

Solastalgia – Toward new collaborative models in an interdisciplinary context

Karin Hellqvist

Introduction

Questioning habitual patterns of work

As a violin student in the Western art music tradition, I am particularly interested in contemporary classical music. I consider my practice to be collaborative, and closely connected to the compositional process of living composers. However, as time passes, I question the actual amount of collaboration taking place. Composers are usually just a phone-call away, and yet, work models repeatedly follow the same pattern of division – the composer composes, I practise, details may be negotiated – and the work is premiered.

Music philosopher Lydia Goehr frames my experiences of this separated work division with historical context. According to Goehr, the regulative *work-concept* emerged as a consequence of several decades of societal changes from the 1770s onwards (Goehr, 1994, p. 206). Under the influence of the conditions of other art forms, the importance of the musical *work* now came to be increasingly emphasised over its *performance* – a move, as Goehr phrases as, «away from seeing music as a means to seeing it as an end» (Goehr, 1994, p. 206). As composers were liberated from their service to extra-musical institutions and increasingly seen to be independent creators with autonomy to pursue their own careers, they attained a new status. The establishment of this work-concept fuelled the development of ownership and copyright laws in the field of music, and the copyright of musical works was transferred from publishing houses to the composers themselves. Those changes also affected the composer–performer–work ecosystem. Goehr describes how performers developed an increasing *fidelity* to the composers and their work, captured by the concept of *Werktreue*. The ideal of *Werktreue* «emerged to capture the new relation between work and performance as well as that between performer and composer. Performances and their performers became subservient to works and their composers» (Goehr, 1994, p. 231).

Even though the contemporary music I perform is written in a different context from that in which the ideal of *Werktreue* emerged, the respect for the work and the composer still affects my practice today. Consequently, beyond being consulted at the level of detail, I have rarely participated in compositional processes and have never been acknowledged as a co-creator. Having studied in the conservatoire tradition and performed on the international contemporary music scene, I now seek to challenge this work division and further enrich the compositional process with the knowledge I have gained as a performer. I want to make works idiomatic and personal by being involved in compositional work. However, those wishes are sometimes in conflict with the conventional division of labour in the field – with the fidelity toward the musical work that the concept of *Werktreue* captures.

Point of departure

This artistic research exposition shares the insights I gained during the collaborative compositional process of creating the violin, electronics and video work *Solastalgia*, co-created by composer Carola Bauckholt, video artist Eric Lanz and myself, Karin Hellqvist, as violinist. *Solastalgia* is created as a part of my artistic research PhD at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo, where I investigate how I can expand my creative identity by being active in artistic co-creation. *Solastalgia* is a site of research as well as a standalone artwork, and it is presented in contexts outside the research field, at festivals for contemporary music, as well as reflected upon in research publications.

Our point of departure is a *commission* – my proposal to Carola to co-create a violin work for me. In this case, few premises apply, other than to share the compositional process and to leave it open for research. At the time of which I am articulating this proposal, I am still not familiar with the concept of *Werktreue*. However, I wish to challenge its manifestation as I experience it in my practice, which is no small thing to ask. I am respectful of the fact that, in our field, my commission suggests developing new work methods – something I will discuss further. If my intention is realised, this will be a unique artistic and collaborative experience for me, and possibly also for Carola.

Apart from the collaborative aspects, my commission encompasses few other premises. The use of technology, the thematic concept of the piece and plans for its premiere are left open, as well as the idea to involve Eric Lanz, which forms later on. Given our friendship – established through previous work together in ensemble settings and on *Doppelbelichtung* (Bauckholt, 2016) for violin and electronics – it was always likely that I would have commissioned a new work from Carola at some point. However, as we will see, the context of artistic research offers resources that enable a process very different from the one with which I am familiar.

Solastalgia's co-creators

The reflections shared here are my own. However, *Solastalgia* is a collective endeavour among three co-creators. Carola Bauckholt is a leading composer on the international scene. She holds a professorship of composition at the Anton Bruckner Privatuniversität in Linz, alongside providing compositional work for prominent ensembles of contemporary music and directing the music section of Akademie der Künste in Berlin. Her compositions often blur boundaries between the visual arts, musical theatre and concert music. She does not participate as a performer in her works herself.

Video artist Eric Lanz is professor of video and photographic art in Saarbrücken. His work concentrates on the perception of matter and its transformation through longtime observation. Eric's quiet sequences often focus on the emerging or disappearing of forms, extending the visual experience to impressions of tactility or musicality.

I, violinist Karin Hellqvist, am an international performer, both as a soloist and with ensembles for contemporary music. During the period 2018 to 2024, I am an artistic research fellow at the Norwegian Academy of Music. *Solastalgia* is one of the first collaboratively composed works in my repertoire, as well as one of just a few on Carola's list of works. The research process and this exposition is undertaken and published with the consent of Carola and Eric.

Concepts and research context

The performative turn in the 1990s marks a paradigmatic shift in the social sciences. In research on musical performance, the relations between performer, composer and musical work have been increasingly problematised. One emerging model for categorising interactions between performer and composer is musicologist Alan Taylor's topology of working relationships (Taylor, 2020). For Taylor, the concepts of *imagination* and *evaluation* of artistic ideas play a central role in understanding the level of

involvement of the artists. *Imaginative* processes represent the generation of creative ideas, while *evaluative* processes refer to the decision-making connected to them. By asking whether imaginative and evaluative processes are shared, Taylor categorises processes as either *hierarchical*, *co-operative*, *consultative* or *collaborative*.

