Rethinking the Performer: Towards a devising performance practice

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Abstract

The performer's perspective and the impact of collaboration on the performer's artistic practice is often overlooked in frameworks designed to analyze collaboration in contemporary music. The conception of what a performer is 'for' in the development of a new musical piece is, at least in part, what constitutes a performer's artistic practice, whether that is the performer as an interpreter and executor of scores, as an adviser to the composer, and/or as a co-creating deviser. The interpreter-adviser-deviser model is conceived as a framework for considering the ways composer-performer collaborations can influence and contribute to the construction of a performer's artistic practice and subjectivity. Collaboration is not only a method of creating new works, it's also a method for creating artistic practices. Drawing on examples of devised practices as exhibited in Jennifer Torrence's artistic research, practices which are communicated through reflections, dialogues, images, and videos, the article ultimately argues that it is the performer as deviser that offers the most radical rethinking of the purpose, role, and potential of the performer in contemporary music collaboration.

I. A dialogue on the relationship between composer, score, and performer

In 2015, composer François Sarhan and percussionist Jennifer Torrence collaborated to create the evening-length music theater piece for solo percussionist, No Say No Way. No Say No Way takes the form of a lecture-recital about the triangle, however in reality it explores themes of reticence, doubt, and failure. In the following dialogue Sarhan and Torrence discuss the historical relationships between the composer, the score, and the performer, and finally offer a reflection on their attempt to rethink these relationships while creating No Say No Way.

François Sarhan: Let's start with a general description of the situation. What brought you to ask a composer (like me for instance) to make a project for you and with you?

Jennifer Torrence: Two parts: one, I think you're making good and important work, I want to be a part of your process, and to see how your work will affect mine; and two, I'm no longer interested in so much of the status quo composer/interpreter relationship. I thought you would be up for a different approach.

F: How would you describe this status quo?

J: I describe it as a very long staircase where the composer works at the top and the performer waits at the bottom. First the composer goes up that staircase to be alone at a writing desk for quite sometime. Then, they descend those stairs (with their hands shaking a little bit from excitement and fear) and gives the interpreter the sacred object of the score. The interpreter promptly runs home to practice alone until "perfection" is sonified.

F: My sense is that it is a heritage from the Romantic period, where the composer invented this position of "chosen one", which creates a split between him and the performer. Significantly, this

emerging position (late Beethoven, young Liszt and Wagner) is contemporary to the emergence of the notion of repertoire. In 1831 Mendelssohn performs the Matthäus Passion by Bach, a piece which was forgotten for many years, and suddenly, by this gesture, Mendelssohn builds the dialectic contemporary/historical and repertoire/creation.

It seems to me that a lot of contemporary music, at least the way it is conceived in Europe, is still strongly embedded in the Romantic concepts of the omnipotent composer and primacy of the score.

J: Do you feel there has been any shift away from the score today? Both in general, and in your own practice? Or do you find that even you have a desire or need to keep the score as a "worshipped" object?

F: The score has no interest for me whatsoever, and if I could get rid of it completely, I would consider it to be an improvement. There certainly is a distance taken by some composers from the score, for various reasons and with various results, but the real question actually doesn't lie behind the score: it's the conception of the composer that has to be completely rethought. To get rid of this omnipotence, to reintroduce the interaction with the body, the performance, the audience (the simplest elements of "making music"). That is, for me, the first questions to ask, and then the relation to notation and to the score come more naturally.

That's probably where some performers can have such an important role in the life of composers, when they can provoke these sorts of crises. Then at last the composition can become what it should always be: a decomposition.
J: And do you feel that *No Say No Way* has achieved this moment of decomposition, or crisis, as you call it? We have almost completely left the score behind, but there are still traces of it left in our process and in the piece. For me, the occasional use of a score was an important step to come closer to your language and thought process. But like you, it would be a great improvement for me if I could simply intuit or improvise through the lens of your compositional voice. Perhaps it's also a question of rethinking the concept of the performer...

F: In my opinion, one needs a composer as a *mal necessaire*, a necessary obstacle. Ideally we don't need composers or performers; ideally we can produce music being both. That's one of the attempts of *No Say No Way*.

Then is it an achievement in that respect? Yes, certainly; at least I'm proud of having been able to communicate layers of meanings and expression without notation, with a few words, and even the written composed parts are not the most prominent of the whole show.

So, there is hope.

October, 2015.

II. Performer Roles in Contemporary Music Collaboration

What is a performer for? When composers work with performers, in what capacities do they expect or hope to engage them? At what point should a composer give credit to the performer for their creative contributions to a piece? At what point should a performer demand that credit? How does the relationship to the composer and the process of collaboration create the artistic identity and practice of the performer? To repeat the original formulation: what is a performer for? The answers to these questions are fundamental to understanding various approaches to composer and performer collaboration and in considering how collaboration shapes not only musical works, but artistic practices.

