

# **Making it Work: Creative music performance and the Western kit drummer**

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## Abstract

This study synthesises a range of views from cultural psychology, action theory and expert practitioners to illuminate issues of creativity and meaning in the performance of the Western kit drummer. Creativity and cultural psychology models are tested and critiqued, but require extension or adaptation to cast a more focused light on the meaning of creative performance for drummers. Aspects of the work of Csikszentmihalyi, Dewey, and Boesch are drawn together and developed to argue that the construct of ‘significant action in context’ provides the conceptual and methodological tool with which to begin analysis of this relationship of mind to cultural setting.

In seeking understanding of perception rather than objectively-determined facts, a qualitative interpretivist paradigm is adopted. Semi-structured interviews and autobiographical data of expert practitioners are used to generate rich data. Viewed from an action-theoretical perspective, the data are analysed and interpreted using thematic analysis, expanded here to encompass both autoethnographic and phenomenographical components. The agency of the researcher is assumed throughout, and the importance of scholarly self-reflexivity highlighted.

The purpose of the study is to construct a cultural psychology of the Western kit drummer which may reveal aspects of creativity in performance. It emerges organically from an ongoing sense of needing to know, or at least understand better, how drummers’ cultural psychology determines what they do. Such an explanation may not only contribute functionally to drummer practice, but also improve understanding of collaborative and creative interactional processes in music and related artistic spheres.

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## Statement of Originality

This thesis and the work to which it refers are the results of my own efforts. Any ideas, data, images or text resulting from the work of others (whether published or unpublished) are fully identified as such within the work and attributed to their originator in the text, bibliography or in footnotes. This thesis has not been submitted in whole or in part for any other academic degree or professional qualification. I agree that the University has the right to submit my work to the plagiarism detection service TurnitinUK for originality checks. Whether or not drafts have been so-assessed, the University reserves the right to require an electronic version of the final document (as submitted) for assessment as above.

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### Interview Transcriptions

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## CHAPTER 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Research context, questions, aims and outcomes

The current wide interest in creativity has focused attention on the process of popular music creation. If creativity does indeed lie at the heart of the modern economy, as government agencies (British Department for Culture, Media and Sport), scientists (Parag Chordia cited in O'Brien and Walton 2011), and authors (Howkins 2001, Florida 2002) maintain, benefit may arise from the clearest possible understanding of creativity's many manifestations. Popular music has been designated as part of the Creative Arts industry by policy makers in both government and academia, but the extent to which its instrumental practitioners are actually creative has rarely been interrogated, and their understanding of the experience of creativity even less so.

This thesis asks how Western kit drummers achieve and interpret creativity and meaning in music performance. A set of narrower questions seeks to understand how drummers' constructions of creativity inform their practice, and what an examination of the creative performance of experts<sup>1</sup> might teach us about how this creativity may be encouraged or compromised. These questions are as follows:

- How do expert drummers conceptualise creative performance?
- How do they assign it meaning?
- How do different performance contexts mediate and govern drummer action?
- How do expert drummers construct difference?

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<sup>1</sup> Krampe and Ericsson distinguish an 'eminent' performer, one who "irrevocably changes and expands the known possibilities for a given instrument or repertoire" from an expert. Eminence, they suggest, "lies beyond the mere acquisition of skills and interpretative techniques", sufficient of which, it might be argued, qualify the performer as 'expert' (Krampe and Ericsson cited in Hargreaves *et al* 2012:20 n4). From this view, all participants in this study are expert; none are eminent.

- How do they communicate difference?
- How do they assess the significance of difference in performance?

To address these, the thesis aims to develop an original synthesis of thinking from creativity studies, cultural psychology and action theory to illuminate aspects of creativity and meaning in drummer performance. Following Palmer's proposition that "each performer has intentions to convey" (Palmer 1997:119), it is argued that a) the performer hopes to effectively convey those intentions by means of the expression of experience; and b) such an expression may be assessed by others as significant and hence creative. Viewed through an action-theoretical lens, drummers achieve and experience creativity through significant 'mediated action in context' (Boesch 1987, 1991; Wertsch 1998). Mediated action may be taken forward to become full experience (Dewey 1934, Glăveanu 2013), the 'communicative performance' of which has the potential to be assigned creative significance (Palmer 1997, Hope Mason 2003).

The key objective of the research is to provide a more nuanced description of drummer creative performance than hitherto by first understanding participants' 'lived experience'. This cannot, however, be studied directly: "language, speech and systems of discourse mediate and define the very experience we attempt to describe" (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:636). The research thus considers representations of the experience of drummer creativity, not the experience itself. Only after interpretation using an appropriate methodology might such representations lead to better understanding. The thesis is expected to assist in balancing historical misunderstandings of the experience of creativity among a cadre of popular music instrumentalists; to challenge the strand of thinking that considers the individual composer the major musical creative; and to provide a popular music perspective on the psychology and practice of music creativity.