		Types of shared imaginative working	
		Is the evaluation of ideas shared?	
		No	Yes
Is the imagination of ideas shared?	No	Hierarchical working People imagine ideas for separate parts of the project. One person evaluates them.	Co-operative working People imagine ideas for separate parts of the project. Evaluation is shared and equal.
	Yes	Consultative working People imagine ideas for the same part of the project. One person evaluates them.	Collaborative working People share imagining and evaluating ideas as equals.

➤ **Figure 1** Types of shared imaginative working (Taylor, 2020, p. 4).

Composer Sam Hayden and Professor Luke Windsor have written about shared work in their article 'Collaboration and the composer: Case studies from the end of the 20th Century' (Hayden & Windsor, 2007). They build on the research of organisational theorists Chris Argyris and Donald Schön (1974), who outline two types of interactions among individuals. In *Type I* interactions, individuals carry a fixed and defensive view of their professional role, while in *Type II* interactions, individuals are able to question habitual patterns and ideas about their role. Using this model in the domain of musical composition, Hayden and Windsor (2007, p. 30), describe how a *Type I* interaction between composer and performer

can unfold. Creativity is tacitly agreed to be located in the domain of the composer, while the performer's role is concerned with technical aspects. This reasoning is at play in Taylor's *hierarchical* type of shared work, where imaginative and evaluative processes are located in the domain of the composer. A *Type II* behaviour, on the other hand, allows the parties to question assumptions about such restrictions in their relation and behaviour. They are able to develop new interactive pathways.

Vera John-Steiner, professor of Linguistics and Educational Psychology, has written extensively about the nature of collaborative work. She argues that «shared vision and purpose of the partners, their talent and perseverance, and their timing» (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 9) are important when developing collaborative work. Shared engagement she describes as the collaboration's «emotional scaffolding», creating a «safety zone in which support and criticism are practiced» (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 8). She further discusses the requirements for shared work to produce novel and groundbreaking results, arguing that a changing rhythm of interaction, «shifting between periods of interdependence and independence» (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 8), is not only beneficial to the quality of the work, but is in fact critical to the survival of the collaboration.

Within the field of artistic research, performers and composers search for new ways of collaborating, defining shared work and problematising the ontology of the musical work. Researcher and percussionist Jennifer Torrence (Torrence, 2018) argues that the perspective of the performer is often overlooked in frameworks aiming to study collaborative work in music. Torrence thus designs a scale on which her involvement as a performer ranges from *interpreter* to *adviser* to the co-creating *deviser* and uses it to analyse shared compositional processes. Another body of research on a performance practice centred around collaborative work is the writings of guitarist Stefan Östersjö. In his PhD thesis *SHUT UP 'N' PLAY! Negotiating the musical work* (Östersjö, 2008) insight is given into the mechanisms behind the creation of new guitar works. Östersjö proposes a model in which not only composer and performer, but multiple agents, interact to create the identity of the musical work. Furthermore, in

collaboration with composer-performer Henrik Frisk, Östersjö has also conducted research into their composer–performer interactions as a way of laying the foundations for a new work created for both guitar and computer (Frisk & Östersjö, 2006).

Researcher and clarinettist Heather Roche (2011) has explored collaborative work with a number of composers, noticing the ways that the *trust* developed between the participants. And how this is key to a successful collaboration. Performer and composer Halla Steinunn Stefansdottir investigates the socio-cultural aspects of agency in the processual work of a performer, composer and curator. Stefansdottir describes how agencies in the technological, non-human and human environments affect and shape her work (Stefansdottir, 2023).

My own artistic research builds on the work of the musicians mentioned above, who research how collaborative work within their own practices and the field of contemporary Western art music can be analysed and developed. I aim to contribute to reducing a knowledge gap in the field by highlighting the performer's contributions. A concept I have developed that runs as a thread through my research is that of the *artistic palette*. My artistic palette comprises the *agency* and *creativity* I use in creative processes as a performer. In my research, I have explored the artistic palette as a multidimensional concept, comprising the skills and abilities – what I have termed *skillabilities* – in an embodied, contextual, relational and intuitive dimension. The skillabilities of the artistic palette include concrete skills such as use of audio technology and violin technique, but also abstract abilities as communicative skills, imagination and decision making. The artistic palette is dynamic – it is re-constructed to adapt to the experiences, relations and materials I encounter.

During the work on *Solastalgia*, my explorations of *technology* as a compositional tool and method will play an especially important role in the compositional process. Those explorations demonstrate how I add new creative skills and abilities to my artistic palette, highlighting the contributions I make as a performer and co-creator. Embedded in the work on *Solastalgia* is my personal journey of exploring the concept of the artistic

palette. By unfolding this process, I aim to show how performer agency and creativity are constructed, negotiated and developed.

The term «solastalgia» was coined by Glenn Albrecht, former professor at Murdoch University, «to fill a gap in our language of Earth-related emotions where people experience a deep form of existential distress when directly confronted by unwelcome change in their loved home environment» (Albrecht, 2017, p. 292). As we will see, the framework of eco-anxiety around which our work will be structured is not explicitly articulated from the beginning. Rather, it emerges as a point of connection that will affect work methods and dialogue.