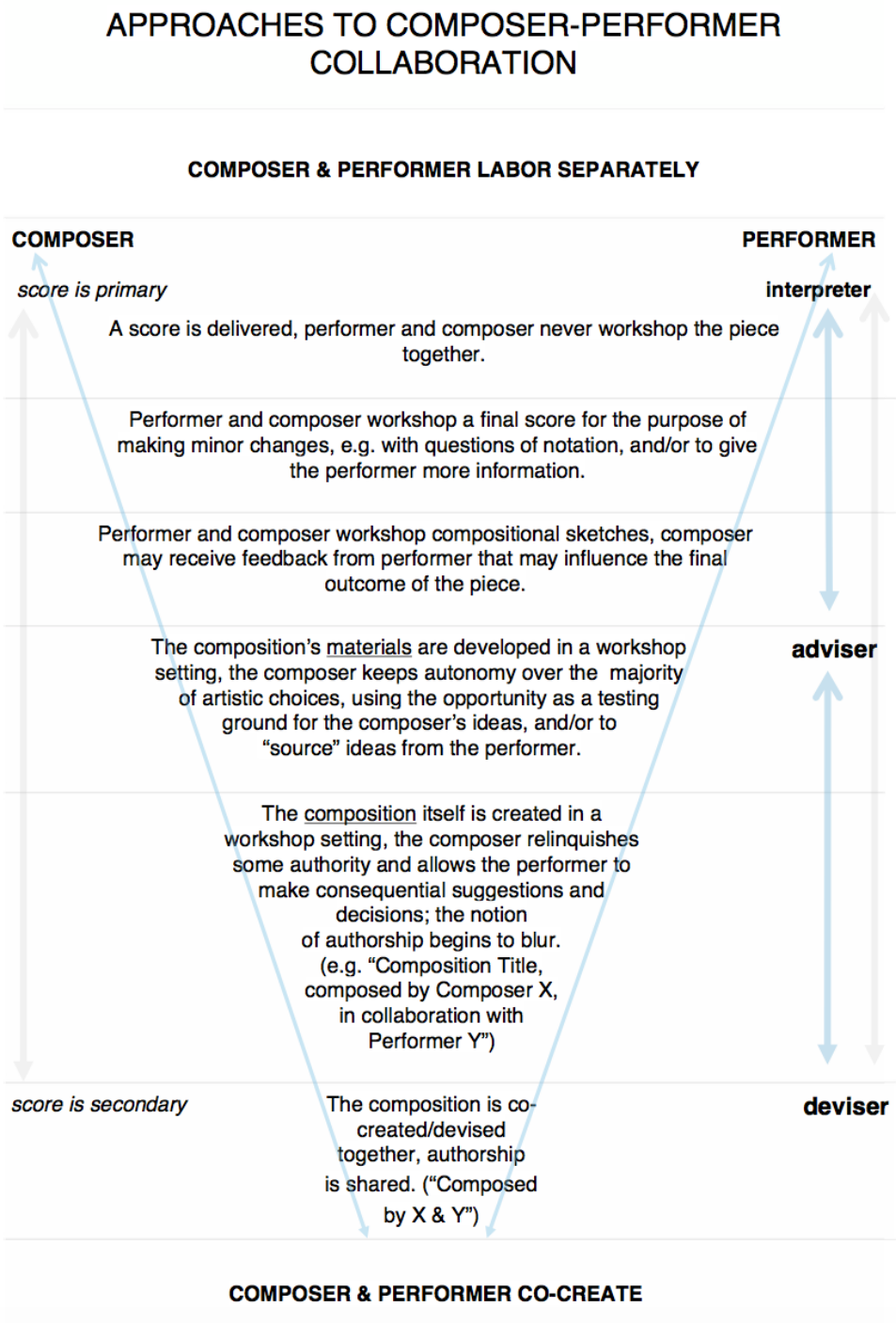
The interpreter-adviser-deviser model (see figure 1) offers an often overlooked perspective in contemporary music[1] collaborative frameworks, which is the impact of collaboration on the performer's artistic identity and practice. In various collaborative situations the performer can assume the role of acting as an interpreter and executor of a score on behalf of the composer, as an adviser to the composer, and/or as an equal and co-creating deviser.[2] These roles can be more than mere tasks taken up in a single generative process, they can, through repetition, represent the artistic practice of the performer. This is especially the case for musicians specializing in contemporary music, where a large portion of a musician's activities is often commissioning and realizing totally new pieces. (Roche, 2011) It is the composer's and the performer's conceptualization of what a performer is 'for' in this process that largely defines the potential of a performer's artistic practice. Like any model, the interpreter-adviser-deviser model exists on a spectrum containing nuance and variability. It is conceived as a framework for considering the ways composer-performer collaborations can influence and contribute to the construction of a performer's artistic practice. Each role in the interpreter-adviser-deviser model is necessary depending on the creative situation, however it is the third of these, devising, that presents the most radical rethinking of the role, purpose, and potential of the performer in that it often considers the performer to be a co-creating author of a new piece.

Recent scholarly work has questioned the storied notion of the composer as an autonomous genius who single-handedly creates new musical pieces. This research has yielded diverse models for analyzing and considering the nature of composer-performer collaborations. Several of these models consider the issue of decision making to be the dividing line between various collaborative approaches. In these cases, the process of decision making is usually a reflection of hierarchy and a division of labor between composer and performer (Hayden & Windsor, 2007; Taylor, 2016). Acknowledging that the composer very rarely works completely alone, Elliott Gyger (Gyger, 2014) proposes a model that considers the influence of the performer on the evolution of a new piece. Though Gyger consciously stops short of devised collaboration within his model, he concludes with the notion that the influence of the performer seems to be contingent on when the performer and composer meet to work on the piece in relation to where the composer 'is' in the process of composing. The interpreter-adviser-deviser model exists in relation to the scholarly research above, through it draws its difference by attempting to focus on the role of the performer in the

Figure 1

[1] "Contemporary music" is used here as an, albeit imperfect, umbrella term for 20th and 21st century Western Art Music. Other terms used to describe this music include new music, contemporary classical music, experimental music, and/or exploratory music. These terms and their usage are contentious and have been debated in texts such as Pàmies, Joan Arnau. (2016, June 13). New Music is Not (Necessarily) Contemporary. New Music Box. Retrieved from https://nmbx.newmusicusa.org/new-music-is-not-necessarily-contemporary-music/
"Contemporary music" is never used within this text to reference popular musics.

