and ever-changing situations (for example a sonata form movement). Each piece sets one single situation at a time and explores it in as much detail as possible. An example from *Make sure* best explains it: if I start a sound with the bow very far from the bridge, a bit of overpressure, a certain bow speed and one finger of my left-hand laying lightly (without pressure) on the string, I might get a very peculiar multiphonic. Changing only one of these parameters at a time, for example the bow pressure, I will be able to explore this sound, pascal of pressure by pascal of pressure. Performed with enough sensitivity, this exploration of sound becomes a musical form on its own. This is also the situation in ‘Movement IV’ and ‘Four Piano Strings’ in *Symphonie*, as well as in ‘Melody and extended humours’ in *Kinderlebenslieder*.

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[11] See Insub. (n.d.)

In terms of perception, once a situation has been set, there is no surprise, no Beethovenian *sforzando*. But unlike the idea of minimalist music in the 1960s, in which processes are set off and left to play out, therefore also making the works willingly predictable, in my works the process that plays out in each situation remains unknown or blurry. This is because, metaphorically speaking, the situation serves as a seed. Then, it is the responsibility of the performers to let the seed grow, to take care of it, until it blossoms, dies, dries out and vanishes into dust. Depending on how finely and carefully performers make the seed grow, how able they are to separate and develop each parameter of their sound, time will be stretched to various extents, but in no case may it be rushed, and the sonic outcome of the seed will greatly depend on the way it is handled by the performers. Here the material (the seed that the performers grow) generates, ‘create[s], alter[s], distort[s], or even destroy[s] time’, to return to Kramer’s words (1988:5). The time strategy that I discussed in the previous section and the seed strategy discussed here lead to the same result: in order to let the seed grow, the performers have to keep exploring a given sonic situation. Conversely, by taking time to explore a given sonic situation, they will let the seed grow.

Svioloncello is in a particular situation regarding the seed metaphor. Time is framed more tightly because in this piece Fetokaki and I wanted to keep some kind of dramatic tension. Yet, the idea of exploring a situation and letting the seed grow still applies, only differently, even though this growth antinomically entails the dismantlement (as a metaphorical destruction) of the cello. I need to give some context about this piece, first. This is how Fetokaki, the primary initiator of *Svioloncello*, describes the piece:

> [*Svioloncello* highlights] the difficulty of reducing the value of an object to any one parameter – the labour that went into making the object; the object’s symbolic significance; its sentimental value; its

> monetary value; its cultural or historical significance, and so forth. Yet we want to resist this difficulty, when faced with it; unnecessary destruction elicits emotional and ethical responses in us, and we want to establish what exactly it is that makes us feel uncomfortable – and often to make normative statements about why the practice is unethical. (Fetokaki, 2018)

Her conceptual idea led to the main, simple constraint of *Svioloncello*: the cellist should open the cello with a knife (which would a normal procedure for a luthier) in the left hand, while playing it with the bow in the right hand. The left hand can be used to change the pitches of the strings—its traditional task—during the short transitions between two stages of dismantlement. During the whole process, from the initial experiments to the series of performances, we realised that no state of dismantlement sounds the same from one rehearsal to the next, nor one performance to the next.

The luthier prepares the cello by gluing its parts with a much lighter glue than normal, and a hidden cable inside the body. The cable prevents the cello from collapsing on itself due to the tension of the strings when removing the table and the back (see score, p. 3, for more detailed explanations). The glue, because it is handmade, is always different, making the process of opening the instrument either quick and painless, long and difficult, or a random combination of the two; that is, *unpredictable*. The tuning of the instrument changes every time a part is removed: first the sound post, then the table, then the back, then the fingerboard, then the strings one by one. But the tuning changes differently every time, because the tension of the hidden cable is always slightly different. The way the instrument reacts at each stage also varies. In performance, sometimes the sides vibrate beautifully (watch moment 21:00 of the video, and one of my personal favourites, moment 22:40), like some kind of marine trumpet—a Medieval bowed string instrument with a hurdy-gurdy-like drone, unlike what its name suggests.[12] Sometimes the sides hardly react at all.

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[12] See Society of strange and ancient instruments (2019).

For all these uncertainties, there is no way for the performer to know what the instrument will sound like before playing it. We have performed this piece about ten times, and not once was I able to anticipate how the cello would react at any stage of the dismantlement. Therefore, each initial sound of a given stage of dismantlement was *de facto* a seed that I had to take as it was, take care of, listen to, grow and play with. Unsurprisingly, this is precisely what led me to develop the idea of a sonic seed in *Make Sure*, and later on in most of the other pieces of my portfolio.

1.4 Unlearning, not learning, embracing impermanence

Performers and improvisors have an incredible catalogue of techniques. This knowledge often operates like roads crossing a territory: one can travel the territory, but as many roads as there are, one does not explore the areas between the roads anymore. Bailey puts it quite radically:

> However one learns to play an instrument it is always for a specific task. The Indian player, after successful study with his master, is fitted to play Indian music. […] [Education] limits its adherents' ability to perform in other musical areas. (Bailey, 1992:99)

Forgetting about the roads and pretending the sonic territory is entirely new in order to (re)discover it require unlearning one's skills and even forgetting one's education. In *Svioloncello*, *Symphonie* and *Kinderlebenslieder* I am trying not to map territories, but to share techniques to get off-road. If I extend the metaphor, I would say that this is one of the reasons why my music is often slow. When one explores new territories off-road, it is safer to proceed on foot than with the racing car of knowledge. This way, one is also able to enjoy fully each single footstep. A particularly radical example, I think, is my version of 'Four Piano Strings' (in the portfolio). The outcome of each single keystroke is so unpredictable, and often so beautiful, that the more I play it, the slower I go, because I want to enjoy each note and each combination of those notes.

One way to unlearn skills and techniques is to make certain elements of the performance (the instrument, the score, or any other item of the given performance) mutable. When a piece of mine is repeated, it is the same but also different, possibly unrecognisably so, just like a given landscape will be totally different if you look at it on the next day, the next season, or the next decade. There is no ideal version for all eternity, only a possible version for each iteration. Nyman talks about pieces that ‘throw up momentary configurations which have no sooner happened than they are past: the experimental composer is interested not in the uniqueness of *permanence* but in the uniqueness of the moment’ (1999:9; emphasis as in the original). Unlearning is a powerful tactic to create unique moments because it prevents the performers from fixating on a single version. Sappho briefly mentions the ‘practice of impermanence’ in our score *Watching Paint Dry* (p. 2). During a private conversation on this topic, she said:

> Specifically, in the context of that piece, the idea is to get people to interact with something that is not going to stay the same for very long. It’s the idea that the material is visually fleeting. It represents a lot of my practice not wanting to see things that are concrete. It has to deal with authorship. If something is not permanent, it leaves open the idea that we have ownership over making the thing, but not the ownership over keeping the thing. […] The practice of impermanence is irrational from a Western social viewpoint. It is not about doing something to leave a legacy. It’s about the process, not the product. (Sappho, 2020)

That having been said, how can we celebrate and transmit impermanence? Instructions for improvisation are the most obvious means, while working with impermanent aspects of an instrument is another. The sounds of ‘Four Piano Strings’ (in *Symphonie*) rely on so many parameters that they become *de facto* unpredictable: a different pressure of the finger laying on the string, a different attack on the keyboard, and, more simply, a different size and brand of piano all produce a different sound. In *Svioloncello*, opening up the cello with a knife makes it react totally differently from a normal cello, and differently from one performance to the next. In ‘Movement IV’ in *Symphonie*, I ask all the performers to tune down their instruments so that they physically react differently. Through these constraints, my performers trade their catalogue of techniques (as impressive as it can be) for a new and continuous land of techniques that organically lead from one to the other. Eventually this continuous land offers (even) more colours than a catalogue of known techniques.

A fascinating observation regarding this continuous land is that it is limitless. As performers, when we think we are finished exploring a given territory, we soon realise that we can change the magnitude of our exploratory lens and explore again in finer detail. This claim is supported by my personal experience and discussions I had with some of my performers. For example, Katharina Gohl Moser (2020), the commissioner of *Watching Paint Dry*, described this limitlessness using a different metaphor: 'Working on the piece surprises me more and more; it's like peeling an onion that is never over; [there is] always a new exciting and aromatic layer that comes out…' (my translation from French). An example from *Make sure* can also illustrate this claim. As we tour this show, my bow technique becomes more and more refined. Consequently, I can work more and more subtly with the strings, making them constantly sound in new ways. Yet, I do not necessarily consider that I play *Make sure* better now than I did a year and a half ago. I would say that the change in magnitude (the acquired fineness of my bow technique) allows us to hear different things. Another nature metaphor comes to my mind here: observing a meadow in its entirety or one of its blades of grass with a microscope are equally fascinating. They just highlight different aspects of the same situation.

In addition to *unlearning*, I value *not-learning*. Often, rehearsing a piece, or repeating it in one concert after the other, fixes things. All the pieces of my portfolio require starting each new rehearsal and each new performance from scratch. The unlearning techniques that I mentioned—opening up the cello, tuning down the instruments, and moving the fingers on the piano strings—are to be relearnt every time because they will act differently each single time anyway. What the performers gain out of these experiences is not so much a reservoir of sonic elements they can use from one version to the other, but, hopefully, the trust to explore new virgin territories at each iteration of the piece.

One might rightly ask what differentiates such sonically unfixed pieces from pure improvisation. The answer, in my opinion, lies in the very strong structuring of some musical parameters. Such parameters can be of different natures. A composer like Michael Pisaro, in a very open piece such as *Achilles, Socrates, Diotima* (2018), controls the micro-form: rhythmical motives, sound qualities, tessituras and dynamics are defined at all points. In a piece like *Symphonie*, I control the macro-form. The overall form and the colour of each given section is very defined and recognisable thanks to easily identifiable, ever-present elements. In ‘Verklärter Tag’ (a part of ‘Movement IV’), the idea of a meta-bow, that is to say a whole group articulating together (see p. 30 of the score and moment 31:56 of the Hull version and 28:45 of the Huddersfield version), acts as the main marker of identity. The three interventions (‘Unknown Pieces’) of the free ensemble that interrupt ‘Verklärter Tag’ also act as structuring and identifying moments (see p. 32 of the score, as well as ‘Unknown Motive’ at moment 25:24 and ‘Unknown Sound’ at moment 29:50, both in the Hull version). In *Svioloncello*, the obvious structuring element is the dismantlement of the cello, that cannot be performed practically in any other order.

The territories in ‘Four Piano Strings’ and ‘Seven (or more) Hammer Ladies’ are also planned to be re-explored at each of their iterations. Their structures, though, are a lot more defined than that of ‘Movement IV’, since both pieces consist in rolling out very straight-forward processes. In ‘Four Piano Strings’, the performer has to follow the strings from as far away from the hammers as one’s arm allows it to the hammers, and back. It is virtually impossible to anticipate what each note will sound like, but there is a strong sense of global musical form, at least for the performer, due to the physical action of going down and up the strings. ‘Seven (or more) Hammer Ladies’ consists also of a very simple process to unfold: a pseudo-Shepard tone for the performers’ voices, inspired by Jean-Claude Risset’s works using this effect,[13] together with a huge *crescendo* and an *ostinato* for the performers’ hands playing with hard and soft sticks (see pp. 43-45 of *Symphonie* and moment 03:22 in the Hull version) directly inspired by Galina Ustvolskaya’s *Composition No. 2 “Dies Irae”* (1973). All the other parameters in this piece remain open to exploration and are: 1) the choice of surfaces the performers are hitting; 2) their position in the venue; 3) the moment they start and finish the percussion part; and 4) the tessitura of each voice. All these parameters are fluctuating. The venue (its acoustic and the materials that can be hit), the mood, taste and creativity of the performers on the given day of the performance, as well as the tessitura of the voices (depending on fluctuating physical parameters in the body of the singers) are never the same from one iteration of the piece to the next.

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[13] For a detailed study, see Mursic, Riecke, Apthorp et al. (2017).

I adopt a different strategy when I write pieces that are not at all recognisable from one version to the other—even when performed by the same musicians—but have a very strong identity for the performers rather than the audience. In *Experimental Music*, Nyman pins down this practice in his discussion about Cornelius Cardew:

> Almost every type of […] musical situation Cardew has created was intended to make an immediate impact on the (prospective) performer, to stimulate him to action. […] Cardew remarked that the stimulation of the interpreter is a facet of composition that has been disastrously neglected and in 1966 he wrote that in any notation a balance must be maintained between cogent explicitness […] and sufficient flexibility […] to permit of evolution. (Nyman, 1999:115)

In his text *A Scratch Orchestra: Draft Constitution*, Cardew gives a few contrasting examples such as 'each member should work on the construction of a unique mechanical, musical, electronic or other instrument' (1966:619) and 'each player shall write or draw on each of the ten fingernails of the player on his left' (p. 619, this instruction is signed by Richard Reason). One could argue that the identity of these last two examples is not sonic—not recognisable by the listener—but lies in the way they stimulate the performers, as Nyman puts it and Cardew implements it. Similarly, in the case of *Clitorides & Zebroids*, I am not sure I would recognise my own piece in a blind test. But the constraints are so radical for the performers that they are *de facto* the most structuring and identifying elements, even though they are not audible as such. There is no doubt indeed for the performers that they are playing these pieces, even though they are largely improvised. The performers could hypothetically come up with parameters similar to the ones in *Clitorides & Zebroids* in a free improvisation. But the fact that the impulses come from a third party, external to the performers (the mediator), is a radical constraint that cannot occur in free improvisation. *Watching Paint Dry*, which also relies on an improvisation controlled by external impulses (the water and the paint drying) would be easier to recognise in a blind test thanks to the stubbornness of the material and the uncanniness of the traditional song that appears at one moment in the piece (for example: moment 05:57 of the top left video page 12 of the score; moment 10:08 of the top left video page 13). These two simple elements, the stubbornness and the song, are precisely what gives the piece its structure and its sonic identity for the listener. Of course, in a live version, the presence of the painting is also an identifying element. But it disappears by definition in an audio recording, while, for Mariabrice at least, such a recording is still *Watching Paint Dry*. Ultimately, its stronger item of identification remains, I believe, the radically limiting constraint of exploring only one type of sound material through the whole piece for the performers. This is the most radical expression of a general approach that I have in all the pieces of the portfolio except *Clitorides & Zebroids*, which is to limit and explore lengthily any given musical material.

1.5 The ping-pong game between the mind and the body

My pieces play a permanent game of non-hierarchical ping-pong between the mind and the body (including the body of the instruments) regarding ‘who is in charge’. I can think of four distinct types of instructions in my scores:

1) I may give strictly intellectual instructions: ‘Play a chord of 3 to 7 sounds […] that you never played, heard or read before. […] Right away, start modifying your chord very gradually and steadily.’ (‘Unknown Chord’, in *Symphonie*, pp. 33-34) In this case, the body obeys the mind and acts physically to transform the instructions into sound.