Research methods and questions

In Parts I and II below, I describe some of the work methods and materials created during the composition of *Solastalgia*. These methods are connected to collaborative composition, and, as I will illustrate, they have been constructed as our creative work proceeds. Describing, analysing and contextualising my involvement in the artistic process is further a part of my artistic research methodology. In my research publications on this project, I aim to articulate aspects of the project that cannot be grasped merely by listening to *Solastalgia* or even reading an analysis of the work. Here, I want to share artistic and reflective materials from *within* our collaborative process. This material would otherwise lie hidden and inaccessible as a resource of knowledge production on creative practices. My explication of this collaborative process draws on audio excerpts, dialogue transcribed from recorded conversations, email conversation, and artistic-reflective videos created by Eric Lanz from documentary video materials, as well as written reflections.

The research questions I address are:

- What ways of working emerge as *solastalgia* is addressed through collaborative composition?

- How does the collaborative compositional process affect our previously established roles as composer and performer?
- What function does my artistic palette have in the construction of *Solastalgia*?

Solastalgia is financially supported by the Swedish Arts Grants Committee and created within the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme. It is partly developed at Studio für Elektroakustische Musik der Akademie der Künste, Berlin and Experimentalstudio des SWR Freiburg. It was premiered at *rainy days* Luxembourg, November 2022 and Wittener Tage für Neue Kammermusik, April 2023. *Solastalgia* is published by Edition Peters.

Part I: Layers of embodied knowledge

Starting: new ways to communicate in a separated reality

In Parts I–II of this exposition, the artistic work on *Solastalgia* unfolds somewhat chronologically, from initial idea to finished work. Our work begins not with a specific musical idea, but rather with a continuation of our previous work together. Remembering that I suggested that we explore birdsong in *Doppelbelichtung* (Bauckholt, 2016), Carola asks me to propose an idea. Since we are separated by the pandemic, I consider ways to begin our exchange. With a budding interest in working with Reaper software, which makes the recording and editing of audio materials possible, I record various sounds at home, arranging them in a collage. Carola comments:

What do you think, like a warm up: I send you a sound and you improvise and send it back to me. Vice versa, you send me a recorded sound and I'll write some music or react to that? (Carola in email of November 2020)

Carola sends me a recording of the sound made by melting ice, captured with a microphone inside the ice. I reply with a sound file I created with several layers of violin recordings, composed as an audio collage, without the original sound of the ice in it. Those layers of violin recordings together form a sonic landscape leaving both the sound world of the ice and the violin behind.

Audio 1

➤ **Audio 1** Violin mapping of melting ice.

Methods of mapping the ice

Excited by the result, I keep making recordings inspired by different audio sources of ice, sending them to Carola. I view those different multi-layered recordings as *mappings*. Just as a map is not a picture of a place but rather a representation of it, my intention is not to *copy* the original sound of the ice, but rather to reflect its characteristics using the sounds of the violin. In this evolving practice, I search for ways to channel my embodied reactions to the ice into a new sonic structure through the violin. I am closing my eyes, listening and being together with the ice. With headphones on, I do not always hear what sound I produce within the complex ice sonorities. However, not hearing myself becomes a way of accessing embodied reaction patterns without being influenced by the sound I produce on the violin. By repeatedly collecting layers of reactions, I explore how embodied performance patterns are expressed through my instrument. Thus, in addition to creating a reflection of the ice, this mapping process makes my embodied knowledge accessible while at the same time expanding the artistic palette with new abilities. I record layer upon layer and mute the previously recorded tracks to stay with the original sound for each new take.

With each new audio sample of ice, I develop my abilities of mapping in my practice – by refining my recording skills, trying out new approaches, altering playing techniques and learning from my experiences. I find that different sources of ice call for different playing techniques. For friction and resistance, I turn to bowing techniques of over-pressure and slow bow speed. I use tools, such as my kitchen potato brush, to create sounds that neither fingers nor bow can create. Sometimes, pitched materials appear, as in the singing of ice when it moves during temperature shifts. Intuitively, I search on the fingerboard for clusters of pitches that create the right harmonic spectrum. After having covered different sonic parameters, the thrilling moment comes when I press mute on the original track and listen to the violin recordings combined. Some mappings reach their final version after one attempt, while other times recordings keep circulating between Carola and me. On one occasion, Carola hears a specific melody in a recording of ice. She notates it, whereupon I record it on top of the previous material. As seen in Figure 2, accompanying the audio example of mapped Arctic ice, a glimpse of musical notation enters our collaboration.



➤ **Figure 2** Noted melody.

Audio 2

➤ **Audio 2** Arctic ice notated melody.

My mapping process is further captured in Eric Lanz's Video 1, below, created by footage from my mapping sessions.

Video 1

Video 1 Karin's practice.

Carola suggests that the mappings have given our work its conceptual framework, and we begin to discuss climate change and the concept of «solastalgia».

Thanks to your improvisations, we're already with the new piece. I'm grateful that you have explicitly taken our project to another level – climate change. Could the ice shout SOS? (Carola, email, January 2021)

I wanted to share something I came across:

'On board the Sunrise, a young German member of the ship's crew, Carola Rackete, told me about "solastalgia", the term coined by the philosopher Glenn Albrecht to describe the pre-emptive sense of loss that people feel when witnessing natural beauty in this era of environmental destruction' (Watts 2020). It resonated with me, as a possible theme for the piece. Solastalgia could be a beautiful title. One concept of the work could be only using violin sounds to give a voice to the disappearing ice, a *solastalgic mourning* (Karin, email to Carola, January 2021)

Discussions around eco-anxiety and the potential and responsibility that artistic activities have in creating a sustainable society will now come to influence the process. For me, it becomes a shared space for processing the fear and guilt I experience being a human in the Anthropocene.