[2] "Devise" is used here in reference to the generative process for creating performance known as devising. Devising is always used in this text in reference to co-created performance with at least two creators/authors.



collaborative process in terms of the performer's agency and artistic identity. The interpreter-adviser-deviser model illustrates that collaboration is itself a practice, and therefore it is not only through collaboration that a piece is made, but it is also through collaboration that artistic practices are made.

The roles performers assume may be exhibited in specific collaborations and contexts, or they may represent a performer's approach to their collaborative and artistic practice more generally. In other words, the role a performer plays in a collaborative process can be understood as simply that, a role one plays while in a particular group dynamic, or they can be understood as encapsulating a repeated collaborative approach out of which the performer's practice and artistic identity is built and understood. Identity and subjectivity are complex concepts that span far beyond the frames or ambitions of this text. However, for the purposes of grounding the suggestion that collaborative roles could reflect an entire artistic practice it is useful to consider the notion that one aspect contributing to the formation of both identity and subjectivity is the relation between a person and

another. In the case of the performer, the relationship towards composer and the score is a crucial element for understanding performer subjectivity. The performer who sees the composer as an authority, by which the performer learns or grows, is a subjectivity altogether separate from the performer who identifies as equal to the composer when regarding the question of what and how a new musical piece is made.

Performer subjectivity has been described by Gorton & Östesjö (Gorton & Östesjö, 2016) as a web of interactions between the performer and the instrument, the score, performance practice, and the composer. However, they argue that the primary relation for the performer developing what they term 'voice' is in relation to the instrument. The instrument, of course, does play a crucial role in the construction of performer subjectivity, however it could be argued that the emphasis of the instrument on a performer's 'voice' primarily reflects that performer's artistic and collaborative practice. 'Voice', identity, and/or subjectivity of the performer can equally be formed in relation to composer-collaborators as to an instrument. This is especially possible for musicians whose instrument is but one element within an expanded artistic practice, which could also include improvisation, composition, research, or performance more generally. Gorton & Östesjö use a second term, 'discursive voice', to describe the collective 'voice' of the composer and performer that emerges out of the process of collaboration. Though this formulation is certainly compelling and useful for conceptualizing collaboration, the subjectivity referred to in the argument above that a performer's 'voice' can develop primarily through the relation to a composer is not meant as a collective voice but rather as an individual one specific to the performer. In fact, in some cases it could be argued that it is a direct consequence of the relation to the composer that determines the secondary emphasis of the instrument as grounds for constructing performer subjectivity.

The performer as interpreter (see fig. 1)

The method of using a performer to interpret and execute a finished musical score is perhaps the most stereotypical dynamic between composer and performer. The model of the interpreting performer most confirms the Romantic view of the composer as solitary genius. In this case, the performer acts as a "medium" or "messenger" that transmits the composer's musical ideas on behalf of that composer. During the compositional process the composer may work completely alone without ever consulting the performer, or there may arise occasional questions of notation and instrument specific considerations. Through the act of composition, the composer designs the parameters for musical engagement and expression on behalf of the performer and most often communicates this to the performer through a written score. The performer then translates the score into sound through the act of a performed interpretation. Throughout the process of realizing the musical work, the performer's expertise and artistic identity lies with their instrument and the interpretation of a finished score. Though interpretation and the act of performance are critical to understanding any musical work (Cook, 2013), the authorship of the musical material always remains with the composer. This is the case even in the example of the open score, wherein the composer leaves openings for the performer to "finish" the piece (Eco, 1989), for example by asking the performer to develop the sonic materials, as in the case of graphic scores, or by asking them to create the form of the piece, as in the case of open modular compositions (Saunders, 2008).

The performer as adviser[3] (see fig. 1)

The advisory role of the performer is one that encapsulates a range of collaborative methods and strategies. The 'performer as advisor' is a role that performers and musicologists alike will feel

[3] The formulation of "adviser" was introduced by Silje Marie Aker Johnson in "A search for an extended physical interpretation of contemporary vocal music and opera", Norwegian Artistic Research Forum, Hønefoss, Norway, 11, March 2017.

familiar with, though the specific historical impacts performers have had on pieces and composers is more often told in the margins of musical history; relegated to footnotes, anecdotes, and mythology. With Johannes Brahms' relation to clarinettist Richard Mühlfeld as perhaps one of the most well known examples, composers throughout history and up to the present have had specific performers by their sides acting as musical confidants and consultants (e.g. Kanga, 2014; Roche 2011). Though these performers rarely receive the attention or credit they may deserve, through the lens of these collaborative practices the image of the composer as solitary genius begins to fade from view.

Gorton & Östesjö (Gorton & Östesjö, 2016) describe what is here formulated as the performer advising the composer as "two complementary perspectives": "pre-compositional joint invention and post-compositional negotiations in the realisation of a score and its notation". In this formulation the dividing line between approaches is the relation of when the composer and performer meet to collaborate and the appearance of a notated score. Advisory collaborations that initiate before a score is created are often based on workshopping compositional sketches, experimentation, and improvisation. In this 'pre-compositional' workshop setting, the performer may be used as a resource to test and illuminate musical ideas. The workshops can also be used to develop the underlying concept or materials of a new piece. In rare cases the performer may be present during the entire compositional process. Meetings that occur between the composer and performer after the composition has been made, or "post-compositional negotations", are normally used as opportunities to revise a score and to reconsider notation. In some cases, the performer may suggest edits to the piece such as taking away, reordering, or adding material.