2) I may give purely physical instructions: ‘you will only play these four pitches with one hand, while sliding as slowly as possible on the corresponding four strings with four fingers of your other hand. […] The courses of the four fingers should not be exactly parallel.’ (‘Four Piano Strings’, in *Symphonie*, p. 12) In this case, the ear and the mind serve as control units that permanently adjust what the bodies (of the performer and the piano) produce. In this specific example, the nature of this control can be: spending more time on a specific

situation that the mind likes; subtly varying the dynamics; subtly varying the rhythm of the four notes. But in all these cases, the mind should intrude as little as possible.

3) I may give intellectual instructions that will have unpredictable physical effects and will therefore create a feedback loop with the mind, which must then permanently adjust depending on the reaction of the (body of) the instrument. The best example of this is the soloist's part of 'Movement IV' in *Symphonie* (pp. 22-26). The soloist must freely combine different motives that are described in intellectual (or conceptual) terms (notes, rhythms, dynamics). But mixing these motives inside a trumpet create sounds that are mostly impossible to anticipate.[14] The instrument, by definition, reacts physically to the intellectually induced motives to produce a new, complex motive. The mind of the performer has to react to this new motive and adjust it accordingly.

4) I may freely combine intellectual and physical instructions: 'Play and hold a pitch-based sound which is still unknown to you. […] Transform it very gradually and steadily by modifying at least two of its parameters: dynamics, pitch […], bow or lip pressure, bow or lip position/shape, bow speed, air pressure.' ('Unknown Sound', in *Symphonie*, p. 33) In this case there is no hierarchy as to which part of the sound-making process has the initiative: the mind and the body challenge and surprise each other.

Clitorides & Zebroids possibly offers the most striking demonstration of how this ping-pong game between mind and body works. While the default mode of the performers has to be 'free improvisation' (an intellectual instruction), the audience members can make the performers react to intellectual instructions ('density and volume', p. 5); physical instructions ('body contacts' p. 5, 'number of instruments', p. 6); and even purely conceptual instructions, that, unlike instructions as 'volume', do not have a predictable outcome ('words to connect', p. 6).

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[14] It is comparable to ring modulation between two complex sounds: intuitively anticipating the result is nearly impossible, except in the case of two pure sine waves.

The commonality of all these instructions of different, and at times, contradictory natures, is the fact that they all act as tools for the exploration of sonic territories. In my work, again, there is no hierarchy between the mind and the body, the spirit and the physical. But the ping-pong game must never stop. If any thought has to be followed by a physical action in order to produce a sound, I am not in favour of a purely physical action that is not permanently adjusted by a critical mind. I may generate a random sound, but as soon as it exists, it is gauged by the mind for critical assessment and continuous revaluation: 'Whatever this sound is like, accept it. Hold it. If you love it, if it is expressive in any way […], transform it very gradually. […] If you do not love the sound that came out […], hold it anyway. Hold it and transform it gently and caringly until you love it.' ('Unknown Sound', in *Symphonie*, p. 33)

In terms of physicality and the body, *Svioloncello* is a radical example. The dismantling of the body of the instrument leads the whole piece. The limitation of the body of the cellist—the left hand is mostly dedicated to the manipulation of the knife and is used only sporadically on the fingerboard—is an extremely severe constraint. The minds of the performers are constantly adjusting to the physical inputs of the piece. The right hand of the cellist, as well as most of the voice material are built around these physical inputs. I describe in detail this material in section 1.8.

1.6 Violinist A ≠ Violinist B; Violin A ≠ Violin B

Stockhausen's *Aus den Sieben Tagen* (1968) was a huge shock for the 20-year-old me. I understood that behind the magical and poetical rhetoric of the score ('play a vibration in the rhythm of your enlightenment', p. 7), Stockhausen was addressing most of the issues of music-making: listening to oneself, listening to each other, and creating a group sound and thinking the form together, to list just a few. More importantly, the last piece of the book, *Arrival*

(p. 31) starts with: ‘Give up everything, we were on the wrong track. / Begin with yourself: / you are a musician. / You can transform all the vibrations of the world into sounds.’ I often think of *Aus den Sieben Tagen* as a canon for my work. My pieces are somehow variations of it. Stockhausen set a practice based on trusting the musicians and considering them as individuals with idiosyncrasies that must be part of the music-making. All my ideas are built on this base. In each of the works of my portfolio, I try to accept and embrace the fact that each performer is different. By ‘each performer’, I do not only mean the performers of a première or a given performance, but all the possible existing performers ever. How do we then collaborate with all the possible individuals and their idiosyncrasies, rather than relying on the universal but limited skills of specifically trained performers?

In my music, I consider indeed that each possible performer of the universe will know better than me, the very-non-omniscient composer, what to do on a given day, a given situation, with a given mood and a given instrument. I do mean ‘a given instrument’. A very practical example would be the issue of clarinet multiphonics. Opinions differ about whether different reeds, different lips, different techniques, different humidity levels, and some other parameters *dramatically* change the possibilities of a clarinettist or not. But what must be acknowledged is that different habits and reflexes, as well as, more simply, different brands of the same instrument, encourage and sometimes force the clarinettist to adapt strictly notated multiphonics to the reality of a given situation. How do we incorporate all possible situations in the score, rather than asking the performers to bend to an ideal, single multiphonic? How do we celebrate what makes all the instrumentalists and instruments different rather than similar? I have toured with many different cellos, and understood that besides their different limitations, they also all have their voice, their qualities, and their personality. Cello maps for multiphonics may become more and more accurate,[15] but an open G played very near the bridge will sound noticeably different from one cello to the next. In my music I choose to leave room for what the instrument wants to say. Bailey describes this attitude quite neatly in *Improvisation*:

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[15] See Fallowfield (2020).

> The instrument is not just a tool but an ally. It is not only a means to an end, it is a source of material, and technique for the improvisor is often an exploitation of the instrument that appeal to him, that seem particularity fruitful. The unorthodox technique is commonplace, its function being to serve only one man's purpose: 'technique for the improvisor is not an arbitrary consumption of an abstract standardised method but rather a direct attunement with the mental, spiritual and mechanical energy necessary to express a full creative impulse' (Bailey, 1992:99, partly quoting Leo Smith, 1973).

I discuss this topic more in metaphorical terms in the score of *Symphonie* on page 37:

> Whatever your sound is, you can make music with it. You just need to make the music that can be born from this sound. This is why I am asking you to listen to your sound, and trust it, this is why I am saying your instrument knows. Don't force a "beautiful sound" (what is that?) on it. Just follow whatever it wants to offer you when you change a bit the lips pressure, the air flow, the right-hand technique, whatever. All your life you have tried to tame your instrument, but you may have forgotten it knows a lot more things than we generally are asking it to do. It is now time to release it. Be the person that will take out its chain and let it return to the wild. […] Become the instrument of freedom of your instrument, [and then] your instrument will be using you to sing freely, instead of you using it.

These things that I am asking the performers to let go of their instrument, I am asking myself, as a composer, to let go of with my performers. What music and what notation allow me—the composer—not to tame my performers? How do I remind them that they know their instrument—or at least can explore it—better than anyone else? The answers cover a wide spectrum ranging from very practical instructions to totally abstract pep talks.

In *Watching Paint Dry*, the performer's knowledge is the core of the piece. We, Mariabrice Sapphocatherin, just: guide it towards the stabilisation of the sonic material and a shift in its density (see p. 10); invite the performer to lose control of time (p. 4); and add a touch of uncanniness with the traditional song (p. 11). This is just one way of exploring what the performer knows. In *Symphonie*, I write a long pep talk that mixes abstract considerations (the music should 'sparkle like a "shimmering fire"'), things to not do ('simple pitches', 'centred sound of classical playing'), things to look for ('noisy, complex, parasitised sounds’), and preconceived ideas to get rid of (‘learn to control [the] so-called “mistakes”’). The whole pep talk (pp. 19-20) goes:

> I would like to ask you all, whatever instrument you play, to always focus on producing rich, complex, multi-layered, mysterious and personal sounds. Avoid simple pitches. Step away from the traditional (very straight and clear) “centred sound” of traditional classical playing. Favour off-focus sounds by mixing techniques freely (Soloist: embouchure shape, voice, air flow, air pressure, vibration change, head cavity shape for you; Improvisors and Ensemble: any other kinds of techniques), in order to explore multiphonics, noisy, complex, parasitised sounds, saturated sounds, noisy pitches, as long as you are able to stabilise/control them. Anything that makes your sound lively, colourful, beautiful, alive. Think of these sounds that are usually considered “wrong”, such as pseudo-multiphonics, parasite sounds, accidental changes of pitches. Learn to control them, to stabilise these so-called “mistakes”. Love them, dig into them, shape them, transform them gently and constantly, always keep in mind that they should sparkle like a “shimmering fire”, to use Karlheinz Stockhausen’s words. (*Set Sail for the Sun*, in *Aus den Sieben Tagen*, 1968, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Universal Ed.) Cherish your shimmering fire, keep it, grow it, give it a real life worth living. Do not change any sound before it is done living a long, happy, sometimes epic life. But transform it constantly, let it bloom. Trust your sound, let it live the life it wants to live, just accompany it the best you can. Trust your instrument, your strings, your pipes, your vocal cords, they want to go a certain way, follow them, they know.

This way of proceeding has a number of consequences. It is easier for the performers to use the techniques they know or can find themselves rather than using imposed ones. It also offers a greater variety of colours from one version to the other of the same piece. The performers can use any idiosyncratic technique. This new contract (one might call it a ‘convention’) between the composer and the performers calls for a lot of benevolence from the latter, which will be discussed in section 2.2.

1.7 Idiosyncratic songs

In this short section, I discuss the use of traditional songs in two works of this portfolio, *Watching Paint Dry* (for example: moment 05:57 of the top left video page 12 of the score; moment 10:08 of the top left video page 13) and *Kinderlebenslieder* (in the section ‘Melody and extended humours’), as well as in my older work *Uranus’s Second Castration* for solo flute (Catherin & Garcia Carro, 2017 for the score, 2019 for the video, watch moment 24:40). I find songs to be a particularly powerful compositional tool in the context of experimental music in general and in the pieces discussed here. Traditional songs contrast long, slow developments of monolithic material (the landscape that I have discussed above), on which *Watching Paint Dry* and *Uranus's Second Castration* (but not *Kinderlebenslieder*) rely: the melodious voice differs from the instrumental sound by its nature (human sound and words versus instrumental sound), its identity (folkloric versus extended/experimental technique), its pace (narrative and melodic material versus an anti-rhetorical continuous landscape) and its duration (a relatively short event versus long development in the case of *Watching Paint Dry* only). Besides highlighting the specificities of these two sonic worlds by means of contrast, I value the ineffable appeal of traditional songs. What makes them so moving to me? I do not know, but I hope that each audience member shares this feeling of melancholy and uncanniness when such a song appears without warning in these works.

More importantly, asking the performers to choose a traditional song in their mother tongue, as I do in *Watching Paint Dry*, 'Melody and extended humours', and *Uranus's second castration*, is a very easy way to let them appropriate the piece. They make these pieces their own through a number of means: 1) they input material that they are familiar with; 2) they choose the story (or the narrative) that they want to share, that is meaningful to them;[16] and 3) they have indirect control over the duration of this specific event since they know in advance the duration of their chosen song. Lastly, and most importantly, when these performers start singing a traditional song, they treat the audience to at least two very precious presents: their (sometimes untrained, genuine) voice and an intimate, dear part of their culture. In *Watching Paint Dry*, this also sometimes includes sharing rare languages that are mysterious and unknown to most of the audience members where this piece has been performed. Since its composition, apart from a few mainstream languages (English by Sappho, French by me and Estoppey, Italian by Alessia Anasatassopulos, and Serbian by Dejana Sekulić), *Watching Paint Dry* has been performed in Züri-Dütsch, the Swiss German dialect from Zurich (Gohl Moser), in Greek-Cypriot (Eva Stavrou), and in Gwara Podhalańsk, a Polish dialect (Linda Jankowska). My hope is that these generous presents create a special bond between the performers and their audience.

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[16] The fact that the audience may not understand the lyrics for lack of a shared language is not relevant in this specific case.

1.8 Open scores and 'written orality'

I try to design scores that are reduced to a handful of rules of the game only. These rules should allow the performers to imagine by themselves extremely detailed music based on many parameters: dynamics, orchestration, motives, and timbres, among many others. The performers are both responsible and trusted. They are aware of what all the others are playing, as well as the result they are after.[17] This way, they can constantly work for the common good (the group sound), as long as they are benevolently seeking the ideal performance. In order to appropriately combine score and aesthetics, many of my pieces are written using very different notations. I believe indeed that the notation has to reflect what is important to control and what is important to be left open in each given composition. Trevor Wishart explains in great detail the importance of notation:

> [Analytic notation] begs the central question of what defines musical experience and this very concept has been fundamentally twisted by the impact of musical notation itself, gradually forcing music to kow-tow to the verbally definable. (Wishart, 1996:34)

Cardew, quoted in Nyman, expressed it very simply in 1963:

> A composer who hears sounds will try to find a notation for sounds. One who has ideas will find one that expresses his ideas, leaving their interpretation free, in confidence that his ideas have been accurately and concisely notated. (Nyman, 1999:4)

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[17] Arguably, so too are the musicians of a Mahler symphony. In practice, the outsourcing of listening (the conductor serves as a meta-ear for the orchestra) and the splitting-up of the score into parts (that only show the staves of one instrument or instrumental section) make it extremely difficult for any given musician to be aware of the more global process of a romantic symphony. (I speak here as an insider, a former orchestra cellist.) In *Symphonie*, the musicians are asked to understand, remember and generate the organisation of the piece. This mental effort increases and allows a sort of permanent awareness of the global process.

For all of us composers, it is easy to fall into the rut of habits and norms, ignore Wishart and Cardew's claims, and not focus the notation exactly on the parameters that define our personal musical experience, expectations or ideas. This means failing to inhabit an appropriate spot on the spectrum that ranges from pure 'notation for sounds' to 'notation for ideas'.[18] Due to its main, extreme practical constraint, *Svioloncello* is a good case study of my notational system.