At this point, Carola suggests bringing video artist Eric Lanz into our collaboration. She has been interested in including Eric's visual language in her work for some time, and it turns out that Eric is keen to address

feelings of eco-anxiety in his work too. I am immediately drawn into the visual landscapes of Eric's works.



➤ **Figure 3** Field recording.

In Freiburg, where Carola lives, the winter is worryingly warm. But on a freezing -20°C day in Stockholm, I record my steps on the snow-crusted ice of a nearby lake and map it.

Audio 3

↗ **Audio 3** Steps on snow.

My violin matches the high-pitched ice sonorities well, but some recordings capture lower registers. I therefore experiment with thicker *octave strings*, allowing the violin to sound an octave below its standard range. They soon become central in several mappings thanks to their hollow, friction-rich sound and overtone spectrum, as in the mapping in Audio 4.

Audio 4

↗ **Audio 4** Underwater.

My expanded practice: empowerment and agency

Carola encourages me to take the first steps toward articulating the overarching artistic and sonic concept of the work – toward addressing eco-anxiety through my mappings of the ice. Consequently, I am active both in developing work methods and initiating the conceptual framework: its relation to Albrecht's concept of solastalgia and to the Arctic ice. Thus, according to Taylor's (2020) model, I have been active in the *imaginative phase* – a phase that in my previous practice has been the full responsibility of the composer.

Our physical separation creates a need to develop new working methods, and the impossibility of physically meeting up is one of the reasons that the usual division of tasks is redrawn. The ability to record and

edit materials provides the opportunity to be creative and playful with my own palette of sounds. Sending a mapping to Carola, a small artwork in itself, feels different from sending one single recording. I am now composing sonic building blocks for the piece with materials derived from my mapping exercises. My discoveries of how involved in the compositional process I can be empowers me and influences the whole work.

During this explorative phase, the skills and abilities of my artistic palette develops to access my embodied knowledge. My different playing techniques, reactions, sonic preferences, ways of listening and intuitive decision-making connect me to embodied resources providing the creative process with material and structure. The artistic palette expands with my emerging practice and my communication with Carola.

Part II: Dialogue and decision making in collaborative work

Constructing the timeline of *Solastalgia*

In August 2021, Carola and I meet in person for the first time on this project to work on *Solastalgia* together in the Studio für Elektroakustische Musik at Akademie der Künste in Berlin. After two years of developing materials separately, it feels special. We have created a catalogue of mappings, developed the concept of the work and begun expanding it into an interdisciplinary context. Now it's time to construct the form of the work. As agreed, Carola has started to draft an overarching structure in her audio software, while my computer holds the separate sound files and the ability to edit them.

I notice that we are involved in a process of experimentation and evaluation, zooming in and out between detail and form. We make decisions about the order of sounds, whether they reoccur or co-exist, and how long they should be. Tracks pass back and forth between our computers. I learn from Carola, and I sense that this is reciprocal, she is also learning from me. Through our dialogue, the work begins to take form.

C: The blowing toward the end is a bit loud.

K: Yes, it's too present and too human somehow. Should we change the levels within the original track? I can do it quite easily here.

C: Yeah, and the action of blowing and whistling into the violin can be something that's also done live.

I experience this as a journey into the core compositional process of the work, a part of the work's life-cycle that I've never participated in before. My sense of ownership of *Solastalgia* intensifies as both the imaginative and the evaluative phases of the work are shared.

Eric Lanz has captured our interactions in documentary footage from our work sessions in Berlin (Video 2).

Video 2

↗ Video 2 Workshop in Berlin.

Safe space and uncertainty

Through the way we interact and exchange feedback, I feel included, involved and active. I perceive generosity and openness from Carola, and I notice the way she always listens to and considers my ideas. Her encouraging attitude, and my courage to accept her invitation, allows a *safe space* to emerge – one of listening, including, asking and holding space.

However, for me, developing the *form* of a piece is an unexplored territory. The other side of this work, that of the attention and optimisation of *detail* in a given context, is what I pay close attention to in my performance practice. When immersed in detailed practising, I neglect the evaluation of form – as it is located in the domain of the composer. Is my limited experience of composing narratives in sound affecting my ability to formulate ideas regarding the form development of *Solastalgia*?

C: Do you have the feeling that the tension is good here?

K: That's why I asked you, I'm not sure, and it's difficult because now I know it. I was a bit worried it's too long, but I'm not sure. It's also different to be in a concert space with the performer and the visuals, perhaps it's okay, but I will listen again. 10 minutes is quite long, after 4.5 minutes, that's when it starts to become a bit static. Maybe it's enough with 3 minutes building up?

C: So, you would shorten the beginning?

K: I think so. The beginning is quite the same, then the texture starts to change as more abstract materials enters.

In form-related conversations, I notice uncertainty in my language. Words as *perhaps*, *maybe* and open-ended questions suggest I hesitate and hope for Carola to express her thoughts first. I doubt my decisions and become self-conscious. However, by continuing to seek my opinion, Carola not only gives me space to enter the discussion, she actively encourages me to do so, and she gives my opinions equal consideration to her own. Instead of simply taking decisions herself when I am in doubt, she helps me navigate my uncertainty, and when my suggestions propel the work onwards, she acknowledges it.