As adviser, the performer may experience having a greater impact on the outcome of the piece as well as the perception that the new piece is "custom made". When improvisation is used as a strategy in the generative process or in the resulting work, the performer may experience a greater sense of freedom or a sense that the piece gives space to the performer's individual artistry beyond the realm of interpretation. Though a score is often used to communicate elements of the piece and to preserve the composition for future performance, during the advisory process, the score can begin to lose its emphasis as a means for communication between the performer and the composer. This process gives the performer insight into the composer's intentions, information which may or may not enter into the written score. This insight, in addition to the sense that a piece is "custom made", may afford the performer a greater sense of artistic ownership and interpretational freedom.

In advisory collaboration, the performer and the composer enter into a dialogue where both parties have agency to contribute towards a musical work before the composition's formal components are set into a final score. However, by definition, the nature of acting as an adviser suggests that the performer can only give recommendations and suggestions to the composer, they don't have power to enforce those suggestions. In most cases the composer retains the power to make the majority of artistic choices, as well as sole authorship of the piece.[4] In some cases, the composer may choose to use the margins of the score to thank the performer for her or his contributions to the composition.

Though advisory collaborative processes are manifold, the method can offer a creative situation where a performer's artistic practice and subjectivity can form beyond the relation to instrumental craft or score interpretation. Advising offers the performer the possibility of relating their artistic practice to a specific composer and to the process of sharing an artistic journey. This relation may demand that the performer improvise, stake aesthetic positions, and/or make consequential artistic suggestions before the completion of a piece. For some performers, it is at the point of experiencing an adviser role that the performer may consider their performer-composer collaborative practice to be part of what constitutes their overall artistic practice.

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[4] One must only watch Frank Zappa and Tony Palmer's 1971 film "200 Motels" to see a charming example of a composer notating a performer's improvisation and calling it his own compositional work.

The performer as deviser (see fig. 1)

The performer as deviser is the performer as co-creator or co-composer. Within the world of contemporary music, the performer as deviser is the most radical practice a performer can assume as it presents the widest range of possibilities regarding what a performer can be and how a performer can contribute to a new musical piece. The word “devise”[5] in this context refers to strategies used in theater and live arts originating in the 1950's and 1960’s, most notably in the model of theater known as devised theater (Heddon & Milling, 2005, p. 1 - 3). Devised theater is a generative practice in which the traditional method of creating theater, which begins with a script and relies on a hierarchy lead by a director, is replaced with a flat structure in which all theater practitioners contribute to the creation of a new work, including the actors, scenographers, technicians, and others (Oddey, 1996, p. 4). No matter the medium, devised creations are usually made in a non-hierarchical, collective, and collaborative structure. Devised creations are usually made "from scratch", and each phase of the generative process usually involves all participating artists regardless of the artist's expertise. In devised composition, the hierarchy between the performer and composer is dissolved, allowing both parties to contribute to creative and practical decision making. Devising usually results in co-authored works. In some cases, the composer also performs on stage alongside the performer. Devising most distinctly raises the question of authorship, and it is within this form of collaboration that the performer and the composer may enter into negotiations considering authorial credit and the division of financial reward.

The following outline of tendencies in devising draws on examples from devised theater as a parallel employed to illustrate possible practices of a deviser performer. Like advisory collaboration, devising presents manifold processes and results that are often idiosyncratic to the artists involved. It is therefore useful to the reader to conceptualize devising as a spectrum in itself, with the potential that specific processes are left unrepresented within this account.

In devising, the role of the performer differs to that of more traditional compositional collaborative roles in a number of key ways. Many of these differences are grounded in the fact that the performer is integrated into the generative process as a co-creator. The devising performer thus shares with the composer the decision-making process inherent to creating a new piece. These creative and practical decisions are usually made with performer and the composer working at the same time in the same space.6 The immediacy of the devising process thus creates a bypass whereby the score is not necessarily required as tool for communicating musical ideas from the composer to the performer. Quite simply, in devised creation there is no object such as a score with which a performer interfaces, but rather the critical interaction occurs between the performer and another artistic *subject*. This differs to more separated collaborative models whereby most artistic decisions are ultimately made and drafted at the composer’s desk. The diminished significance of the score emphasizes the performer's relation to the composer and to the process of creation as critical relations that form a performer's subjectivity.

In addition to enhancing the relation to the composer, the devised process' displacement of the score as the performer's starting point for realizing a musical piece also offsets intepretation of a score as the primary activity of a performer. In devised composition it's even possible that the score may never be created at all. Very often, if the composition is written down it is done so primarily for the purpose of preserving the composition for future performance, rather than to communicate instructions to a performer for the first time. This act of writing-down can also happen long after the performance has happened. Theater director Simon McBurney says the following about the notion of a script or text as a step in a devising process,

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[5] As noted in Heddon & Milling, Devising Performance: A Critical History, "devising" is often interchangeable with "collaborative creation". However, collaborative creation implies that there are at least two collaborators, whereas devising does not necessarily imply that there is more than one creator. For the purposes of this article I will use devising to denote collaboration involving more than one person and when specifically referencing modes of collaboration where the roles and identities of the composer and performer are blurred and shared equally.

“Most of the time a theatrical production is constructed in the following order: writing, rehearsal, performance and, sometimes, translation... In our creations, the process is... reversed...[it] becomes rehearsal-performance-translation-writing.” (Cavendish, 2015).