The uncertainties concerning the cello's reactions during the dismantlement process gave Fetokaki and me the idea of the pseudo-rondeau form for the cello part. We use only two main motives: an arpeggio which is varied at each step of the dismantling; and long open strings explored solely with the bow pressure, position, angle and speed. These two simple motives, that look exactly the same on the score from one iteration to the next, actually highlight the incredible differences of sound from one state of dismantlement to the next. The addition of knee pressure on the sides after they have become loose gives an extra type of sonic material to use. A third motive, a short rhythmical one, acts only as a simple opening and closing gesture for the whole piece. Additionally, it was important to write how to explore all the sub-instruments that are born from each stage of the cello dismantlement. Lastly, it was necessary to keep the motives and the instructions simple to give the cellist a chance to learn on the spot how to play each new version of each state of cello dismantlement. By working with simple motives, the cellist can indeed learn to master the instrument as it is being dismantled. As for the vocal part, it was also important to give very specific material to the singer, but also indicate how the singer should deal with the uncertainty of the cello material. To do so, we left the durations of some of the singer's interventions open and we explained how to tune some of the vocal improvisations to the pitches of the open strings during a given performance.

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[18] I should quote in passing five examples of what I consider perfect matches between notation and the composers' musical experience, expectations or ideas. They are all self-published scores covering totally different styles of music and notation that I was lucky to première as a cellist. They are all recorded and available online: Michael Pisaro's *Achilles, Socrates, Diotima* (score, 2018; recording, 2019); Magnus Granberg's *Als alle Vögel sangen mein Sehnen und Verlangen* (score, 2018; recording, 2019); Cyril Bondi and d'Incise's *Two Choices* (score, 2016; recording, 2018); Jacques Demierre's *On the move* (score, 2016a; recording, 2016b); Dror Feiler's *Music is castrated noise X* (score, 2016a; recording, 2016b).

Regarding *Symphonie*, since one of the main ideas was to highlight the performers' idiosyncrasies, it was important to leave things as open as possible. For this reason, similarly to Stockhausen's *Aus den Sieben Tagen* (1968), Cardew's *Great Learning* (1972), or Federico Pozzer's *Noises* (2017), the score is mostly text-based. The four works have rather different approaches though. Stockhausen's texts are poetical impulses that are to be freely interpreted by the performers, such as 'play a vibration in the rhythm of dreaming / and slowly transform it / into the rhythm of the universe' (p.11, *Nachtmusik*). In Pozzer's *Noises*, the instructions are short, practical and straightforward: 'Performers are asked to react to external sounds. Following the chromatic scale […] the musicians […] play one note just when they hear an external sound' (p. 3). Cardew's texts in *The Great Learning* (1972) vary in length and complexity. Like mine they can become quite complex indeed and call regularly for the performers' judgement: Cardew uses expressions such as 'the discretion of the player' (p. 3) or 'circumstances may encourage the devising of [other versions]' (p. 4). Cardew mostly sets a series of episodic situations, organising sounds, similarly to what I do in 'Seven (or more) Hammer Ladies'. While the texts of 'Movement IV' explore sounds, mostly by suggesting territories, or, more precisely, offering a series of fields of exploration starting near and immediately drifting apart from the usual roads we drive as musicians. Therefore, the text is all about how the musicians will idiosyncratically explore the territories I present. 'Play and hold a pitch-based sound which is still unknown to you. […] Transform it very gradually and steadily by modifying at least two of its parameters.' ('Unknown Sound' in *Symphonie*, p. 32) 'Choose your favourite material on the given day of the concert, explore, develop and vary it. […] Keep and develop anything you do for a very long time.' ('Verklärter Tag' in *Symphonie*, p. 12) All these instructions say the same thing: explore a seemingly familiar yet unknown territory. The piece is the exploration.

More generally, the scores we are familiar with in traditional classical music education (printed, concise, black and white) adopted this format mostly for practical reasons. Fewer pages mean they are cheaper to print, easier to carry around (two parameters that are becoming irrelevant with tablets), and faster to browse. Separate parts (that is to say, unlike the full score, music presented out-of-context) were a necessity for ensemble music performers before iPads and page-turning pedals were invented. Performers disagree on whether or not scores should be as concise as possible, and what actually defines conciseness. Many of my own performers were very generous with their sarcastic—and sometimes hilarious—comments regarding the impressive number of pages in my scores. (Once, one of the performers even posted the weight of my score on Facebook.) Nonetheless, many performers told me how much they lack context and insights from composers in general, from early music to contemporary works. A solution that I found in *Symphonie* and in *Clitorides & Zebroids*, in order to deal with the issues of conciseness versus insights is to make a clear distinction between the vital explanations and the complementary ones (comments, anecdotes, context). In this context, a vital explanation is necessary to any performer in order to play the piece I have in mind; and a complementary explanation is only addressed to the performers who would wish to dig deeper in the process that resulted in the score. I also discuss this topic in the score of *Symphonie* itself (pp. 16-17), where I mention the importance of anecdotes about the composers we perform, that are rarely found in scores:

> These anecdotes are of no usefulness to understand or perform more accurately, beautifully or sensitively these composers' music. Yet they make these composers more real, more human. They stop being pure spirits. They are made of flesh, feelings, weaknesses: they are closer to us. There are closer to being our friends.
>
> I enjoy performing my friends' music.

On the next page (p. 18), I explain why *Symphonie* ended up being at the same time a score, a diary and a collection of thoughts and anecdotes:

> I stopped believing in the widely spread convention that the score is an objective document for objective performers. (Roughly said: a message sent from a robot to other robots.) Actually, I think any kind of written text says as much by its style (or lack of) than by its words. Therefore, yes, cracking jokes, being lyrical, and sharing purely technical information are all important to me. [Speaking of which, if] you allow me a second of lyricism [right now], I would say I want my heart to speak to the performer's heart. If some musicians are friendly

> and benevolent enough to play my music, the least I can do is to address them with warmth, trust, and, somehow, intimacy. One might recognise the influence of Stockhausen (the *Aus den Sieben Tagen* period) as well as Satie's, whose jokes were also musical indications to be considered as seriously (if not more) as any other kind of traditional indication.

This leads me to the issue of orality. In *Music, Imagination & Culture*, Nicholas Cook argues that there is no such thing as a score that works on its own:

> [A score] only [specifies certain performance actions] in an approximate or incomplete manner, so that it achieves its intended purpose not when it is executed literally, but when it is interpreted by the performer in accordance with his conception of what the composer wanted and his own musical sensibility. (Cook, 1990:124)

Try feeding an artificial intelligence (AI) with a Beethoven sonata: the AI's performance will be boring. Cook uses a more brutal comparison. He replaces my proposed AI with a Martian performer and my 'boring' by 'one would be inclined to think of someone who played […] music in this manner as being […] mentally deranged' (1990:122). Then, the question arises: where do performers get their 'conception of what the composer wanted' and their 'own musical sensibility' from? Georgina Born talks of 'music as a distributed object that both condenses and is constituted by social relations, material and discursive mediations' (2013:142). Christopher Small also approaches music making from an anthropological angle:

> Since how we learn which relationships are of value and which are not is a matter of our experience, it is to be expected that although each person has his or her own ideas of relationships, those held by members of the same social group, whose experiences are broadly similar, will also tend to be broadly similar and in that way serve to reinforce one another. […] We might expect that such groups should try to pass on their values to members of succeeding generations, and all social groups do, in fact, have institutions, either formal or informal, for doing just that. (Small, 1998:131)

In other words, performers' ability to make music does not come solely from any score (which provides only a tool performers have the ability to make music with), but also, if not mainly, from oral transmission ('social relations' and 'mediations') through teachers and colleagues from their 'social group', as well as concerts they attend and institutions they are members of.

Some composers, including me, do not have the number of performers, followers and supporting institutions that would be required to start a lasting oral tradition. So, how do we create such tradition for our music? One of the strategies I adopted in order to somehow tackle this issue is to create, ironically, a 'written orality' by adding extra texts in some of my scores about the context of the piece, as well as anecdotes, thoughts, and even very personal information. This is a way to be both clearer regarding my sonic expectation and closer to the possible performers. Eventually, this written orality can be seen as much as an addition to actual orality—rather than as substitute—than as a reminder of the importance of the latter. In order to facilitate the creation of this written orality, I understood during my research that my scores should be visually and intellectually pleasing. They should be artistic objects that not only serve as an objective instruction manual for performing the music but also reflect the spirit of the music.[19] I explained earlier why the score of *Symphonie* was multi-layered and realised by so many hands. The giant one-page-score (180.63 × 173.41 cm)[20] of *Kinderlebenslieder* also reflects the spirit of the piece in the sense that it is playful, messy, genuine, and serves, hopefully, as a tool for the performers to remove some of their inhibitions. Besides, from a purely practical point of view, performers spend a fair amount of time on any given score. Reading the instructions, particularly in my scores, can be an onerous task. Concentration may decrease during the process. I hope that the elements that are not strictly necessary, such as images, anecdotes, or even silly jokes, may act as energising shocks. I wish that they make the musicians want to carry on reading, regardless of their fatigue or lassitude.

An additional and very efficient tool of written orality is the use of recordings and videos. In my scores, the videos are first and foremost concrete examples of what I mean within the score. When we ask our instrumental teachers 'show me', they do not necessarily perform the piece the way they would in concert. They perform an example that illustrates a particular point. For example, they could play two bars of a concerto with a questionable intonation (while in concert they would have a nearly perfect one) but with a clear rhythm with exaggeratedly marked attacks: if they mean to exemplify the importance of rhythm and attacks in these given two bars, they make their point, even though they do not perform these bars the way they are intended to be. The recordings in my scores participate in the creation of a written orality as transmitted by an imaginary teacher. What they exemplify depends on what needs to be exemplified. In *Symphonie*, the long cello solos in the audio appendix of the score that I ask the performers of 'Movement IV' to listen to are the seeds out of which I grew 'Movement IV'. They are a source of inspiration for the performers of *'Movement IV'* even though they are actually recordings of another piece: *Make sure*. In *Watching Paint Dry*, on the contrary, Sappho and I wanted to give proper interpretations (in the literal sense) of the score that also had to be as different as possible. We wanted to demonstrate that saying the sonic material used for our piece was totally free was not a figure of speech. This required a number of different versions by very different performers. In *Kinderlebenslieder*, the videos embedded in the score are a lot more didactic. We focused less on their musical quality than on their objective, clear explanatory qualities. Their explanatory quality is necessary for the performers to understand what we mean *technically* in the score. Offering a more musical example might be too tempting for the performers to imitate, instead of seeking their own musical quality. Even the first video example in 'Torsion for kids', which comes from a live performance of 'Torsion',[21] is too short to force any musical understanding of it on the performers.

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[19] I understood this while working on *Symphonie*. This is why the visual aspects of this score and the following ones (*Clitorides & Zebroids*, *Watching Paint Dry* and *Kinderlebenslieder*) are so important. *Svioloncello* was composed earlier, and, besides, my collaborator Sophie Fetokaki advocates on the contrary for maximum concision.

[20] These are the dimensions of the PDF file when it is actually printed out. However, some of the texts are still too small to be read! Therefore, I insist: the performance score *is* the PDF.

In conclusion, I do not have a clear and definitive method to tackle the necessity of orality in music transmission. Just like each new piece needs a particular compositional strategy, it consequently needs a particular notation and a particular orality. Of course, there is intuition, experience and knowledge to help. But when it comes to designing, notating, transmitting, blossoming through a new work, I cannot think of a better method than groping until satisfaction; groping together, with all the participants, the performers, the audience, and the supervisors. The idiosyncrasies united (and acknowledged) will never be defeated.

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[21] 'Torsion' is a movement of *Uranus's second castration* (Catherin & Garcia Carro, 2017 for the score and 2019 for the recording), that I discuss later.

2 Blossoming participants

> In rehearsal Feldman does not permit the freedoms he writes to become the occasion for license. He insists upon an action within the gamut of love, and this produces (to mention only the extreme effects) a sensuousness of sound or an atmosphere of devotion. (Cage, 1973:128)

As a performer, whether of music or performance art, I am only interested in projects that will change me in a way or another. I am not interested in just being any performer with the required skills to perform a given work. I want, selfishly one might say, this work to bring me something in return of my efforts: a new skill, a new idea, a new insight about my practice, my colleagues or myself. Anything new will do. I logically consider that bringing new experiences—chances to blossom—to the participants of my projects is the least I can do. Why is this blossoming important for the participants of my music projects and for the sonic output—the music—itself? What is the role and the importance of benevolence, which Cage calls ‘action within the gamut of love’, in this context?

2.1 Definition of blossoming; inspiration from psychoanalysis and ethnography

By blossoming, I mean becoming a different artist after the experience of a piece; having a meaningful, constructive moment as a musician and a human being. As for those of my pieces which involve audience participation, I also want to offer the audience members the chance—but not the necessity nor the obligation—to blossom through the process of participating in the piece. Ideally, each participant at any level in the piece should have an opportunity to blossom in one way or another. Robin Jousson, the luthier who designed and performed *Svioloncello* explains in a personal communication:

> *Svioloncello* helped me to realise that working synergistically with the musician opened more interesting and fulfilling perspectives [than working strictly alone in my workshop]. It encouraged me to work more in collaborations with the musicians in my ‘normal’ practice: when a musician commissions a new instrument from me, the choices are made in conjunction. I don't deliver a ready-made instrument anymore. […] Freeing myself from the commercial relationship to the musicians like it happened in *Svioloncello* also pushed me to take some of my time to equally free myself from the

> commercial relationship in my normal practice. This allows to explore fields of creativity. For example, I can spend one week making special strings with a given cellist. This is a purely experimental, non-commercial time spent on my practice as a luthier. (Jousson, 2019)

This testimony is of course not a ‘proof’ that *Svioloncello* will help all the possible luthiers to blossom. But it is a good example of a blossoming domino effect. An unconventional piece, *Svioloncello*, puts a luthier in a novel situation. The experience feeds back into the luthier’s usual practice because he allows himself more freedom after he experienced it in *Svioloncello*. He blossoms as a luthier. Later in this section, I outline the blossoming opportunities I try to offer to all the participants of a given composition, including to me, the composer.

I should now discuss the indirect but omnipresent influence of psychoanalysis on the works of my portfolio, as well as most of my work as a maker in general (as opposed to my work as a performer). I never use psychoanalysis deliberately (that is to say consciously), as a tool, a goal or a theme. But the way I think is profoundly (that is to say unconsciously) marked by my interest for this field. There is one, and only one direct reference to it in my portfolio, but in a hidden way: the unsigned dreams that Émilie Girard-Charest and I shared in the score of *Clitorides & Zebroids* (pp. 3 – 8, all the texts in pink). They are an echo of a psychoanalytical method we used intuitively: free association. We used free associations to write the piece, to find the title, and to elaborate the list of ‘words to connect’ (pp. 6 – 7 of the score); we also tried to design a piece that can become for the audience members a space that facilitates and encourages free associations as well as frees them momentarily from their superego, and offers a tool of ‘sublimation’, to use Sigmund Freud’s word and concepts (Freud, 1962). The anecdote of the penis worshippers I discuss in section 2.2 tends to confirm our intuition that some people are indeed freed from their superego with our piece.