K: I like the idea of hearing a single violin in the beginning, and then building the layers, sensing the transformation into a mass of sound. If starting in this mass of sound, you might not know it's a violin.

C: It's true, you are right. I think so too, starting live and smoothly adding layers.

K: It's a nice opening of the piece, just the acoustic violin playing. We could match so I play the same pitch as the tape that grows out of nowhere.

The performer's perspective in the compositional process

In my previous performance practice, I've collected knowledge connected to the study-process of works, of performance situations and experiences of different technical and performative solutions. Through my discussions with Carola, my perspective as a performer enters the compositional process at an early stage, as I make suggestions related to the concept of the work and the performance. My suggestions are conceptual, evaluative and compositional and affect our common compositional decisions. As Carola takes part in this dialogue, compositional and performative processes are combined, as seen in our dialogue below.

- C: It would be easy to have this input of the water on the pre-recorded material. It would be even nicer live, but is this difficult timing-wise?
- K: It could be possible with a stopwatch.
- C: Or if we put a small sign on the tape for you?
- K: It will be possible to coordinate. With a stopwatch and if I see the video, I can follow when it happens.
- C: Maybe we can have both a stopwatch and timing impulses for you? It's a good idea that you have a stopwatch.
- K: In the end we might not have a score in the traditional sense. Perhaps just a stopwatch and notes.

Solastalgia expanding

Winter turns to spring and our process keeps unfolding online. Eric sends us pictures of crystalised islands of salt on a dark surface and we can follow his process from the video footage of his studio. I'm thrilled to see *Solastalgia* expanding into an interdisciplinary format. Eric's careful listening to our sound files also becomes a valuable source of feedback. The different interdisciplinary, technical, compositional and performative aspects of *Solastalgia* are becoming intertwined.

The interesting thing with the structure of the pieces you sent – although I find the pure violin almost more exciting – is the *wave-like shape*. I could imagine working with successive layers. Deposits of paint or salty water on the same surface. (Eric Lanz, email, February 2021)

Video 3

➤ Video 3 Eric's practice.

Elasticity and fixture: making space for performance

A performance of *Solastalgia* will include pre-recorded sound, video and a live violin part. One aspect of the work we discuss is the relation between a potentially elastic live performance and the fixed media of the video-audio part. Hardly anything in *Solastalgia* has yet been notated – the closest to a score we are at this point is the audio timeline in ProTools software. We discuss how the solo violin part will relate to the fixed media, and whether improvisation might give this relationship an elastic character.

E: In the end, the live performance will not be exact, some interpretations stay, yeah?

K: It depends. If we want to keep it open, we can, but it can also be fixed blocks of music, following the video.

C: We'll have pre-recorded electronics, and somebody will start those samples. If they're on the video file, is it possible to have a sequence running while starting another from the video?

E: Yes, as soon as there's an audio timeframe, I can place it in the program to match or counterpoint the time.

The light situation onstage also needs to be negotiated, as the video requires darkness. How then will a potential score be

readable? Our conversation brings expertise and wishes from our respective fields together. As seen in our dialogue, technical aspects come to affect artistic decisions, and vice versa.

C: Your works, Eric, are always so well presented. But a screen in a concert hall ...

E: Yes, we'll depend on the space. To have a good picture you need some darkness where the projection is.

C: The question is, if we have a score?

K: This material has an improvisational character, so I don't think I need to read a score to be on time.

Carola, Eric and I all bring our personal perspectives into practical and artistic discussions. Aspects of *Solastalgia* are being negotiated, and for me, as a performer, this offers new learning opportunities. I'm not used to being compositionally or creatively active in an interdisciplinary compositional process, collectively imagining and evaluating materials. Doing so widens my perspective into an expanded understanding of the whole work. My specific performer's knowledge thus becomes a resource when collectively developing *Solastalgia*.

A score of *Solastalgia*

Traditional musical notation has not yet fully entered our creative process. In my practice, the score is generally the main site of communication with the composer. Now, the status of the score is challenged. The live violin part of *Solastalgia* is created during a three-day workshop at Studio für Elektroakustische Musik der Akademie der Künste Berlin in November 2022, just a couple of weeks before the premiere of the work will take place. The collaborative procedure of creating the solo violin part, however, is not covered in this article.

After premiering *Solastalgia*, Carola and I agree that I will make a first sketch of the score, describing the violin techniques I have used in the semi-improvised solo violin part. Since I do not use notational