The score's loss of significance in both the generative and rehearsal processes as described in McBurney's statement is in part due to the tendency that devising often collapse the acts of creating and the act of rehearsing so that both occur at once. In this collapsed process, the material may be developed through improvisation, game playing, and other contingent methods, potentially making it feasible for the performer to create and rehearse almost simultaneously. This means that the allocation of a performers time can be radically shifted from that of more separate collaborative models whereby the majority of the performer's time is spent alone rehearsing a completed score. This potential reallocation of time away from private rehearsing can further emphasize the performer's relation to the composer, as well as to the act of creation.

Devising very often requires large spans of time to create new work. It's not necessarily that devising requires more time when compared to more separated collaborative models, it's that many devising processes require more time with the composer and performer working together in a shared space. As discussed above, the collapsed process that includes both creating and rehearsing often requires that both the composer and performer be present throughout the entire process. Acquiring the time and resources necessary for an extended devising period is not always possible. It could even be said that such a concept runs antithetical to the typical rehearsal process in contemporary music, which can span a mere handful of days (Walshe, 2016). However, the investment of time into devising not only serves the work, but can also deepen relations between collaborators. As devised theater practitioner Alexandra Desaulniers suggests, it's not just time living with a piece, it's also time living with each other,

“...we accepted that a three or even six-week rehearsal process would simply not suffice to create this show, and agreed to live with the work, and each other, for six months instead.” (Desaulniers, 2012).

Devising and co-creating also shifts the performer's relation to the notion of responsibility, meaning who in a collaboration is responsible for what and when. Devised creation creates a situation for everyone to be “in it together” in a “joint tenancy” (Meill & Littleton, 2004, p. 14). This notion relies on all participants taking responsibility and ownership for the entire piece and its process, including its reception, rather than each party taking care for only their personal and specialized work. For example, in devised creation the notion of a composer or performer “blaming” the other for the failed reception of a piece is simply not possible (Aslan & Lloyd, 2016). Simply put, the group rises and falls together.

For the performer, the demand of taking on more responsibility requires not only courage and generosity but often also new skills and dispositions. In devised creation the performer is not only an instrumentalist but also a contributor to a shared concept. This expanded responsibility again shifts the performer’s development of ‘voice’ from the instrument or score towards the act of creating from scratch. This requires not only instrumental skills but critical and creative thinking aided by research and risk taking. The performer who engages with this method of working may also experience the generative process itself as a training ground for their expanding artistic practice. Desaulniers reflects on the notion of expanding practices with the following perspective,

“As both creator and performer, the role of actor in devised theatre requires more than learning lines and inhabiting a previously established character...[it] was up to our ensemble to maintain structure...Even design elements were not off-limits for discussion...” (Desaulniers, 2012).

In a devising practice, the performer can also be a co-author, composer, improviser, researcher, designer, specialist, beginner, and, forever, so on. In this way, the performer as deviser is the most radical in its rethinking of what a performer can be and how a performer can engage in the genesis

of a new work. It suggests that creating and co-authoring can also constitute a performance practice.

It can be that any single project engages with a variety of performer roles ranging from pure executor to co-creative deviser. A single collaboration can contain many elements and traverse several different processes while moving towards the creation of a single piece. As the piece develops the collaborative approach may shift. The interpreter-adviser-deviser model for considering composer-performer collaboration is intended as a method to conceptualize the role performers play in collaborations and how these roles translate into collaborative artistic practice. It is conceived a spectrum and intends to allow space for diverse, unstable, and idiosyncratic practices.

As Gyger (Gyger, 2014) also suggests, it appears that the role the performer assumes in collaboration is contingent upon the choice of when the composer and performer meet in the same space at the same time and, in turn, at what point a score becomes the primary component for communicating and realizing a musical idea. The sooner a developed score enters the process the more likely the performer will assume the role of interpreter or adviser. The later the score comes into place, the more likely the performer will be asked to improvise and/or co-create to develop the materials that form a musical piece.

It is critical for both the outcome of the work and the maintenance of the collaborative relationship that the performer understands the range of roles that they can assume in a composer-performer collaboration and that the performer decides how they want to be engaged within that collaboration. Through this understanding it is possible for the composer and the performer to discuss and agree upon a method of collaboration. The collaborative method one chooses does not presume the success nor the failure of a musical work, however frustration can arise in collaborative work in the absence of meaningful, mutual understandings of consent (Temple, 2015). The discussion of how a collaborative partnership will function is one that ideally takes place before a creative process begins and one that also continues as the piece progresses.

Collaboration is a practice. It is fundamentally a mode of interfacing with another. It is an act in which identities are formed and changed through the entanglement and mixing-up with another. To return to the original question, “what is a performer for?”, it is in part through methods of collaboration that performers understand what and for whom they are “for”. In other words, it is in large part through collaboration that performers understand their musical, and therefore artistic, identity. Through modes of collaboration that recast performers outside their traditional roles one is able to imagine manifold becomings of the performer as co-creative artist exhibiting agency including and beyond the realms of a score and its interpretations. The notion of the performer is not a fixed idea; it is a subjectivity multiplicitous both in definition and in practice. The collaborative practices going on "behind the scenes" in the creation of a new work are as much a contributor to a performer's artistic practice as that which occurs on the stage. It behooves us all to rethink the concept of the performer and the question of what a performer is for, because the performer is already all of the above, whether they take for it credit or not.

III. A Composer's Perspective on Devising

In 2016, composer Carolyn Chen and Jennifer Torrence created How to Fight, a 50-minute piece for two performers that discusses themes of conflict through spoken text, movement, and two-part song. Chen and Torrence created the piece at the Hambidge Center in North Georgia (USA) during a two-week artist residency. In the following interview, Chen reflects upon the nature of the devised process and how it affected the outcome of the work.