‘Intuition’ is also a concept that has been theorised by psychoanalysts such as Anne Denis (2009). She defines it as a gift from the unconscious that bypasses reflection. In this regard, intuition could be seen as an anti-academic methodology: some steps in the research are not, and cannot be, rationally explained. Acknowledging that not all the steps can be rationalised make the importance of recognising practice as a worthy form of knowledge all the more important and relevant: some human knowledge just cannot be described entirely satisfyingly. It needs to be experienced. This same idea of experiencing rather than rationalising probably haunted me (unconsciously) when I asked performers to go off-road and take the time to explore in *Symphonie*, *Watching Paint Dry* and *Kinderlebenslieder*. When one improvises freely, but within a very strong frame (be it the meta-bow of *Symphonie* or the single obstinate material of *Watching Paint Dry*), new ideas on, and new connections with, the instrument can 'mysteriously' (that is to say intuitively) appear. One finally has time to escape common and socially accepted vocabulary to find and claim their own vocabulary. The psychoanalyst and ethnographer George Devereux (1980b) claimed that 'Freud had insisted on the fact that psychoanalysis is first and foremost […] a method of investigation, and, just secondly, a method of therapy' (p. 400, my translation), as opposed, for example, to psychotherapy, which is first and foremost a method of therapy. Maybe I consider my works as methods of investigation of the unconscious relationships between performers, their instruments, their partners, and music, rather than straightforward music scores. Although these thoughts are nothing more than playful hypothesis and digging deeper would require a whole other PhD.

George Devereux has also been a more direct influence in my work, but through his work as an ethnographer. In *Basic Problems of Ethnopsychiatry* (1980a), he notices that in so-called primitive societies, which recognise and value their members' individuality, there is no recorded case of schizophrenia. Devereux compares this situation to modern societies: in an administration office, in a factory line, and in countless other modern situations, many individuals can be replaced by any other. They lose their individuality. This loss may lead to depression or even schizophrenia. Eventually, it becomes totally counterproductive. This is the portrait that Devereux paints of Western society:

> In modern society, true individuality—that most precious and socially most valuable of all aspects of the human being—is a source of trouble rather than gratification; far from being rewarded, it is penalized. […] True individuality is nowhere in sight and, in most societies, represents no value and brings no rewards. Therefore, hardly anyone dares to be himself.

> Yet, only by being maximally himself can a man be maximally useful to society. Moreover, he cannot be maximally himself without the help of society. Mozart cannot manufacture his own piano, nor Pasteur his own laboratory equipment. […]
>
> If society penalizes, depreciates, or, at best, commercializes this aspect of man, a sense of selfhood, a sense of continuity of oneself in time, and even a real sense of one's existence and reality are made impossible. Depersonalization is thus only a step beyond Mr. Anyone's sacrosanct idea of averageness and is the ultimate—and catastrophic—consequence of this goal. In a healthy society the sense of the self—of selfhood—and a certainty of one's identity and reality […] are encouraged. (Devereux, 1980:234)

Devereux's words triggered this thought: without going as far as tackling issues as serious as schizophrenia, if I want to create a happy, blossoming micro-society (the music ensemble, or even the duet composer/performer) as described by him, I need to compose pieces that offer meaning and responsibility to each single individual. I believe a musician who feels valued will be happier and will play better. But I also need to find a balance and not impose overwhelming responsibilities on musicians who do not wish to take them on. In other words, my pieces are about offering the appropriate position and amount of responsibilities to any type of musician. *Basic Problems of Ethnopsychiatry* also made it clear for me that 'Violinist A does not equal Violinist B', not only because they have different levels, techniques and tastes, but also because they are different human beings, with idiosyncratic sensitivities and life experiences.

This idea of 'being maximally oneself' is tackled in a way or another by a number of other composers working with ensembles of improvisors. In *Experimental Music*, Nyman writes about Cardew's Scratch Orchestra:

> The Scratch Orchestra […] defined itself not through constitutions or the intentions of one composer, but through the interests, idiosyncrasies, ideas, creativity of the group of individuals, drawn from any number of walks of life, who made up the orchestra. The Scratch Orchestra's (unwritten, unwritable) Constitution was one which allowed each person to be himself, in a democratic social microcosm where (for a long time) the individual people could coexist quite happily, without apparently being reduced to a common 'constitutional' or organizational denominator, where a nominal 'star' (a Cardew or Tilbury) had no priority rights over the youngest, newest, most inexperienced member. (Nyman, 1999:133)

But the Scratch Orchestra and the more recent Berlin-based Splitter Ensemble[22] are fixed ensembles. They are not a transmittable piece like *Symphonie*. They are a long-term experience shared by specific people. Zorn's *Cobra* (1984) and Tyshawn Sorey's conducted improvisations such as *Autoschediasms MMXIX* (2019) share the same concerns, but under the control of their composers acting as prompters. Even though *Cobra* is notated to be possibly performed by other people, Zorn himself said 'I would rather be there to tell them the details' (quoted in William Duckworth, 1995:462), and even adds, in a tongue-in-cheek comment, 'ultimately, I'm the best prompter there can be, because then I can be a complete fascist!' (interview with Cole Gagne, quoted in Brackett, 2010:50) While this is a perfectly valid and legitimate way to make prompt-based pieces, it also means that these pieces cannot exist in the absence of their maker. A closer work to mine is Freed's *Micromotives* (2018) in which he sets rules of the game that allow: the performers to share responsibilities freely; the composer to get rid of the prompter role; and possibly Freed himself to be absent from a given production. Another one would be Baudouin de Jaer's 'Orchestre d'un jour' project,[23] in which he puts musicians of totally different backgrounds together and builds a concert based on their idiosyncrasies, operating as a mediator between the participants' creativity and the final sonic result, rather than as a composer. To achieve this, he arrives at the one and only rehearsal with a gross structure, collects all the ideas and wishes of the performers, organises them inside this gross structure, and finally rehearses and performs this collective composition together with the performers-composers.

In *Symphonie*, the ideas of 'being maximally oneself', freedom and benevolence work quite differently to Freed's and de Jaer's pieces. Let us examine the case of the soloist first. Soloists of a solo work or *concertante* works are, by definition, more exposed, but also more rewarded than ensemble musicians. Traditionally, we expect full commitment from them, in terms of practice and energy. I gladly follow this tradition in all my *concertante* works, including *Symphonie*. In ‘Movement IV’ in particular, the necessary time dedicated to exploring and getting familiar with the material and various techniques I suggest is very important. The opportunity to be maximally oneself for the soloist lies in the performance itself. The virtually infinite ways the territories defined by the score can be combined allow the soloist to be relaxed and contemplative at times, intense and virtuosic at other times. Since the score stipulates that the soloist works independently from the other performers in ‘Movement IV’, it is not an exaggeration to say that the former is in total control of the energy, risk-taking, intensity, and, therefore, difficulty, of the part. This gives a rather comfortable position to the soloist, in spite of the obvious difficulty of the material, and a chance to be maximally oneself on a given day, a given mood and a given inspiration.

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[22] A 'collection of internationally respected Composers-Performers' founded in 2010, in their own humble words and capital letters (Splitter Orchestra, 2019).
[23] Formerly 'Back to Normal', and still ongoing since 1991. See de Jaer (2018).

The situation is different for the improvisors and the musicians of the free ensemble of this same part of *Symphonie*. At any moment, each of them makes the decision to play or not. Even the meta-bow conductor (see p. 30 of the score), who happened to be a cellist in the première (Bethany Nicholson), may either play or just mime the bowing gesture. Once any of these musicians have made the decision to play, the complexity and exposure of their material is left to them. They can freely hide within the group sound in a humble way or dominate it as long as they remain a part of it.[24] They can also move freely inside the spectrum that ranges from hiding to dominating, as well as set their amount of decision-making on a given day, depending on their mood, inspiration and familiarity with the work. Such freedom is directly inspired from my practice of free improvisation.

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[24] For example, see how Ilona Krawczyk (voice) switches from a quasi-hidden position to a dominating, quasi-soloist position from 20:25 to 24:05 in the Hull version. In that same extract, Mark Slater (Fender Rhodes) stays almost hidden in the background.

2.2 Benevolence as a condition for my music; benevolence as a blossoming opportunity

For some people, benevolence is a second nature. For others, it can also be a decision, a conscious effort to be benevolent. I do not know to which of these two categories Foofwa d'Imobilité and Jonathan O'Hear belong, but their show *In/Utile : Incorporer* (2017) was, for me, an artistic epiphany with a radical impact on my own work. Credited as a 'participant' after I gave a quick voice workshop to the eight dancers of the show, I had the privilege of following their work from the first rehearsals to the final series of performances. I could talk about the Cagean 'total spectrum' covered by the show,[25] or, more precisely, the shows, since two of them were happening at the same time, */Utile 2* and */Inutile 2*, both with an impressive number of layers of independent text, movement, visual and technical elements. But instead, I want to discuss what happened during the first ten seconds of the first run-through of */Utile 2* that I saw, while the dancers were still wearing their tracksuits.[26] They had to walk for ten seconds. During these ten seconds, I saw eight different idiosyncratic ways of walking that built together a complex and genuine counterpoint of walking dancers. These dancers had not been told how to walk. They had not been tamed or normalised. They were walking as themselves. All of a sudden, I realised how complex, how 'total' the spectrum of bodies, identities and styles could be, because the choreography relied on idiosyncrasies rather than *normalised* techniques. The show lasted for two hours. The eight dancers had arranged eight sections, each one choreographed by one of them using the whole group. Yet it was clearly one show, */Utile 2*, not eight shows, exploring the history of dance through eight very different styles and tones. Our artistic tradition is strongly built on the concept of 'master'. Born's words about composers, and more specifically about hierarchization, certainly apply to the choreographer too. She talks about

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[25] D'Imobilité has been a dancer for Merce Cunningham for many years. The influence of Cage on his personal work is therefore totally natural and even embodied.

[26] While the eight dancers were performing */Utile 2*, Foofwa d'Imobilité and Sylvie Raphoz were performing */Inutile 2*, a spoken duet using a sound/visual installation by Jonathan O'Hear.

> the rise of the romantic principle that musical invention depended on the 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 [...]; a rigidification and hierarchization of the musical division of labour between composer, interpreter(s) and audience. (Born, 2013:142-43)

In this context, the trust and the genuine respect that d’Imobilité and the eight dancers all showed for each other required a total benevolence from each party. It should be noted that the dancers had applied to be part of this collective, which means that they were willing to participate in this production that they knew would be based on trust and benevolence. Consequently, it became possible not to have one master but nine, equal masters. D’Imobilité had not, again, forced the young dancers into becoming obedient soldier-performers, but, on the contrary, he had helped them to fully blossom into who they truly were. In order to do so, he had not imagined a course or a method, but a piece.

First published in 1974, Nyman’s discussion on involvement and responsibility already implies benevolence in experimental practices:

> People tend to think that since, within the limits set by the composer, anything may happen, the resulting music will therefore be unconsidered, haphazard or careless. The attitude that experimental music breeds amongst its best performers/composers/listeners is […] involvement and responsibility of a kind rarely encountered in other music. (Nyman, 1999:15)

I am not sure on which grounds Nyman claims that involvement and responsibility are ‘rarely encountered in other music’. I can nevertheless agree that involvement and responsibility in experimental music—and in mine in particular—are systematic and of a particular nature. I ask my performers to make many decisions, taking into account their sensitivity in the moment, as well as the sensitivity of their colleagues in ensemble pieces. Interpreting my scores according to their sensitivity, intelligence and taste, while taking into account the frame that I offer as well as their colleagues’ choices calls for a lot of benevolence.

At this stage I need to mention that I do not believe that totally benevolence-free music making exists. Even the most controlled and meticulously codified music calls for the performers' judgment and attention for their colleagues. This is one of the reasons why the Disklavier pianos have not replaced pianists yet for the interpretation of written music, or why George Lewis's computer-driven piano improvisations,[27] as impressive as they are, leave me with a feeling of incompleteness. Performers are benevolent when they decide how to attack, sustain and release each single note. They are equally benevolent when they follow one another's *tempi*. Performers' benevolence relies on and calls for their experience, their knowledge, and their intuition. The important point is that such performers have internalised these decision-making processes and are not even aware of the benevolent decisions they make about each single note they play. It has become their second nature. A lack of benevolence leads to grudging collaborations, which kill the music as sometimes happens in poor performances. Cook (1990:130) talks about these extreme cases of 'musicians […] playing in orchestras, who play without regard to what everybody else is doing […] so that the mutuality of performance, which is the distinguishing feature of chamber music, disappears.' Saxophonist, improvisor and composer Dror Feiler shared stories of performers who demonstrated a total lack of benevolence during his career, which is possibly even more problematic in the context of improvised music:

> In 1995 in Germany we had a group improvisation with dancers and musicians. The man playing the electronics played like he was alone on stage, not listening to anything nor anyone. We tried to communicate with him but he was only interested in having his own show. I just stopped playing and left the stage. The same thing happened again in Vilnius some years later with a guitarist who was also interested only in having a show for himself, playing loud and with no consideration for anyone else. In Sweden, a saxophonist arrived to the concert without any instrument. He asked to borrow my sopranino saxophone (while I was playing), and shortly after my alto, leaving me with no instrument to play! Some of these performers have some kind of condition that makes them unable to communicate, but some of them just choose to ignore their partners. There is only room for their ego. (Feiler, 2020)

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[27] For example: *Interactive trio* (see Spelled Just How It Sounds (2016)).

I attended a concert a few years ago that staged a world-famous pianist and a much younger, yet recognised and talented one. The latter was alone for the first few bars of a piece for two pianos. When the word-famous pianist came in, she played much faster, aggressively ignoring her young colleague's *tempo*. Of course, this violent power-move was humiliating for the younger pianist, and, in my opinion, disgraceful from the well-respected older one. These few counterexamples demonstrate how benevolence is an acquired reflex for most musicians but by no means a universal quality.