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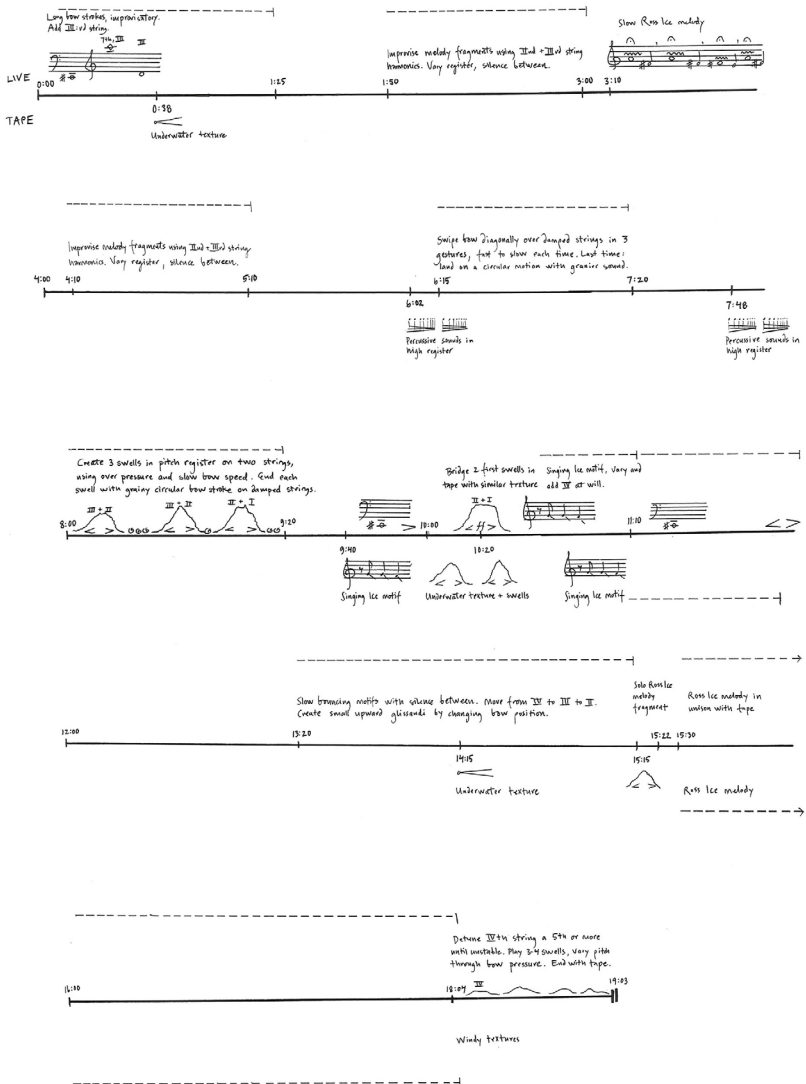


Figure 4 Score draft of Solastalgia.

software, I create a hand-written graphic score, organised on a timeline with occasional elements of pitch notation. When sketching the score of *Solastalgia*, I notice how I want to keep instructions in the score open for interpretation, emphasising the focus on a free, semi-improvised performance. I want the score to leave space for the personal interpretation of any performer who might want to perform the work. My aim with the score is not to be prescriptive, but to leave room for the performer to react to the pre-recorded sounds. I am thrilled that the score of *Solastalgia* was not created until *after* the premiere. I feel as if the piece primarily exists in my performance and in our shared process, rather than in the score. Instead, the score serves the role of an *aide mémoire* for the performance and a gate for others to start to engage with the piece. I sense an unusual distance from it – quite the opposite from my more usual feeling of a bond with and loyalty to the scores of solo works.

Discussion

Types of shared work

Analysing my previous practice according to Taylor's types of shared work (Figure 1) I see how it largely falls into the *hierarchical* category, where imaginative processes are rarely shared, and the evaluation of ideas are located in the composer's domain.

What ways of working have we developed in our collaboration on *Solastalgia*? Initially, work unfolded in enforced physical separation. I engaged in my emerging *mapping* practice, with Carola as a feedback partner, injecting the process with suggestions and encouraging dialogue. In the *imaginative part* of this phase, I occasionally took the more active part, by using my artistic palette to access embodied knowledge. However, this process was constantly fuelled by our dialogue and our shared search for materials. *Evaluation* was not a key focus. Rather, attention was directed to the *production of materials*, and when changes were needed,

I experienced their evaluation as collective. Thus, I see the first part of the work on *Solastalgia* as having an overall *collaborative* nature, although I produced the larger share of the materials. At times, our interactions fell into the category of *co-operative work*, where I produced materials, but the evaluation process was shared.

I am aware of how the level of interaction between me and Carola fluctuated – at times tying us closely together between periods of individual work – and how this brought fluency and variation to our process, in line with the ideas of John-Steiner's observation regarding the importance of a shifting rhythm of interaction (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 8).

In Part II, we met in Berlin. The audio parts were already created, but the timeline and dramaturgy were not yet laid out. In this phase, *evaluation* was at the core of the process, and in my experience, it was shared between us, manifesting as an example of *collaborative* work. Dialogue and openness allowed a sharing of evaluative and imaginative processes.

Later in Part II, the work took on an interdisciplinary character and was again conducted online. During discussions, expertise from our respective fields was brought into the emerging collective artistic knowledge. Initiatives were being taken by all participants and were discussed in the group. Evaluation of ideas became a process of negotiation, in which decision-making was directed to understanding the particular circumstances of an issue in order to find solutions.

Some highly specialist aspects were, however, difficult to develop in a fully collaborative way, especially with the limitations on face-to-face work imposed by the pandemic. Carola and I could not be involved in the practical development of Eric's work, not only because of the physical separation, and because of the limits of our knowledge, as Eric's work manifests in a different medium. The different artistic languages reduced the opportunities for a fully shared process. However, that gap between our artistic languages did not stop us from creating an integrated artwork. The interdisciplinary nature of the work gave rise to multiple perspectives on the process. I found that discussions mainly unfolded in a *collaborative* way, by sharing the imaginative and evaluative aspects of the process. For

the practical production of the interdisciplinary artwork though, aspects of *co-operative* work are present.