Jennifer Torrence: Do you think the word "devised" as a description of our process in making *How to Fight* holds water?

Carolyn Chen: “Devising” seems like a very useful term, though not being in theatre, I don’t know exactly what that word means to people coming from that world. We did play some open-form games, especially toward the beginning of the process, and I think the nature of the spoken material was very much shaped by how we each individually parsed this large bulk of material loosely relating to the them of fighting, and then a few personal anecdotes that seemed to balance the more expository sections. Especially for these speaking parts, there is no set script, and it seems true to the work to not require certain kinds of phrasing – what seems central is to communicate these ideas as clearly as possible in words that sound like our individual voices. If I did end up making a score, these would have to be set out in bullet points and not complete sentences – and the personal anecdotes would have to be completely individual to whomever was performing.

J: Can you say more about how you reflect on our process in making *How to Fight*? Specifically I am referencing our attempt to work together as composer-performer and performer-composer.

C: We started with a very short project description and the general idea of fighting. I had been interested in the idea of investigating conflict, and we’d had a bit of email exchange on the topic. I had some background in taichi and was very excited about learning aikido when we were discussing themes – I maybe proposed the subject in part because these were movement practices and routes to movement that I felt it would be possible to work through, since we’re not coming from a dance background. Also, I thought you’d have a very valuable performance energy to complement this idea.

We met and over the course of two weeks, found a movement vocabulary that was mostly derived from martial arts exercises and that would fit our bodies and the size of the space that we’d have. Then I drafted an order of events in terms of lighting and movement, and found some relevant topics to talk about in accompaniment. At every stage, we edited and polished the materials together, especially in reasoning out overall structure. The details of the spoken material we each worked out individually. I gave you pages and pages of google-search results to sort and cull, but you really worked out what was more interesting to present and how to say it. There were a lot of choreographic details like stage placement, or, for example, how we repeated the jo kata in progressive increments, which emerged through running through the material, talking through it together, and feeling out how things could be made clearer and more vivid.

In terms of the objects we used, it was all a little bit contingent and even improvisational. Before we got to The Hambidge Center Residency where we developed the piece, we went on a shopping trip and bought flashlights and a toilet brush and we also borrowed a broom from your family. I was thinking of finding something to practice with for the jo kata and other martial arts movements. The broom was free and the toilet brush was a good deal financially, which was sort of irresistible. But I think in the end these objects have a lot of bearing on the character of the work as a whole. This was also the case with the particular small percussion instruments that you brought, for example the chimes that illuminate the tai chi cloud hands, and the little castanet and small wooden shaker instrument for the marco polo introduction. All these are so integral to how things sound and the

feeling of these sections, however they were simply the objects we had available to us. Not only their aquisition but also how we used these objects within the piece came through an improvisational, contingent process, for example how the toilet brush segues from a "weapon" into a grooming tool, which was an idea that developed while working through the materials and then stuck.

J: Would you say the process we took was integral to the outcome of the piece?

C: Yes, the process does seem integral. I do think it would have been impossible to make something with so much integrated movement without having this time together.

I'm not coming from a theater background, but I do think the spirit of the piece as a whole is something that requires a certain degree of openness, and tailoring to the performers' (our) individual bodies and voices. I think that had we not had this time constraint of a performance at the end of two weeks, if we had the luxury of a much longer period, things might have been even more improvisational and role-crossing. This is one thing that distinguishes our process from a more typical theater or dance process – the regularity with which we're used to notating and much shorter rehearsal periods in new music. Given the circumstances, I think we were really just problem-solving and trying to do the best we could with the resources we had – so there were moments like the spoken texts where it made sense not to write down, or to simply work it out through doing it. But there were also moments, the song-writing, for example, that fit into a more traditional composing-then-rehearsing model, though with the added luxury of having our voices there to instantly try things out. And there was the responsiveness of getting to rehearse the first song before the other two were written, with the result that the other two were much simpler in construction since I realized we had such limited time to actually learn the music.

J: Do you think that, hypothetically, if you had been left to your own devices you could have come pretty close to what the resulting piece ended up being? I suppose what I am questioning here is if or how much my presence in the process shifted things for you?

C: For those particular elements that we worked out separately (the songs, the parts where I was talking, that first draft of the overall movement/lighting structure), it might be possible to say, yes, they would have turned out something like the way they did. And I think overall, our aesthetic sensibilities are pretty compatible, so that I never felt like there was any substantive conflict in that way. But in the larger picture, I would never have attempted a project like this had we not been able to have the time to work things out together. I wouldn't have tried to thematize things in such a direct way – to actually talk about such personal things. I wouldn't have written out movement tasks for myself. I wouldn't have allowed things to develop in a direction that was so personal, where I'm actually just telling stories about my life. Maybe this is a little counter-intuitive, but I think I wouldn't have gotten so personally involved, bodily or narratively, had we not been working together so closely.

It's just so rare to have this much time to work with someone, and with this much trust. It was easier to leave things more open, to take wider leaps, and to redistribute the labor because of the friendship and trust.

There wasn't a lot of time to consciously think about the process because of the time constraint of two weeks, but this was certainly the first time I've come into a project with this little written material in preparation. Part of this is the trust in knowing your work as an artist. Part of it also may be the nature of the material: the physical material we were starting with is derived from dance warm-ups, or contact improv or martial arts exercises, which were all built up over years of collected experience from many different classes/teachers/sources. None of that would have made more sense or have greater clarity in written form, so it made sense to come into the room and see how easy it would be to incorporate them into a piece simply by doing, for example how they could connect to one another and how they might relate philosophically to the ideas we were discussing more broadly. There was certainly a lot of thinking through moving: realizing something will or won't

work by moving through it, and finding the connection to the last thing from the physical memory of having just done it a few minutes ago, feeling out the quality of energy in the room, feeling where the overall structure is, etc. Also, the degree of directness in speaking and storytelling was overall unprecedented for me personally, and both are still things that excite me about the project. I think both are also less ordinary from a new music standpoint, but very ordinary from a theatrical standpoint; so part of what is interesting lies in the way the medium is configured, too.