In the pieces of my portfolio, I seek to render the performers' decision-making process explicit. For this reason, benevolence stops being an unconscious process and becomes a conscious, intentional, constituent one. The performers of 'Movement IV' in *Symphonie* may choose to play or not at any point. Their first act of benevolence is, therefore, to play. Each decision they make, from choosing an Unknown Piece in 'Movement IV' to the sonic material they use and develop, is motivated by common interest. This is directly inspired by my practice of free improvisation. On a technical level, the soloist of this same movement should have the benevolence to experiment with the options that I suggest: prepared trumpet, double trumpet, and electronics *ad libitum*. I leave these fields open to the performers' creativity and idiosyncrasies. Yet, this openness makes sense only if the performers do explore these fields for enough hours in the practice room, so as to be able, not only to share the fruits of this exploration on stage, but to become comfortable enough to continue the exploration itself on stage. There is a thin and important line here. In my works, even performers who are highly trained in extended, experimental, idiosyncratic and other odd techniques must keep on exploring, digging, discovering at each stage of the process. No one knows nor will ever know what to play in advance. Accepting this situation of non-knowledge, especially for highly trained musicians, calls for a lot of benevolence. The example of 'Four Piano Strings' is perhaps even more extreme. The score looks so simple that it feels like it does not need to be practiced. My personal experience is that the more I practiced it, the more beautiful and subtle it became. Even though I composed it, I will never have a best or favourite way to play this piece.

Similarly, the audience members of *Clitorides & Zebroids* have an opportunity to blossom by participating. But what for? In a discussion about audience's reception in *Music, Imagination and Culture*, Cook explains that the experience of music as a maker and as a listener is totally different:

> Obviously, one need know nothing about fingering in order to derive aesthetic interest and enjoyment from listening to Beethoven's piano sonatas. In the same way, it is not necessary to have a reflective (that is, "theoretical") knowledge of the patterns of grouping and hierarchical organization that are appropriate to a given musical style, essential though an understanding of these may be in terms of production. (Cook, 1990:83)

Cook also shows that there are many ways of listening to music, based on the listeners' skills and knowledge of music. I would argue that these different ways do not cancel each other but rather overlap. As a classically trained composer, I am able to analyse a complex Bach fugue while listening to it. Yet, I am also able to enjoy it in a naïve, spontaneous way by ignoring my knowledge. When I ask audience members to participate in my works, I have at least two ideas in mind. The first idea is that I want them to bring something that the musicians and the composers cannot bring, either for practical reasons (as basic as 'there are not enough musicians for a given task', or 'I do not want more musicians for this piece') or for artistic reasons. In the previous work of mine *an die Musik* (2013), the audience members add a mass effect (listen to the opening gesture of the piece with 15 people in the audience playing the slide whistles). In a solo work such as *New Voices* (2011), they can create an acoustic spatialization effect (watch 02:12 on the YouTube video: the sound of bubbles in water come from an audience member; at 02:58, they come from another member). They can also suggest contradictory and unpredictable parameters in the piece I am now discussing, *Clitorides & Zebroids*, in a way that trained, or aware, or participating musicians could not.

The second idea that I have in mind, and the most important one to me, is that I give them the opportunity to live the performance from the inside, by being an active part of it. This is an opportunity for the audience, but not an obligation, to listen to the performance as an insider. I suspect indeed that active audience members will listen to and experience a piece totally differently. They might be more focused and more aware of the details. They might possibly have a better understanding of the structure, even subconsciously, because they are part of it. In other words, they might have a more insightful experience, which they might, or might not, find more enjoyable. I see this opportunity both as a chance to blossom through an artistic position based on trust for the audience, and as a chance to escape their traditionally passive position. In *Clitorides & Zebroids*, the audience members have three choices: 1) to not participate; 2) to participate by ticking any of the available parameters; and 3) to participate freely by writing or drawing anything they want in the 'Power to the people' box (see score p. 4). In short, the audience members choose the nature of their 'interest and enjoyment' (in Cook's terms) of the piece being performed: as listeners, as participants, as co-makers, and possibly by switching freely between any of these three positions. They also have the freedom to make absolutely any suggestion, including terrible ones, because the benevolent mediator (see below) will make the best out of their participation and ignore counterproductive inputs, which makes the position of the participating audience members quite comfortable.

At this stage I need to recapitulate how *Clitorides & Zebroids* works. The default mode of the two performers is 'free improvisation'. All the other instructions come from the audience members writing on a shared online whiteboard. These instructions are filtered by a mediator. The benevolence of the audience is consequently a *sine qua non* condition. Without it, it would be very easy to ruin the game for the other audience members by vandalising the whiteboard. Girard-Charest and I could possibly develop systems that limit the audience participation to 'appropriate' answers only. But this would show a lack of trust in our participants and would therefore indicate both inconsistency and a lack of benevolence from us, the composers. During the première of *Clitorides & Zebroids*, we did have a few toilet graffiti penises appearing sporadically on the whiteboard. But they did not jeopardise the performance, and even proved our point: anyone can be maximally oneself in *Clitorides & Zebroids*, including penis worshippers. One could still imagine a version with only vandals saturating the whiteboard with toilet graffiti or a totally passive audience not intervening at all. The performers and the mediator could still save the day musically speaking by improvising together, just the three of them. Such a version would be a failure as to what the piece is trying to achieve: make people work together benevolently. Yet, it would still be a (sad) success in revealing the nature of these specific audience members.

Lastly, I should discuss the mediators' benevolence, since they are in a very strong power position in *Clitorides & Zebroids*. In the score (pp. 3-4), Émilie Girard-Charest and I write (emphasis as in the original):

> During the performance, the mediator is not *creating* material, but is choosing, filtering, and compiling the suggestions from the audience. […] The mediator's role is similar to a wise elder or a village chief's role in a traditional tribe. All the members of the tribe have a say, but the chief has the experience, the wisdom, and the benevolence to recognise and choose the suggestions that will benefit the improvisation (and thus the audience) the most. Therefore, *Clitorides & Zebroids* is not pretending to be a mockery of direct democracy ("each vote counts, including the uninformed"), but an attempt to build a micro-society in which each individual serves the community at the best of their capacities.

Needless to emphasise too much how benevolent the mediator must be. (Remember Zorn's words about being a 'complete fascist' as a conductor/mediator in his own work *Cobra*.) In a position of possible total power on both the audience and the improvisors, recognised as a musical authority by the latter, the mediators must demonstrate at all time their humanity, their ability to judge and to guide, and, above all, their trust.

2.3 The limits of control; no limits of control

In this short section I discuss difficulties, or frustrations, that seem to me characteristic of the compositional systems I employ. They also throw some interesting light on these systems. The first issue concerns *Symphonie* but what it raises can be generalised to my whole concept of benevolence. It was shared by Pierre Alexandre Tremblay, who played the electric bass in the Huddersfield version of *Symphonie*. His short email to me is particularly interesting because he discusses his own comment in a way that demonstrates succinctly the tension and release that can emerge from my systems. His comment is specifically about the meta-bow technique (see p. 30 of the score and moments 31:56 of the Hull version as well as 28:45 of the Huddersfield version):

> I liked the metaphor [of the meta-bow], but I think that not having the gesture to follow would have allowed a better, more organic version, by ear, less conducted. At the same time, if your desire is to frame or even to frustrate/limit the improvisor (which is full of potential too!) it all works super well: the name [meta-bow], the metaphor and the gesture. (Tremblay, 2020, my translation from French.)

Tremblay summarises what probably most improvisors feel when they are limited by rules: frustration. Yet, he, and all the other participants in *Symphonie*, had the benevolence to overcome this frustration and 'play the game' fully. This shows again the importance of benevolence in a context where there is a lot of freedom, but also very strict rules to follow. As a performer playing other composers' music, I personally feel I am obedient with a strictly notated score, while I am benevolent with a very open one, such as Freed's *Micromotives* (2018). In the second part of his short message, Tremblay acknowledges that the system 'works super well'. Why, though? The meta-bow is for me a technique to get off-road, as I discussed in section 1.4. The territory is presented as follows: the rhythm is constrained by an 'almighty' meta-bower, and the performers are asked to create a 'global sound' (p. 30 of the score). In order to get off-road, they are asked to explore all the possible timbres, dynamics and even motives within this given rhythm. In other words, since none of the performers except the meta-bower have to take care of the territories of rhythm and phrasing anymore, they can focus fully, as one focuses with different lenses, on the main parameter: sound. Seen this way, frustration is a necessary by-product of the process. Of course, a non-conducted, 'more organic version', as Tremblay puts it, could be beautiful. But the bow-conduction also allows and guarantees a mass effect and, furthermore, a feeling of repeated blocks that morph constantly towards something unpredictable yet familiar, since the repetition gives the audience the opportunity to become acquainted with the material. This might possibly be the influence on my work of Morton Feldman's pieces such as *Patterns in a Chromatic Field* (1981), that rely a lot on ever changing repeated blocks. Feldman works mostly on permutations of pitches and variations of rhythm rather than on variations of timbre, dynamics and motives (within the same set of blocks), but the feeling of 'familiar unpredictability' is, in my opinion, very similar.

The second problem that I want to discuss concerns the première of *Clitorides & Zebroids* by the composers Émilie Girard-Charest and myself. It raises issues of transmission, tradition and practice both in experimental works in general, and in this piece in particular. Even though we are quite satisfied with our performance and its recording, we also think that we have been too gimmicky at times.[28] When we premièred the piece, the paragraph on page 2 of the score that says 'whatever the suggestions, the improvisors must have a musical response to them. This includes situations such as acrobatic body contacts […], spoken moments, as well as any other extreme situation that might seem impossible to sustain a state of satisfying musicality' did not exist yet. It was added as a reaction to these gimmicky moments of the première that we did not like, especially the spoken ones. (For example, watch moment 14:20 to 15:10 and 16:47 to 19:20 of the video. These two moments happen during what was movement three at the première, using the 'words to connect' option as explained on pp. 6 and 7 of the score.) As performative and possibly witty as the piece might be, we still consider it to be a piece of music, and therefore keeping in mind the musical quality of each action for the performers is a *sine qua non* condition for us. Of course, we avoided defining the expressions 'musical response' and 'satisfying musicality'. These are left to be interpreted by each performer. But we needed to transmit the fact that music comes first in this piece. It is part of a tradition of music theatre in which any physical/theatrical action exists around (triggers, extends, accompanies, comments on) musical actions. How did we get tricked by our own piece, though? How could we get wrong something that we both agreed on before we even wrote it down? The answer is really quite simple: lack of practice. Émilie Girard-Charest, who lives in Montreal, was with me in Huddersfield only for a few days, which were mostly occupied with writing the piece. The rehearsal was very brief and took place without audience members sending prompts through the whiteboard. Therefore, we simply did not have enough practice at this piece to avoid this pitfall. This experience demonstrates something that is true in all the works of this portfolio, and, as a matter of fact, all the open pieces that I performed as a cellist and listed in footnote 18: as much as we are interested, in experimental music, by ‘an act the outcome of which is unknown’ (Cage, 1973:13), we still need practice framing, experiencing and embodying the strategies for creating these acts.

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[28] A new performance, with other performers, was planned for the 1 June 2020 at the University of Huddersfield. It has been cancelled due to the Covid-19 crisis.

2.4 Learning new skills, sharing idiosyncratic skills

In section 1.4, I discussed how unlearning and relearning skills were a fruitful compositional strategy. Learning new skills is also a way to blossom as a performer. I was constrained to playing only open strings in *Svioloncello*, to radically modifying the instrument in the same piece, and to using the curved bow for hours in *Make sure*. I was happy to develop my skills as a cellist for these pieces. But more importantly, these specific skills have informed my overall stylistic approach and consequently my other projects ever since. More generally, since I have been organising ensemble projects, many performers told me they developed techniques and sonorities, or even just became aware of parameters they continued to use after they performed my works. Laurent Estoppey is one of the most impressively skilled saxophonists and improvisors I know.[29] He recorded a few versions of *Watching Paint Dry* for the tutorial videos in the scores. In a personal communication, he wrote about this experience:

> The configuration forced me to explore [my sounds] in a much more profound way. […] The time constraint made me look for some kind of third dimension in slowness. […] [I was] placed in a—very enjoyable—situation of partial loss of control on the sound and the music. […] [In *Watching Paint Dry*], one discovers sides of the instrument and of oneself that need to be digested and then applied to the following pieces. […] I would say that the gained experience for now might be to constrain myself to stay longer on a given material, to find some sort of exhaustion out of it, which can lead afterwards to unknown territories.[30] (Estoppey, 2019, my translation)

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[29] See Estoppey (n.d.)

[30] I need to specify here that Estoppey has not read any of my texts about my music. It is striking to notice that he uses so many exact same words: explore, exhaustion, unknown territories.

Similarly, I also discussed earlier how to make use of the idiosyncratic techniques of all possible performers of a piece. Beyond serving as compositional material, these techniques also become blossoming opportunities: performers are happy to eventually be able to use and share their own sonic world in other people's composed music. My hope is that they feel valued, and indeed they are, as they bring their unique sound to a performance. I certainly feel valued when it happens to me in other people's works. Christophe Schweizer's *Rumi* (2019), in which I participated as a cellist, was for me a radical example of how to use the performers' idiosyncrasies. But, unlike *Symphonie*, that can be performed by any enthusiastic musician, *Rumi* was designed specifically for the fifteen performers that Christophe had handpicked for his big band. In short, I find it important that performers get something out of my music, beyond the possible enjoyment of playing it. Can they learn something about their own practice? About themselves? Can they be different musicians after they have experienced my music? These concerns also explain my interest for pedagogical pieces that I discuss in section 2.5.

I have mentioned a number of skills I acquired and later developed during and following the making and the performances of *Svioloncello*. I must add that the technical discoveries, Fetokaki's idiosyncratic ways of crafting a piece, and the extraordinary consistency she brought between the different elements of the piece (music, text, experimental violinmaking) both radicalised my approach to instrumental music and encouraged me to develop intermedia works. The example of *Svioloncello* illustrates how the pieces of my portfolio also act as blossoming opportunities for me, personally.

2.5 The children trusted will always be blossoming

While this is not explicitly stated in the score of *Symphonie*, the 'Unknown Pieces', that are to be rehearsed and performed during 'Movement IV', were written with a pedagogical aim in mind. They were designed originally for the music students of Fractus, the experimental music ensemble of the University of Hull, and therefore had to be accessible to students who may possibly never have encountered experimental music before but were willing to dive into it.

(Participation in Fractus is entirely optional and left to the will of the students, who could also leave at any point—two of them did.) This explains why the instructions for each Unknown Piece are so simple and straightforward. They had to be both convincing concert pieces and beneficial études for experimental music at the same time. For me as a composer, it was a perfect opportunity to break down my aesthetic interests to the smallest, simplest concepts: exploring one sound (‘Unknown Sound’); exploring one noise (‘Unknown Noise’); exploring one motive (‘Unknown Motive’), and so on. The young performers’ enthusiasm and talent went beyond my expectations, since one of them even ended up writing spontaneously a new Unknown Piece that made it into the score and to the performance, ‘Unknown Squad’ (visible in the background of the Huddersfield version at 45:38; see also its preparation in the copy of the WhatsApp messages in the score, pp. 69-70). The ‘Unknown Pieces’, in this sense, were a preparation of a sort for *Kinderlebenslieder*. They are a tool of blossoming, as is the rest of *Symphonie*.