Scrutinising how the work unfolded, I see how both *co-operative* and *collaborative* processes have co-existed in a fluctuating manner. By finding the most efficient work method at a certain time, we found the level of involvement most suitable for our task and circumstances. Further, the analysis shows that it is possible to develop certain types of collaborative work in physical separation. Perhaps this example can inspire collaborating performers and composers to develop methods of shared work that do not involve travelling for each work session.

Safe space

A significant difference between the compositional process of *Solastalgia* and the usual division of labour in the composition of Western classical art music, is my involvement as a performer. What has made it possible to change my involvement from the usual place in a *hierarchical* process into one that is *co-operative* and *collaborative*?

Drawing on the ideas of John-Steiner (2000, pp. 8–9) concerning the importance of a *safe space* for a collaboration to develop, I see our interest and concern for the ice in *Solastalgia* as our *shared vision*. In addition, the friendship between Carola and myself is the *emotional scaffolding* of this collaboration. In our case, working together on *Doppelbelichtung* (2016) acted as a fruitful warm-up where we built trust and got to know each other and our respective practices. Before embarking on a collaborative journey, participants might want to reflect on their shared vision and emotional scaffolding. A «warm-up project» may be something for others to consider before attempting to develop fully collaborative work.

Our collaboration has offered a space where opinions can be shared and habitual task division negotiated. By entering the territory of the composer, I have expanded my knowledge and practice, with Carola's demonstrated trust in me as a supporting framework. John-Steiner calls

this *human plasticity* – «an opportunity for growth through mutual appropriation of complementary skills, attitudes, working methods, and beliefs» (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 8). During the work on *Solastalgia*, I entered new domains of knowledge, empowered to do so by the *safe space* we shared. This article has described *my* perspective on the knowledge I have developed, and I can only speculate about the knowledge Carola has taken away from it. However, John-Steiner's view on the *mutual* appropriation of skills should be a useful focus for aspiring collaborators – how the benefits of *human plasticity* can develop in fully collaborative work.

In light of the types of interactions that Argyris and Schön (1974) describe, I see creative space open for me in our work through Carola's ability to challenge her privileges as a composer. Her *Type II* behaviour allows us to question the idea of the composer leading the creative process. Even by just asking me to suggest a starting point for the work, Carola set assumptions about our previous work division aside. To me, this is a way of practising a generous *Type II* attitude – giving up the privilege of having sole permission to generate ideas in favour of inclusion and collectiveness. I have used Argyris and Schön's model to analyse our interactions in retrospect, but I believe this could be a useful tool for others to implement and discuss throughout the duration of their work.

This article describes our collaborative work as rather uncomplicated. However, I am aware that shared creative processes might not always be so straightforward. The difficulties I experienced during the work on *Solastalgia* were centred mainly around doubting my own abilities. Entering new creative as well as philosophical domains was daunting at times, and I believe that it is the *safe space* we created that turned this doubt into an opportunity for me to challenge my view of my abilities and grow with the task of co-composition.

Loyalty, responsibility and ownership

As I have described, new collaborative practices linked to the compositional process of contemporary classical music are evolving. However, in

my experience, explicitly shared legal ownership between composer and performer is still rare. Carola suggests that *Solastalgia* is a co-composition, and she communicates this to festivals as well as to her publisher. On several occasions we have had to explain that the work is not written *for me*, but by the two of us together. To me, how Carola communicates our shared work further strengthens our established safe space. I experience how we challenge the conventional way of communicating a work's authorship *and* ownership, a consequence of breaking with the conventional task division of performer and composer.

One of the regulating aspects of *Werktreue* is that of the performer's creativity being controlled through their *loyalty* to the work and composer. When I myself am one of the composers, the focus of this loyalty changes. It is transformed into a new form of loyalty and responsibility that is instead directed toward the collaborative work and the safe space developed between Carola and me. The fact that no score was produced until after the work was premiered further changes how loyalty is practised. My relation to Carola becomes based on our equal sharing of process and material rather than on my unswerving loyalty to her composition. There is room for negotiation and dialogue instead of the mutual expectation of me as a performer to follow instructions in the score. Additionally, I notice the way *performative aspects* of the work develop into a shared concern for us both, as they become an important part of the compositional process through discussions after performances and revisions of the live violin part. So, just as my role is expanded to include participation in the compositional work on *Solastalgia*, Carola is also involved into the performative aspects of the work, further blurring line between «composer» and «performer». Furthermore, when performing *Solastalgia* on stage, new factors are at stake – I am responsible not only for my performance of someone else's work, but for the work itself. I experience mixed feelings of increased vulnerability but also empowerment.

The fact that *Solastalgia* is a shared product affects how the piece is legally registered. Carola and I register shared ownership in our respective music rights organisations for composers, GEMA (Gesellschaft für

musikalische Aufführungs- und mechanische Vervielfältigungsrechte) and STIM (Svenska Tonsättares Internationella Musikbyrå). Eric's video is a standalone artwork and rights for it are registered separately from the music. A new experience for me is that, with shared legal ownership, performance royalties from when the piece is performed are shared. With my registration in STIM, I become a composer in the legal meaning and in relation to other performers who might want to perform *Solastalgia*. Will their relation toward the score be different knowing that it is partly created by a performer? Does a score created by a performer emphasise different things than one by a composer? Such thoughts could be interesting paths for further reflection.