Documenting over two days was also an interesting process, and the most elaborate video shoot/ recording I've done, in part because of technical equipment available, and in part because of the length of the material and the importance of the visual content. Because of the nature of the piece, all these decisions about camera angle and the composition of the frame, where the microphone goes – decisions we totally made collaboratively (and also all the editing, which we haven't done yet!). in the end, I think will have a great effect on how most of the people who have any contact with the piece will experience it. I think documenting a piece like this would probably matter more to the overall sense of the "work", if you wanted to talk about that, much more than a score would. So that's an interesting layer, too.

February, 2017.

IV. A Performer's Perspective on Devising

Over the last decades, a growing body of research conducted by both performers and composers has examined collaborative practices and made the indisputable case that collaboration is a critical component to understanding music practices. In this plenitude of texts and dissertations (e.g. Kanga, 2014; Roche 2011) one can explore numerous case studies that illuminate how new musical works come into being through a process of shared nurturing by both composer and performer. It doesn't seem that music scholarship requires further case studies simply to prove that collaborative processes take place in the development of music, or that the image of the solitary composer-genius appears to be a thing of the past. The reader will, however, find what amounts to a collage of artefacts, personal reflections, texts, dialogues, images, and videos with the intention that they point to processes that could be understood as a personal and developing devising performance practice whereby my practice expands beyond the realm of the score or an instrument, and into that of a co-creative artist. I experience a devising practice to be a radical rethinking of what a performer is and can be. It encapsulates a philosophy of the performer as an artist of "all-of-the-above", incorporating performance as well as composition, creation, research, experimentation, and an ever-expanding tendency towards new skills and dispositions.

The pieces represented in this section were created during a research fellowship at the Norwegian Academy of Music and encompass a range of devised practices where the composer and I share a partnership of joint tenancy in the creation of a new musical work. Several of the pieces could be associated to The New Discipline (Walshe, 2016), DIY aesthetics, and multi-media performance, all of which exhibit characteristics that may have lended the new pieces to devising. (Hayden & Windsor, 2007) The pieces represented in the following section include:

What Noises Remain (2016), created by Peter Swendsen & Jennifer Torrence for solo percussionist, objects, video, and electronic sound. What Noises Remain is a 50-minute multimedia performance loosely based on The Tempest by Williams Shakespeare.

etudes to become a deer (2017), created by Neo Hülcker in collaboration with Jennifer Torrence for two performers, objects, movement, texts, and video. etudes to becomes a deer is a 30-minute multi-media performance about the transformation of human into deer.

Institute for Post-Human Performance Practice (2017-2018). Created by the Institute for Post-Human Performance Practice (Trond Reinholdtsen & Jennifer Torrence), for percussionist, composer, live video, documentary video, and installation. Institute for Post-Human Performance Practice is a one-hour multi-media performance-installation that outlines the Institute's recent performance research and the opening ceremony of the Institute.

Reflecting on relation

"The act of musicking brings into existence among those present a set of relationships, and it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act of musicking lies." (Small, 1995)

Music performance is constituted of several components, one of which is craft, and another of which is relation. Relation can exist between a performer and object, such as a score or instrument, and it can exist between a performer and another artistic subject. The implications of relation and the act of relating is fundamental to understanding any performance practice and/or performer subjectivity. Within this research I have, through the process of creating new work, related to six different composer-collaborators. Each composer is different and with each of them I am different. In each case, the process of working together yielded an independent and third entity: the relationship that produces a new musical work. Evaluating if a collaboration has yielded new creative possibilities lies in the basic notion that the new artwork could not have been made by the composer alone, or by me alone; it required both of us working in relation to each other.

Collaboration is often associated with inevitable compromise, where one must give up something in order to reach an ever tenuous agreement. I haven't had this experience in these specific collaborations, and I attribute this to the process that devising demands. By moving the creative process away from a 'production-line' model where composer and interpreter work on a new piece at different stages, at different times, and in different spaces, and instead moving our process towards devising, the relationship between myself and the composer consistently developed into a sensation of 'we-ness' (Roe, 2007). This sensation seemed to emerge through dialogue and through a process-induced being-with. It seemed to emerge out of the devising process' demand on me as the performer to share responsibility with the composer in both practical and creative problem solving. Finally, it seemed to grow out of the shared feeling of ambiguity that came with a project whose outcome was uncertain. In particular, experiencing this sense of collective uncertainty was new to my practice as a performer. Embracing shared responsibility and uncertainty demanded risk taking and a profound sense of empathy towards my collaborators in a way I had never before encountered. It is specifically this experience of empathy that renews my understanding of Christopher Small's statement, that it's in collaborative relationships where the "meaning of...musicking lies." Getting there required time and trust, and enough of both to cultivate a truly joint tenancy. It required both of us to give up on "I" and give in to the idea of communion through collective creative action, and the emergence of a third entity: the relationship that spawns the unexpected perspective.