Mark Slater is the coordinator of Fractus. He was in charge of many of the rehearsals, followed the whole process, participated in the performances, and was the supervisor of all the members of Fractus during the semester of preparation of the performances. Therefore, he had a particularly encompassing and insightful view of the participants’ evolution during the whole process. In an interview, he first recapitulates the pedagogical aspects of *Symphonie* and the students’ reception of it:

> [The students] went through a genuine process of coming to terms with the challenging ideas you put forward. For them, the ideas were challenging on both technical/physical and conceptual grounds. Asking them to control very gradual dynamic changes covering an extreme (for them) range was difficult to begin with. And, on top of that, you were asking them to do other things simultaneously. They got this, as the weeks progressed, because you broke the techniques down into discrete elements. From the technical/physical point of view, the students who took part definitely developed because they were able to coordinate their bodies in ways that they couldn’t before in the service of the sounds you were after. (Slater, 2020)

Then, he explains how the students became fully responsible of *Symphonie* and embraced this responsibility:

> They grew in curiosity as the project developed. It took a little while for them to absorb the parameters of the pieces and how they could be structured overall, but I had a real sense that they started genuinely experimenting with the WhatsApp cues and various combinations. This kind of exploration could only happen when the understanding of the parameters was secure. It was also great to see them seeking out different locations and listening *to* the acoustic of the performance, rather than just performing *in* it. (Slater, 2020, emphasis as in the original)

Later on, Slater elaborates on the responsibilities, the pride and the blossoming of the students. He also answers my question about pleasure the students might have had.

> I think all the students enjoyed both performances and had a sense of pride in what they'd achieved, for themselves personally and for the ensemble collectively. But pleasure in this context could be seen to stretch across the time of the piece in different ways. There were points, when they'd got to grips with the technical demands of Seven [(or more)] Hammer Ladies (for example), that they really enjoyed the gradual growth in intensity. They committed to it and that could be heard in the sounds they were making (the […] extreme ranges of dynamics, and the way that changes were controlled in terms of pace). But there were also points when they were quite apprehensive about what they were doing, perhaps because the form of musicianship was so new to them (which is exactly what the point of the ensemble is). This apprehension probably undercuts any sense of direct pleasure (to use your term), but that's not to say they didn't look back on the performances and find that, after all, they really did enjoy what they'd done. […] All the students who stuck with this project committed to it. Not without bumps in the road – but we want those! (Slater, 2020)

While Slater's words highlight mostly the musical challenges and rewards of *Symphonie*, I assume the apprehension he mentions also includes that related to the performance art moment 'Le Baiser par Contagion'. Overcoming their apprehension for this purely physical part of the performance possibly proved to be an important part of the blossoming process that Slater detected within the students.

The experience of creating *Symphonie*, as well as my personal tastes, led me towards writing more and more intermedia works. It seemed a particularly valid and fruitful decision to work in such a format for my next pedagogical piece, *Kinderlebenslieder*. I truly believe, based, once again, on my experience as a teacher, a performer, a former pupil and a composer of pedagogical pieces,[31] as well as on my intuition, that children should have the opportunity: 1) to write and to be read ('Kinderlebensworte'); 2) to take pictures that are actually looked at ('Kinderlebensbilder'); and, 3) to make art with their hands that is exhibited and discussed ('Kinderlebenskunstwerke'). In this case, the quality (a highly debatable concept) of each final item is not relevant. What is relevant is the fact that these items are created with minimum guidance. The teacher—with the possible help of the composer—has the task of organising these items together to create meaningful and quality art out of them. In other words, the pupils cannot go wrong with these parts of the show. It may not necessarily be the only or rare occasion to have their personal work be read, looked at and discussed, but if it is, I am happy to provide them with the chance to find out they actually have things to write, show and make.

Before I return to the conversation on the musical aspect of *Kinderlebenslieder*, I must state that the lockdown in Cyprus due to Covid-19 was announced just a week before its planned première. This means that no performance could take place, but the piece had already been extensively rehearsed by Stavrou, the commissioner of this piece, and her students. Therefore, through email and text message conversations, Stavrou has been able to provide a number of comments that I have used in this commentary and in this section in particular.

Similarly to the other pieces of the portfolio, 'Melody and extended humours' as well as 'Torsion for kids' (two of the pieces in *Kinderlebenslieder*) explore sound in depth, yet using different strategies. In 'Melody and extended humours', the pupils have to come up with their own material both conceptually (they must choose humours and moods they want to explore musically) and technically (they choose or even invent which extended techniques they want to explore). Finally, they explore the techniques through the lenses of the humours and moods they chose. Therefore, the exploration of sound is subject to both practical constraints (the extended techniques for example) and metaphorical constraints (the humours and moods). The ping-pong game between mind and body is at play again. In ‘Torsion for kids’, the exploration of multiphonics with lips and breathing techniques (two parameters that the performers control to a certain extent) is to be constantly tuned to the constraints arising from the dancing body that pushes limbs and organs into all sorts of odd positions (parameters that are barely controllable by the performers).

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[31] *Les extra-violoncellistes*, for eight cello pupils and their teacher (2004), premièred with cello pupils in Lausanne in 2005; *The Cypriot fourth dimension* for an unlimited number of pianists playing on one grand piano and their audience (2015) premièred at the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles in 2016 with Maria Paz's pupils, and performed again in Lausanne in 2017 with Anna Benzakoun's students.

Similarly to the ‘Unknown Pieces’ of *Symphonie*, *Kinderlebenslieder* also has ambitious pedagogical objectives, but to a much greater extent. These pedagogical ideas come from my personal experience and practice as a teacher and workshop leader, as well as from memories of both frustrations and epiphanies as a pupil and a student. For example, in conservatoire training, there is often a quest for the ‘perfect’ sound, but teachers do not necessarily explain to pupils that instrumental sound is a subjective and personal concept, and sometimes do not even believe it is. I find it important to show that sound quality is a spectrum that can be explored and utilised consciously. Besides the fact that exploring the sound quality spectrum is a perfectly valid musical activity in general, and in my music in particular, I also believe that mastering this spectrum can greatly help in understanding and mastering the ‘classical’ part of that spectrum that mainstream repertoire employs. Stavrou, the commissioner of *Kinderlebenslieder*, gives a very clear example of this in an email conversation. She was initially dubious about ‘Torsion for kids’, because she thought it would be too difficult for the pupils. She had commissioned, premièred and toured for a couple of years the original version of it, ‘Torsion’, a movement of *Uranus’s second castration* (Catherin & Garcia Carro, 2017 for the score and 2019 for the recording) and spoke from experience. Yet, she ended up having all her students, including the beginners, practice and perform it. She had realised, in her own words, how important it was:

> ‘Torsion’ is one for the movements of [*Uranus's Second Castration*] that made me reflect a lot on the impact of my body and my movements on my playing and my sound. I find it rather technically difficult. [...] The movement requires great focus and great control of your body [...].

> Eventually I decided to work on ['Torsion for kids'] with all my pupils! I noticed that one of the pupils' big problems is the way they hold the flute. They do not realise the importance of their whole body on their playing. Most of them end up having back problems because of that. Furthermore, [they are all teenagers and] their bodies change a lot at this age; they do not have total control of their movements.
>
> I found it a good idea to make them work with a dancer. We had a body warm-up in order to be conscious of all its parts. Then, we did exercises in order to realise the impact of movements on the flute sound.
>
> I think it is a very important experience for my pupils. They became conscious of numerous aspects of their body and can use these exercises not only for your piece but for all the repertoire they play. (Stavrou, 2020, my translation from French)

Kinderlebenslieder proposes another double aesthetic/pedagogical objective: the possibility (and the necessity) to experiment with a broader practice of music. In both 'Believe in Galina Ustvolskaya and doubt not' as well as in 'Melody and extended humours', the pupils become co-composers. They have to make final decisions in 'Believe in Galina Ustvolskaya and doubt not' regarding the number of repeats and the duration of the fermatas. In short, they are responsible for the most important parameter of music: time. Aesthetically speaking, these responsibilities left to the pupils should allow the piece to take directions that are unforeseeable by me, the composer. Equally unforeseeable are the choices the performers will make in 'Melody and extended humours', and how these choices (of extended techniques and humours) will actually sound. Again, these choices constitute a complex compositional task. Finally, in the Melody part of 'Melody and extended humours', the pupils have to choose a traditional song that will serve as compositional material for the whole piece after some manipulation. As I discussed earlier in the section *Idiosyncratic songs*, because they choose as a group a song that belongs to their culture and their intimacy, I hope they thus feel more closely connected to the piece. Transforming a familiar song through the manipulation I suggest rather than using a melody I impose also makes the process, hopefully, more playful: the children might be excited and curious to know what happens to their familiar song after this manipulation occurs. In my opinion, all these pedagogical strategies give the students the opportunity to understand the hidden mechanisms of the piece. Hopefully, these insights help them to look at everything they play under a very different light: the light of one who knows how music is made.

Lastly, I want to briefly say a word about the conducting task undertaken by the students in ‘Melody and extended humours’. On top of all the tasks the pupils must perform (playing long notes, varying their sound quality, switching from ‘Melody’ to ‘Extended humours’ following certain rules of the game), they also have to conduct the whole ensemble one after the other. Similarly to the meta-bow technique in *Symphonie*, this situation might trigger all kinds of reactions and as many unforeseeable, sonic situations. Pedagogically speaking, this calls for a lot of concentration and careful listening. Again, I believe this very active listening as well as the decision making for the whole group will help develop their ensemble sensitivity and their understanding of ‘group sound’ beyond the purely aesthetic outcome that I am after in my music. In *Kinderlebenslieder*, the concepts developed in the other pieces, and in *Symphonie* in particular, are clearly highlighted and explained for the purpose of allowing the children to discover, learn, and, hopefully, blossom from these concepts.

Conclusion

> To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing. (Small, 1998:9)

The main contribution to knowledge of this PhD consists of six new works that explore in different ways the concept of blossoming participants. They illustrate how to celebrate the participants' idiosyncrasies and how to turn them into the main material of the composition. The discussion on *Clitorides & Zebroids* even raises the rather rarely considered importance of allowing an active participation of audience members in experimental music (as well as in the range of musical styles I am familiar with from classical to free improvisation). The commentary brings new insights and examples of how and why my methods (such as collaborations for example) and ethos (such as my policy of highlighting idiosyncrasies) are unique assets in 'providing material for performance'. Consequently, it shows how the works of the portfolio impact the participants' positions and responsibilities. Since five out of the six works of the portfolio are transmissible through scores, the commentary presents and discusses notational techniques that highlight and celebrate the idiosyncrasies of all the possible participants for all future possible performances.

Looking back at my research, it is clear to me that *Symphonie* and *Kinderlebenslieder* are stepping stones in my catalogue of works and in my personal 'musicking' in the sense that I consciously combined for the first time all the compositional tools and ethical concepts (benevolence and blossoming) that I had been exploring in a purely intuitive manner since I started composing. Working on all the pieces of this portfolio with my newly acquired academic self-awareness (for which I must thank again my supervisors Dr Mark Slater and Dr Alex Harker) helped me to widen and open my practice to areas that I had hardly approached until then (intermedia practice) or that I had even rejected previously (texts). This commentary has attempted to render explicit the tools and concepts that I have used in these pieces, as well as their interdependencies. Regarding the question of building bridges between human beings and their idiosyncrasies, each piece adopts a different approach. All the pieces emphasise the bridges between their makers and their performers, as well as highlighting the participants' idiosyncrasies.[32] *Symphonie* and *Kinderlebenslieder* share the particularity of building bridges between younger, apprentice performers. *Clitorides & Zebroids* also creates a tangible bridge between the humans in the audience and the humans on stage through the whiteboard, that also reveals and enhances some of the idiosyncrasies of the audience members.

Highlighting and possibly enhancing the participants' idiosyncrasies result in a mild to radical change of their habits. *Watching Paint Dry* challenges the performers' usual practices by turning them into *de facto* painters. *Svioloncello* turns the cellist into a live luthier and the luthier into a performer. *Symphonie* impacts the performers perhaps even more radically by turning them into performance artists. *Kinderlebenslieder* requires all of these transformations to be achieved by children. All of these performers, as well as the performers of *Clitorides & Zebroids* see their bodies suddenly being summoned to act beyond their traditional role of triggering vibrations in their instrument. Still in *Clitorides & Zebroids*, the audience members' position is also challenged. They make the decision to stay outside of the performance or to become part of it, which is not their usual position. Choosing the latter gives them great responsibility. This responsibility is shared, in all the pieces, by all the performers, who are told to systematically make decisions that impact the whole performance, as traditionally takes place in free improvisation.

Each piece gives its own answer to why I think intermedia works and collaborations are helpful and necessary for the blossoming of participants. The interviews with Mark Slater and Eva Stavrou about their respective students, as well as other interviews with other participants, demonstrated the many ways these students and performers are transformed by the experience of performing these pieces. I outlined how the scores for these works make this process available for all their possible performers and not only for those who premièred and/or designed them. I also detailed the notational tools I used to transmit the pieces in question.

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[32] Makers and performers were the same people in some of the pieces, but they could all be played by performers that are not the makers.

This commentary may also bring a humble contribution to questioning the powers (and their much too common abuses) at play in musicking, not in a theoretical (sociological or other) manner, but a practical one. In the near future, I plan to organise new performances of *Symphonie* and *Clitorides & Zebroids* with entirely new performers. This should shed some new light on these works and open up new sonic territories within them. Hopefully, *Kinderlebenslieder* will finally be premièred when the Covid-19 crisis is over. I also received a commission from Studio Art Zoyd in France to work on a version of the sonic part of *Make sure* with live electronics. My plan is to apply my ideas about unknown territories to electronic processes. As I have tried to demonstrate in this commentary, there is not one way of sharing responsibilities, giving the participants the opportunity to blossom, and being benevolent, but as many ways as there are pieces and performers. Therefore, I will keep on exploring them one performance at a time.