Collaboration as transcendence

As John-Steiner suggests (2000, p. 188) collaborative work can «transcend the constraints of biology, of time, of habit, and achieve a fuller self, beyond the limitations and the talents of the isolated individual». During the period of our collaboration, I experienced *Solastalgia* as larger than the sum of our individual contributions. Through my analysis of transcribed dialogue and by tracing the origin of artistic materials, I discover how our contributions intertwined and hybridised along the way. I notice that we consciously transcended the constraints of *habit* during the process. At the outset, Carola was informed about my PhD project and my aim to explore collaborative composition. Agreeing to work with me while the artistic process was being exposed to documentation was generous of her – a willingness to publicly transcend habits and well-known territory.

On top of this, I can see how the constraints of *physical place* were transcended through the use of communicative technology while separated during the pandemic. And I further realise that I also transcended my own established practice, with the expansion of my performer's role representing a step toward an achieving of a fuller creative self. I entered the work with Carola aspiring to challenge the separated work division between

performer and composer. Those conventional practices might be separated but nevertheless dependent upon each other. Thus, the transcendence that followed is something I could not have created alone. I have been fortunate to work with an artist who is not afraid of reviewing and transforming her practice, thereby allowing space for me to transform mine.

Artistic palette

In the course of the evolving work on *Solastalgia*, the artistic palette emerged as both a concept and an artistic resource. Exploring the artistic palette became a process of reflection around my creativity and agency as a performer. In Part I, I saw how my embodied knowledge was communicated through my ability to create sonic materials through technological means. I developed skills and abilities connected to the use of technology for construction, communication and co-creation. Using my digital audio workstation and my violin as tools for construction, sharing artistic discussions online with communicative technology, using software to organise artistic components and searching for playing techniques on the violin are examples of the expanding abilities of my artistic palette.

When we met in Berlin, the use of audio technology became a tool for co-creation. And for the merging of the audio and video parts of the work, crafting with technology enabled artistic dialogue between the layers of the work, allowing for elasticity in the relation between fixed materials and live performance. In Part II, my artistic contributions were acknowledged in the compositional process, and my performer's role was empowered as I participated in shared artistic work. As I engaged in creative dialogue I used my artistic palette to communicate knowledge built on past performances and concert situations, the relation to space, audience and notation.

Just as I could see Carola reviewing her role as a composer, my process of conceptualising the artistic palette was important in my understanding of how my creativity stretches beyond the works I perform, and what it can bring to an artistic situation. Engaging with the artistic palette

has opened a space for me to view my agency and creativity in new ways. Beyond *Solastalgia*, those experiences have increased my trust in my capacity as a co-creator. I now enter new creative processes with a greater understanding, trust and curiosity in my own abilities, and I am more likely to push projects in the direction of co-creation than I was. The one-way work mode of my previous experience does not seem to offer the same opportunities for growth and knowledge exchange as processes that allow me to engage and develop my artistic palette further.

In the introduction, I situated my practice in a growing field of artistic research concerned with the development of new collaborative practices. It is my hope that others can draw inspiration from the concept of the artistic palette to further develop understanding of their own creative abilities. Can other artists use the artistic palette as a means of understanding and enhancing collaborative work, as Carola and I did? As a performer, I would be especially happy to see if the artistic palette can help other performers in their processes of developing agency and creativity in their practices. I believe this can challenge the work division between performers and composers in the field of contemporary music and thus contribute to the creation of more spaces for knowledge exchange between its participants. By looking at my creativity through the lens of the artistic palette, I have felt free to challenge myself to develop an expanded practice. I would be interested to see if it could be the same for others too.

Resources

Solastalgia has been created as a part of my PhD project at the Norwegian Academy of Music. This has allowed for resources that would be difficult to reconstruct or source outside of an institutional framework. The wide time-frame and the economic support has allowed for *process-based* rather than *result-oriented* work. I see our work as a result of optimal circumstances in which co-creation was planned for from the start. The qualitative process-based work has been as important for me as the resultant artwork, quite differently from my result-oriented practice

outside of the institution. Outside of the institutional framework, I have previously experienced how aspiring collaborators meet structural challenges such as the fact that commission fees are conventionally directed to the composer alone. However, those structures are being negotiated, for example through the Norwegian Arts Council's grant, *Komposisjon og produksjon av musikk* (Norsk Kulturråd, 2022). Creating *Solastalgia* has been resource dependent, but it has raised my awareness of how collaboration can generate transcendence with the right resources.

Accepting environmental grief

For me, *Solastalgia* has been important on several levels. Aside from growing empowerment, involvement and agency, the connection it has enabled between me and the Arctic ice has a significant impact on both my practice and my eco-anxiety. When mapping the ice, I felt close to it, despite the geographical distance. Being immersed in its captivating sound-world, and aware of the alarming situation, placed a weight on my shoulders. I wanted to escape, unwilling to accept the ecological disruption that is upon us – or what it will leave us with. Awareness of the dystopian situation combined with the beauty that rests in the ice is difficult to face. However, being immersed in our creative process has at the same time made me move toward an acceptance of my solastalgia. I have experienced how I can comment on present-day issues through art, strengthening my trust in the work potential of artists to move thought and catalyse change. Thus, living with *Solastalgia* generates a complex concoction of grief, acceptance and empowerment. I suffer, and at the same time, I'm empowered not to escape, and I let solastalgia guide me in life's decisions.

Video 4

↗ Video 4 Live documentation of *Solastalgia*.

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