Reflecting on roles and authorship

I commissioned composers who would have normally engaged a performer as an executor or advisor and requested that we devise the work instead. This request was outlined with the suggestion that each piece be made in-the-room, on-the-floor, in close contact with each other, even if this would require a long period of time. The performance elements were created with both parties present during the entire process. In several cases the multi-media components of the pieces such as video, playback, costume, and scenography were created together, though much of the video and audio editing was done by either the composer or myself separately.[6] The inherited hierarchical labels of composer and interpreter were thus voided and the work was made together. We each carried into the collaboration our backgrounds as performer and/or composer, but we let the piece be made, and in many cases performed, by everyone. We did not privilege our educated roles as grounds for authority in decision making during the generative process. As a performer this meant engaging both my "inner eye", a well developed perspective that regards aspects of personal execution in performance, and my "outer eye", a developing perspective that co-creates the piece as a whole.

However, despite an attempt to allow creative equality afforded by choosing a devising process, my role as 'performer' in the collaborative processes varied widely during the creation of the pieces. The roles I assumed usually reflected the relationship to the composer, the type of material being handled, and the phase in the project. On occasions I could feel like a voyeur peering into the mind and practice of the composer, seemingly watching over their shoulder as they compose in real time; occasionally I felt like an adviser to the composer, complementing, expanding, and facilitating as they tested their ideas; on other occasions I felt like my body and artistic tendencies were the literal material being thrown around like oil on canvas, whereby my specific artistic practice becomes the material of the work; on other occasions I felt truly as a co-creator who built an entire piece as an equal contributor, often through improvisational strategies and even

[6] Emphasis on visual components is a tendency associated with some contemporary music of the 21st century, such as compositions associated with The New Discipline and, more generally, multi-media compositions. (e.g. Groth, S. K. (2016). Composers on Stage: Ambiguous Authorship in Contemporary Music Performance. Contemporary Music Review 35(6), 686-705; Walshe, J. (2016, March 4). The new discipline: A compositional manifesto. Retrieved from www.borealis.no.

composition. All of these dynamics occurred, at times simultaneously, and all within the frame of a single piece.

In each piece I credit the composer with the starting concept, though it is up to debate whether to credit them for musical composition. Very often the practice of 'composition' manifested as the process of ordering major events, not in the sense of creating materials but in the sense of deciding what goes where and when within the total structure of the piece. This process of ordering was often done by the composer, but it was also occasionally shared between us. The process of creating the piece's materials and internal logic was often created in an improvisational, contingent, and collaborative manner.

Through the process of co-creating, it became valuable and even inevitable to remove the separation not only between who composes but also who performs. In many of the pieces created in a devised method, the composer ultimately performs on stage and/or creates another entity with which I perform, such as video or audio playback. This emergence felt like a natural result of creating the work together in the same room and in a method that allows every person to contribute in any way, regardless of expertise.

To a varying degree, I assumed ownership and/or authorship of each piece. This language was always a negotiation between the specific collaborators participating in the specific projects. The language used for ascribing credit established in writing how each person contributed, and therefore what each person owns or authors. Furthermore, this act of crediting affords what each person can claim as constituting the grounds of their artistic practice. In the process of deciding the language of authorship, my collaborators and I have occasionally opted out of using the labels 'composer' or 'performer', instead settling for 'creators' of the project. This choice opens up the possibility that every person can influence any and every aspect of the piece, regardless of their expertise. It has personally become important to take credit for my contributions in collaboration. If I was part of making the piece, I feel it's fair and just to state that fact with clarity. The negotiation of ownership and authorship has, in my experience, been a welcome discussion, however, in most cases it has remained a delicate topic to navigate. My collaborators and I have settled on formulations of credit such as "Created by (composer) in collaboration with Jennifer Torrence", or "Created by (composer) for and with Jennifer Torrence", or "Created by (composer) and Jennifer Torrence". In some cases, the question of reimagining the language of authorship in a contemporary music piece was too radical, and, despite using devising methods, the authorship remained in a more traditional model that credits the composer and erases the performer's contribution almost entirely.

Though the creative process and result may generally be shared, this does not mean that financial remuneration in the form of the commission was shared. Some institutions and funding bodies have the flexibility to award authorship to both the composer and performer, where other bodies are less flexible in this way, and less flexible to retroactively reflect how a creative process develops across the course of creating new work. When the collaborative process becomes co-creative the challenge is largely up to the artists involved to share credit and financial rewards in an appropriate and mutually agreed manner. In several cases, the composer offered to split the commission with me. We found agreements that felt fair to both parties, whether that was a 50/50 split, or some other arrangement. When a shared commission fee did not seem right for a particular project or did not emerge out of a shared dialogue, it was important for me as the 'performer' to insist that my credits be explicitly noted in scores and documents. This gesture of taking collaborative credit felt necessary to honour the spirit of how the pieces were made as well as to give recognition to my expanding artistic practice as a performer.

Reflecting on an expanding artistic practice

By deliberately overturning collaborative models that separate me from the composer and taking on devising as a method for creating new work, I have experienced not only a profound sense of ownership to the new work but also a profound connection to my collaborators in a manner I had never before encountered. The relation to the composer has been a critical element in my artistic practice throughout my career; devising has offered yet another mode in which to explore these relationships.

The process of devising has not only deepened my relationship to my composer-collaborators, it has also expanded my artistic practice through the acquisition of new skills and dispositions, whether that is improvisation, composition, videography, scenography, or design. I don't claim to now be an expert in any of these extra-performance areas, but I can sense a shift in my artistic practice, an expansion that enriches my entire artistic life. Devising has afforded me as the performer the potential for yet another subjectivity-forming relation: self-making through creation. And this ambiguous, boundary-ignoring, inclusive, collective, and interpersonal practice is one I revel in.

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