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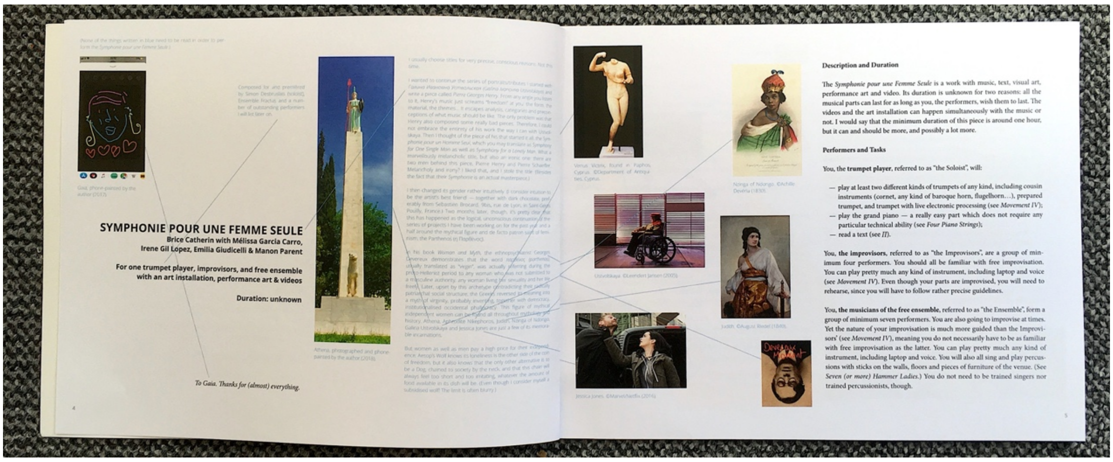
APPENDICES TO THE SCORES

1 *Symphonie pour une femme seule*

Pictures of the book, taken by me:

SYMPHONIE POUR UNE FEMME SEULE

Score?



SYMPHONIE POUR UNE FEMME SEULE
Brice Catherin with Mélissa Garcia Carro,
Irene Gil Lopez, Emilia Giudicelli & Manon Parent

For one trumpet player, improvisors, and free ensemble
with an art installation, performance art & videos

Duration: unknown

To Gaia. Thanks for (almost) everything.

Description and Duration

The *Symphonie pour une Femme Seule* is a work with music, text, visual art, performance art and video. Its duration is unknown for two reasons: all the musical parts can last for as long as you, the performers, wish them to last. The videos and the art installation can happen simultaneously with the music or not. I would say that the minimum duration of this piece is around one hour, but it can and should be more, and possibly a lot more.

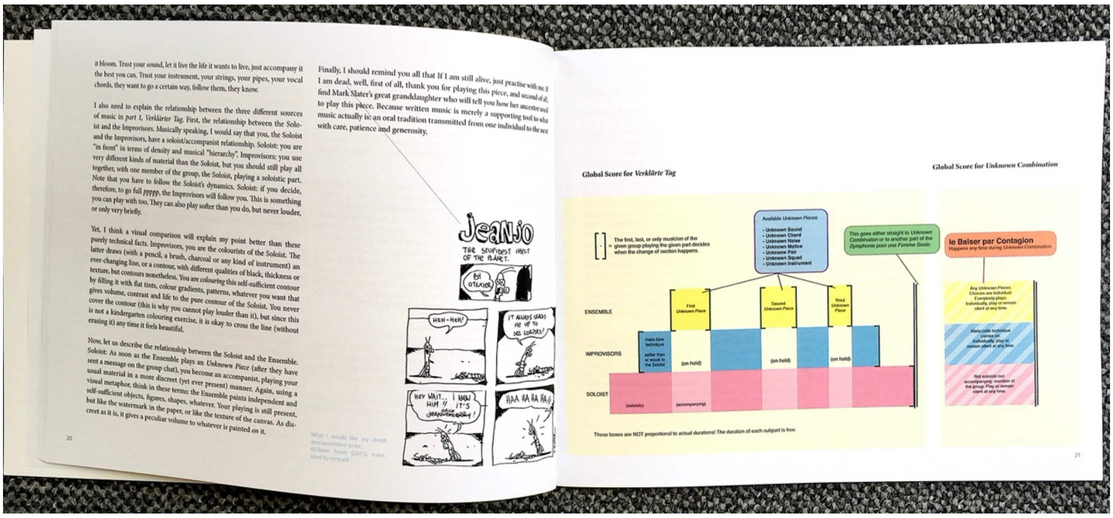
Performers and Tasks

You, the **trumpet player**, referred to as "the Soloist", will:

- play at least two different kinds of trumpets of any kind, including cousin instruments (cornet, any kind of baroque horn, flugelhorn…), prepared trumpet, and trumpet with live electronic processing (see *Movement IV*);
- play the grand piano — a really easy part which does not require any particular technical ability (see *Four Piano Strings*);
- read a text (see *II*).

You, **the improvisors**, referred to as "the Improvisors", are a group of minimum four performers. You should all be familiar with free improvisation. You can play pretty much any kind of instrument, including laptop and voice (see *Movement IV*). Even though your parts are improvised, you will need to rehearse, since you will have to follow rather precise guidelines.

You, **the musicians of the free ensemble**, referred to as "the Ensemble", form a group of minimum seven performers. You are also going to improvise at times. Yet the nature of your improvisation is much more guided than the Improvisors' (see *Movement IV*), meaning you do not necessarily have to be as familiar with free improvisation as the latter. You can play pretty much any kind of instrument, including laptop and voice. You will also all sing and play percussions with sticks on the walls, floors and pieces of furniture of the venue. (See *Seven (or more) Hammer Ladies*.) You do not need to be trained singers nor trained percussionists, though.



it bloom. Trust your sound, let it live the life it wants to live, just accompany it the best you can. Trust your instrument, your strings, your pipes, your vocal chords, they want to go a certain way, follow them, they know.

I also need to explain the relationship between the three different sources of music in *part I, Verklärter Tag*. First, the relationship between the Soloist and the Improvisors. Musically speaking, I would say that you, the Soloist and the Improvisors, have a soloist/accompanist relationship. Soloist: you are "in front" in terms of density and musical "hierarchy". Improvisors: you use very different kinds of material than the Soloist, but you should still play all together, with one member of the group, the Soloist, playing a soloistic part. Note that you have to follow the Soloist's dynamics. Soloist: if you decide, therefore, to go full *ppppp*, the Improvisoes will follow you. This is something you can play with too. They can also play softer than you do, but never louder, or only very briefly.

Yet, I think a visual comparison will explain my point better than these purely technical facts. Improvisors, you are the colourists of the Soloist. The latter draws (with a pencil, a brush, charcoal or any kind of instrument) an ever-changing line, or a contour, with different qualities of black, thickness or texture, but contours nonetheless. You are *colouring* this self-sufficient contour by filling it with flat tints, colour gradients, patterns, whatever you want that gives volume, contrast and life to the pure contour of the Soloist. You never cover the contour (this is why you cannot play louder than it), but since this is not a kindergarten colouring exercise, it is okay to cross the line (without erasing it) any time it feels beautiful.

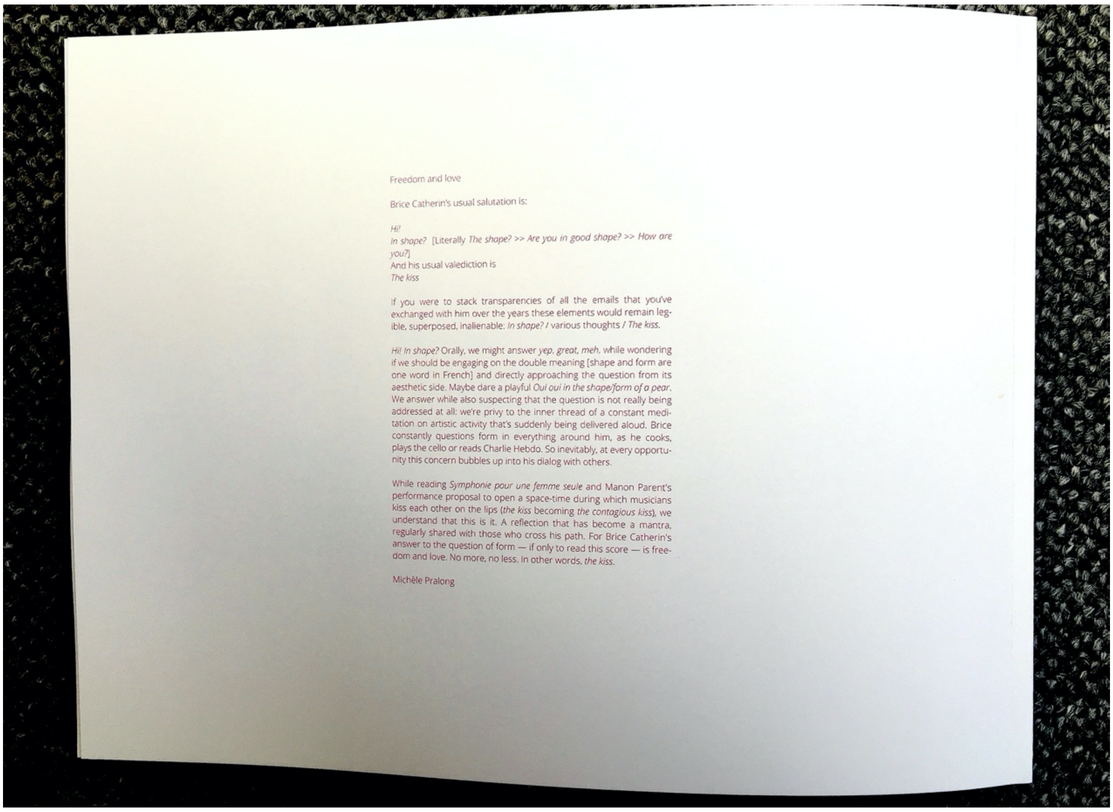
Now, let us describe the relationship between the Soloist and the Ensemble. Soloist: As soon as the Ensemble plays an *Unknown Piece* (after they have sent a message on the group chat), you become an accompanist, playing your usual material in a more discreet (yet ever present) manner. Again, using a visual metaphor, think in these terms: the Ensemble paints independent and self-sufficient objects, figures, shapes, whatever. Your playing is still present, but like the watermark in the paper, or like the texture of the canvas. As discreet as it is, it gives a peculiar volume to whatever is painted on it.

Finally, I should remind you all that If I am still alive, just practise with me. If I am dead, well, first of all, thank you for playing this piece, and second of all, find Mark Slater's great granddaughter who will tell you how her ancestor used to play this piece. Because written music is merely a supporting tool to what music actually is: an oral tradition transmitted from one individual to the next with care, patience and generosity.

Global Score for *Verklärte Tag*

Global Score for *Unknown Combination*

JeanJo
The first, last, or only musician of the given group playing the given part decides when the change of section happens.
Available *Unknown Pieces*:
- Unknown Sound
- Unknown Chord
- Unknown Noise
- Unknown Motive
- Unknonw Pair
- Unknown Squad
- Unknown Instrument
This goes either straight to *Unknown Combination* or to another part of the *Symphonie pour une Femme Seule*.
ENSEMBLE
IMPROVISORS
SOLOIST
First *Unknown Piece*
Second *Unknown Piece*
Third *Unknown Piece*
meta-bow technique
softer than or equal to the Soloist
(on hold)
(on hold)
(on hold)
(soloistic)
(accompanying)
These boxes are NOT proportional to actual durations! The duration of each subpart is free.
le Baiser par Contagion
Happens any time during *Unknown Combination*.
Any Unknown Pieces. Choices are individual. Everybody plays. Individually, play or remain silent at any time.
Meta-cello technique carries on. Individually, play or remain silent at any time.
Not soloistic nor accompanying: member of the group. Play or remain silent at any time.



Freedom and love

Brice Catherin's usual salutation is:

Hi!
In shape? [Literally *The shape? >> Are you in good shape? >> How are you?*]
And his usual valediction is
The kiss

If you were to stack transparencies of all the emails that you've exchanged with him over the years these elements would remain legible, superposed, inalienable: *In shape?* / various thoughts / *The kiss.*

Hi! In shape? Orally, we might answer *yep, great, meh,* while wondering if we should be engaging on the double meaning [shape and form are one word in French] and directly approaching the question from its aesthetic side. Maybe dare a playful *Oui oui in the shape/form of a pear*. We answer while also suspecting that the question is not really being addressed at all: we're privy to the inner thread of a constant meditation on artistic activity that's suddenly being delivered aloud. Brice constantly questions form in everything around him, as he cooks, plays the cello or reads Charlie Hebdo. So inevitably, at every opportunity this concern bubbles up into his dialog with others.

While reading *Symphonie pour une femme seule* and Manon Parent's performance proposal to open a space-time during which musicians kiss each other on the lips (*the kiss* becoming *the contagious kiss*), we understand that this is it. A reflection that has become a mantra, regularly shared with those who cross his path. For Brice Catherin's answer to the question of form — if only to read this score — is freedom and love. No more, no less. In other words, *the kiss.*

Michèle Pralong

Selection of scores written by the participants of 'Le Baiser par Contagion'.

Example 1:

I walk in the space. When I get into eye contact with my partner, I slow down and stop in a spot. I make three, four steps towards him/her and suspend, watching as he/she approaches me. I let him/her to get close and walk around me (we look into each other's eyes most of the time, except for the moments when we get closer and reveal the texture of the partner's skin with eyes). I let him/her to observe me first.

I take over and start to move around my partner, while he/she is standing. I get closer to him/her with my face, as if I would touch him/her with my cheek. I move with my left cheek around his/her left cheek. When I withdraw, he/she began to move around me again. I follow his eyes, but when he/she is behind me, I stay focused in the same position sensing his/her movement and eyes on me. When he/she stops, I go around him/her again.

I stand behind my partner. I look at his/her head and hear. With my right palm I move around the surface of his hear, just before touching. I travel with my hand and eyes around the top of the head and then slowly going down to the neck. I get as close as possible, almost as if I would touch my partner. But I don't do it. I walk around and stand in front of him/her.

I look into my partner, in his/her eyes. We stay like that, looking at each other's eyes for few seconds, long enough to get familiar and calm. I look at my partner's neck and a line guiding from his/her left ear to chin. With my right hand I trace these lines without touching, but being very close. I trace the movement with my eyes, as if I was touching my partner this way. When I put my hand down he/she can start his/her movement around me.

Example 2:

Gesture 1

Approach your partner and reach slowly toward the inside of their right arm with yours slowly working up towards their elbow. Once you've reached their elbow, grasp it and move closer to your partner.

Gesture 2

Move up to the inside of their upper arm, bring it round and progress up onto their shoulder as you begin to walk behind them running your fingers across the top of their back, placing a hand on each shoulder.

Gesture 3

The third gesture consists of navigating your way back round your partner and down their arm so that the last point of contact with them is your finger tips

Example 3:

Movement 1

Exploration of each other's fingertips, tentatively at first with just the tips meeting. From this meeting there is a gradual moving over each other's fingertips, slowly and beginning lightly but increasing in pressure, noting the roughness of the ridges on our respective fingerprints and the way they change and continue down the rest of the fingers themselves. After finding our way along each other's entire fingers the exploration becomes more lateral, going around the sides and into the spaces between, noting the creases of the finger joints and the protrusions of the underlying bone structures where they raise the skin.

Movement 2

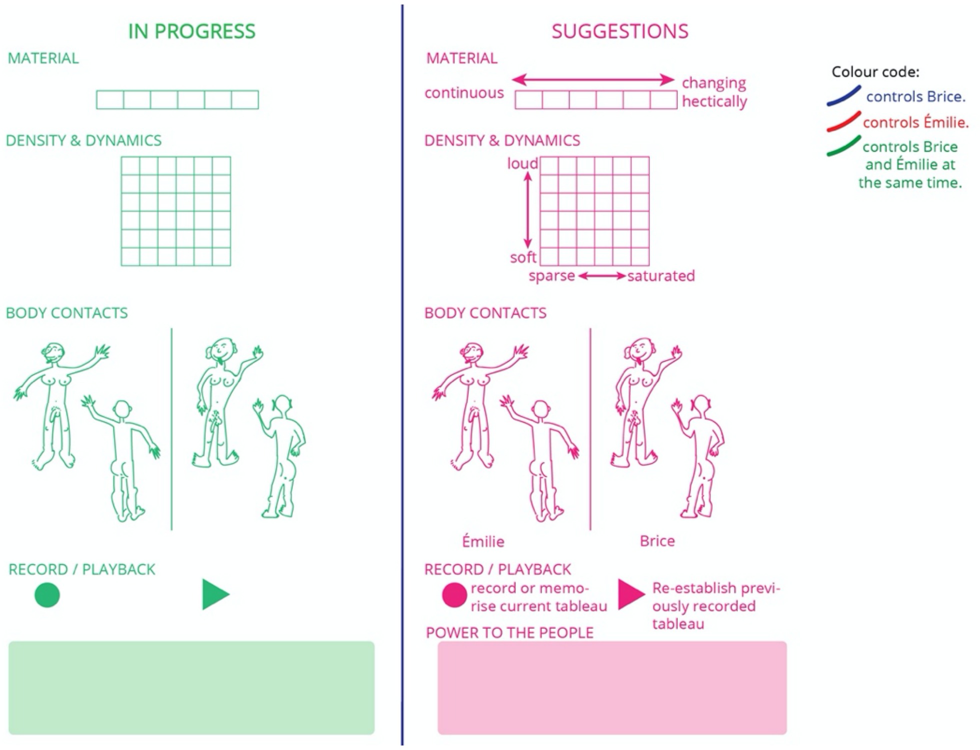
Having explored the ridges on the undersides of each other's fingers, we move until our hands are fully touching each other, palm to palm at first and then moving so that palm touches the back of the hand, then the sides of the hand along the fleshy part below the thumb and the outer edge where the small metacarpal bone is detectable through the skin. The initial sensation is one of hands gliding lightly against each other, but then the fingers of each envelop the other's hand and begins to apply more pressure, still gently but with enough firmness to feel where the underlying muscles and bones are. Instead of gliding, the movement becomes more probing as pressure is applied and then released in one specific place, then a movement to another adjacent part of the hand, and the motion then repeated. Changes in the thickness of muscle, the proximity of the skeletal structure, and the tautness or looseness of the skin, is all paid close attention to as the overall structure of the components of each other's hands gradually come into view.

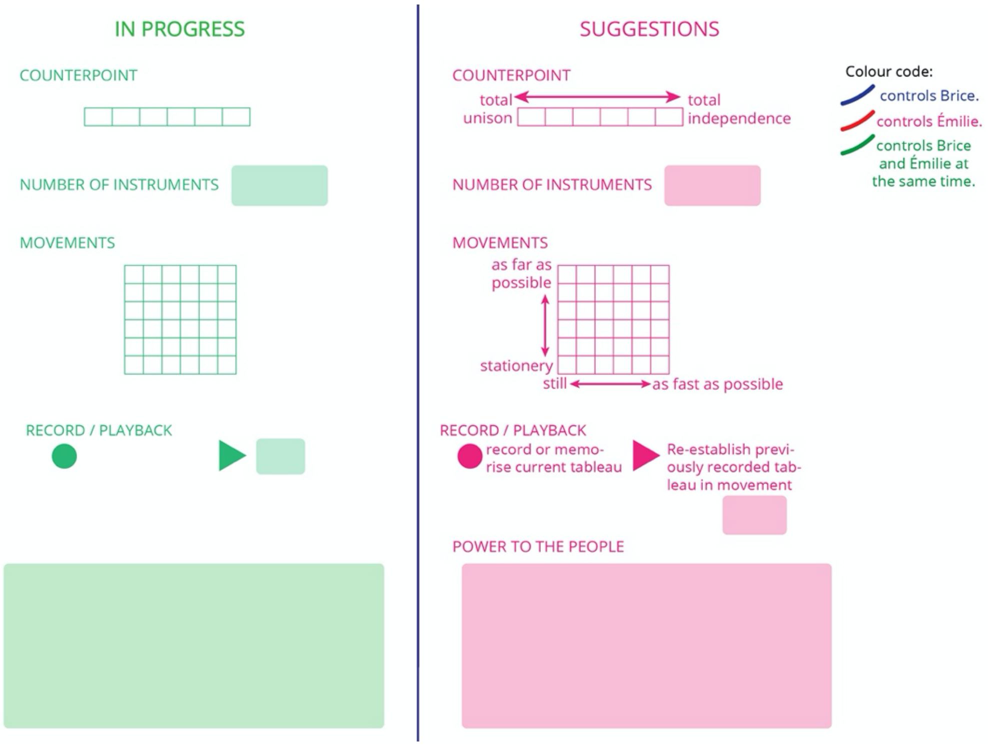
Movement 3

Beginning with left palm flat against the other's left palm, one facing upwards and the other downwards. The fingers of one stretch outward and feel the contour of the other's wrist, and this action is then mirrored by the other. The movement further up the arm continues its natural course, with each moving their hand towards the other's elbow. The pressure is light, and the hands glide smoothly, and as the hand moves upwards the arms remain in contact with each other. The gradual movement along the arms is matched by a rotational movement around each other's ulna, the bone that runs from the elbow joint to the little finger. Upon reaching each other's elbows, the hands continue and the fingers curve around the upper arm until each is cradling the other's elbow with the full length of the lower arms pressing against each other.

2 *Clitorides & Zebroids*

The three whiteboards that were used for the première:


IN PROGRESS
MATERIAL
DENSITY & DYNAMICS
BODY CONTACTS
RECORD / PLAYBACK
SUGGESTIONS
MATERIAL
continuous
changing hectically
DENSITY & DYNAMICS
loud
soft
sparse
saturated
BODY CONTACTS
Émilie
Brice
RECORD / PLAYBACK
record or memorise current tableau
Re-establish previously recorded tableau
POWER TO THE PEOPLE
Colour code:
controls Brice.
controls Émilie.
controls Brice and Émilie at the same time.



IN PROGRESS

COUNTERPOINT

NUMBER OF INSTRUMENTS

MOVEMENTS

RECORD / PLAYBACK

● ▶

SUGGESTIONS

COUNTERPOINT

total unison ↔ total independence

NUMBER OF INSTRUMENTS

MOVEMENTS

as far as possible ↕ stationery

still ↔ as fast as possible

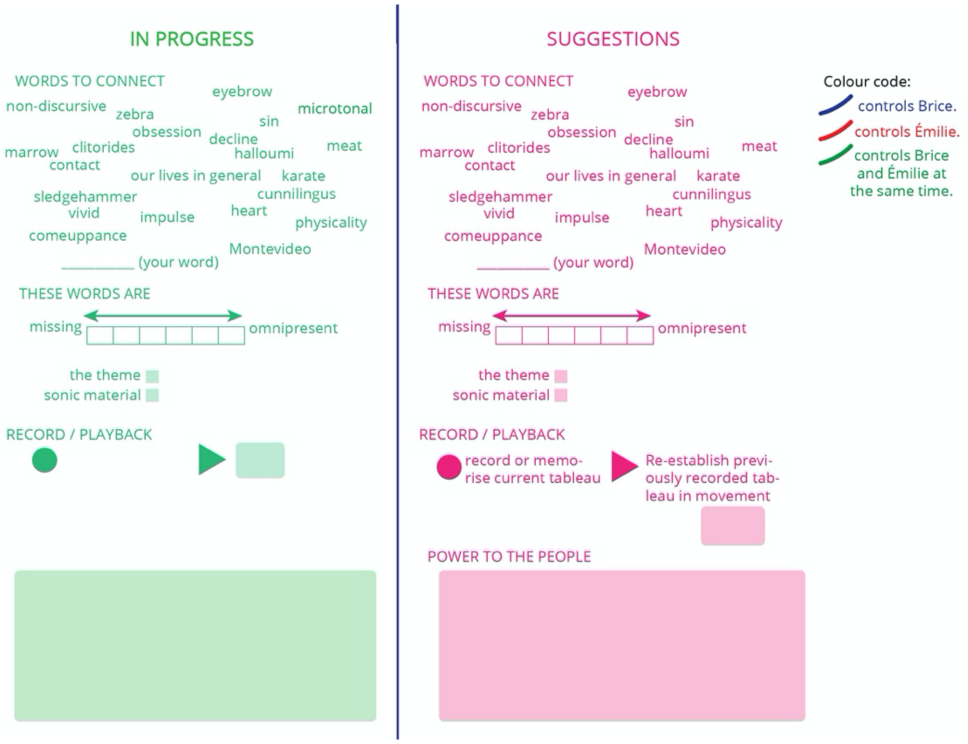
RECORD / PLAYBACK

● record or memorise current tableau

▶ Re-establish previously recorded tableau in movement

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

Colour code:
controls Brice.
controls Émilie.
controls Brice and Émilie at the same time.



IN PROGRESS

WORDS TO CONNECT

non-discursive
eyebrow
zebra
microtonal
sin
obsession
decline
marrow
clitorides
halloumi
meat
contact
our lives in general
karate
sledgehammer
cunnilingus
vivid
impulse
heart
physicality
comeuppance
Montevideo
__________ (your word)

THESE WORDS ARE

missing ↔ omnipresent

the theme
sonic material

RECORD / PLAYBACK

● ▶

SUGGESTIONS

WORDS TO CONNECT

non-discursive
eyebrow
zebra
sin
obsession
decline
marrow
clitorides
halloumi
meat
contact
our lives in general
karate
sledgehammer
cunnilingus
vivid
impulse
heart
physicality
comeuppance
Montevideo
__________ (your word)

THESE WORDS ARE

missing ↔ omnipresent

the theme
sonic material

RECORD / PLAYBACK

● record or memorise current tableau

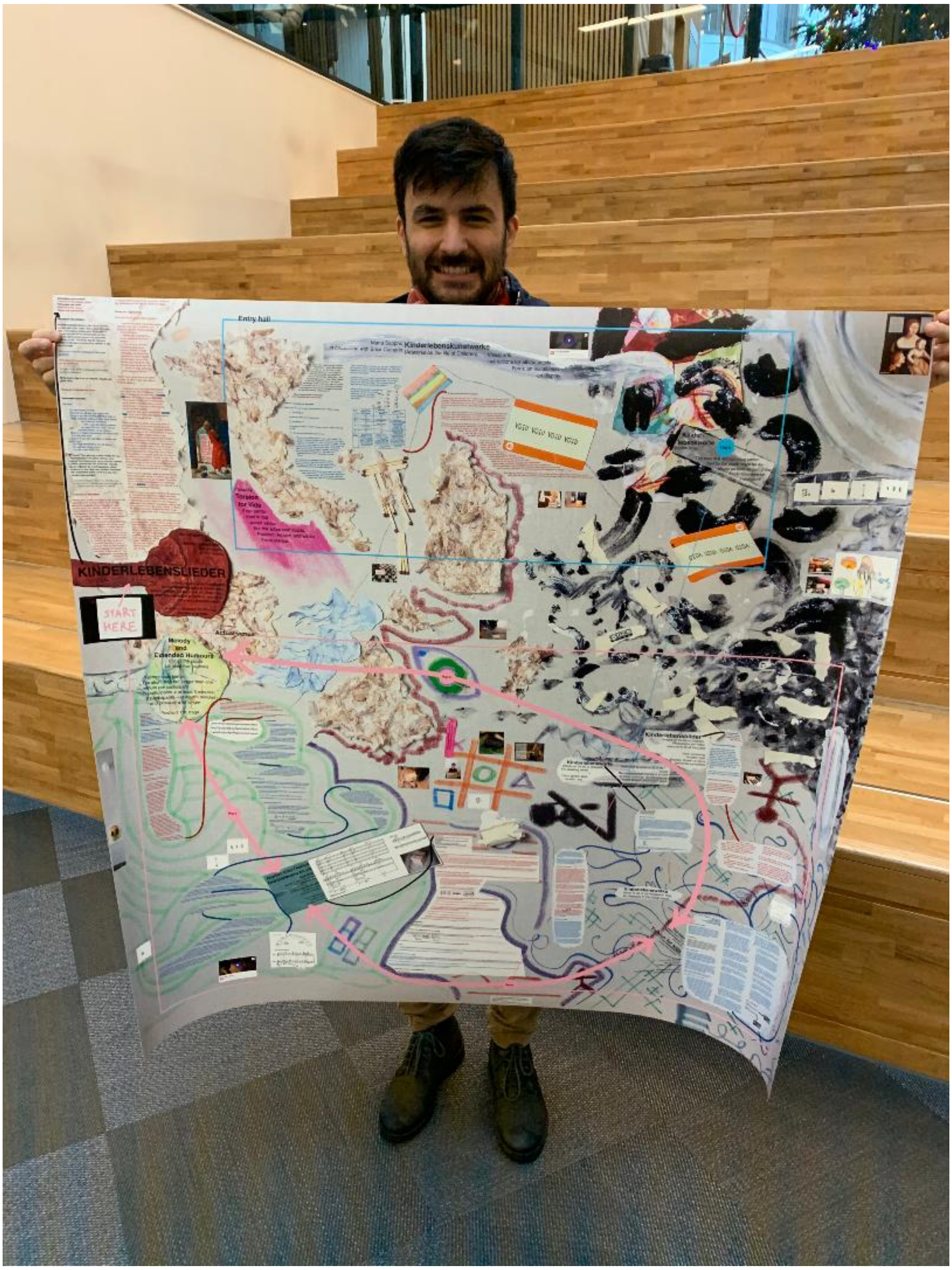
▶ Re-establish previously recorded tableau in movement

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

Colour code:
controls Brice.
controls Émilie.
controls Brice and Émilie at the same time.

3 *Kinderlebenslieder*

A photograph of the print-out of the score, in a slightly smaller and previous version than the PDF file of this portfolio, with the composer for scale. (Anonymous photographer, University of Huddersfield.)


Entry hall
KINDERLEBENSLIEDER
START HERE