Not only is music performance under-researched, but such research as there is tends to focus on musicians within the classical tradition (Doğantan-Dack 2012). While the creative activities of popular music's principal agents, such as the songwriter, have received considerable attention (McIntyre 2006, 2011; Bennett 2011, Burnard 2012), the experiences of 'unpitched' instrumental practitioners remain mysterious. Thus, the proposition that an identifiable, coherent group of Western kit drummers, for example,

might have a qualitatively different experience of creative music-making from that of pitched-instrument practitioners remains under-explored.

Being a science and an art, music is, on the one hand, measurable and knowable in its physical properties and on the other, mysterious and ineffable (Seashore 1938). The investigation of such a domain requires a broad-horizon inter-disciplinary approach; here, the emerging discipline of cultural psychology and more established understandings from social ethnography overlap to form the disciplinary landscape. The immediate sub-discipline is the psychology of music.

The importance of the study subsists in understanding popular music instrumental performance from the perspective of high-level mature professionals. The work is an extension of a life-long intuitive, unschooled approach to the observation of the ‘participating self’ (Tedlock 1991) in creative musical endeavour. It emerges organically from an ongoing need to better understand how drummers’ cultural psychology might be a principal determinant of what they do, the author’s lifetime of practice having only fuelled a desire to make better sense of the drummer-in-action. Having demonstrated that drummers can be creative at the highest level of music performance and that creativity may be achieved and experienced by some drummers at specific times, the study should advance knowledge of creative interactional processes in other artistic spheres.

## **1.2 Philosophical stance**

The first pillar supporting the thesis’ philosophical position is epistemological, and critical to understanding the relationship between the inquirer and the known. The research is framed within the constructivist/interpretivist rather than the objectivist/positivist paradigm. A subjectivist position, which holds that the knower imposes meaning on the known, assumes knowledge to be neither objective, nor absolute, nor truly generalisable.

For Nietzsche there was neither true knowledge which is not itself created, nor truth independent of what human beings construct (Nietzsche cited in Mason 2003:213). This perspective is adopted in favour of an objectivist understanding which holds that

meaning resides in the things themselves, independently of consciousness and experience (Crotty 1998). The interpretive paradigm adopts a constructivist stance that attempts to understand the subjective human experience and “to grasp meanings from within” (Burnard 2012:263). Following Burnard, the musicians’ perceptions and reflections in this study arise from inside creative practice rather than outside (Burnard 2012). Knowledge is seen here as a compilation of human-made constructs from which researcher and participants co-create understanding. Co-created findings are grounded in an extended subjectivist epistemology of experiential, propositional and practical knowing (Denzin and Lincoln 2011:100) which seeks to gain understanding by interpreting subject perceptions. Such a stance sees the inquirer and inquired “fused into a single entity. Findings are literally the creation of the process of interaction between the two” (Guba 1990:27).

The second of the twin pillars supporting my philosophical position is ontological, concerning itself with the nature of existence and reality. In brief, understanding is sought by interpreting subject perceptions. This position understands reality to be created experientially; in other words, the way we think life is and the part we are to play in it are self-created. In this way “we put together our own personal reality” (Guba and Lincoln cited in Denzin and Lincoln 2011:103). A predominantly subjectivist posture does not abandon objectivism altogether; there may be objective cultural / historical conditions that have to be incorporated, such as observable metrical and tempo homogenization in the rhythmic aspects of popular music.

Broadly, a positivist realism which asserts that realities exist outside the mind - that there is an external reality separate from our descriptions of it (Bryman 2008:14) - is eschewed in favour of a subjective relativism suggesting that what is said to be “the way things are” is really just “the sense we make of them” (Crotty 1998:64). Individual drummers are likely to have different accounts of their lived experience of creativity, in which truth and reality are individually defined.

### **1.3 Theoretical approach**

Careful observation and interviews with expert practitioners may permit informed hypotheses about how some drummers at certain times and in specific places construe notions of creativity. Such material is interpreted through three theoretical positions: John Dewey's theories of art as the production, expression and communication of experience; Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's systems theory of creativity, of greater utility than the multiplicity of creativities posed by Burnard; and the action-theoretical approaches of Ernst Boesch and Vlad-Petre Glăveanu which combine to help situate significance within mediated action. By positing action at the centre of a web of individual-level relationships between lived experience, interpretation and meaning, and integrated with domain-level cultural variables (drum culture expectations, assessments of creativity, quality of action), one may begin to understand how meaning informs change in practice (see also Smith 2013).

In linking ideas from creativity theory to those of cultural psychology, the argument capitalises on a strand of thinking within the latter that identifies mind and culture as fundamentally interdependent and dynamic, and identifies the circular feedback loop between the individual and culture as the principal informant in the meaning-making process. Extending the work of Boesch and Glăveanu to music performance, creativity and meaning are connected through the construct of 'significant situated action'. Finally, the thinking of Wenger is used to position drummers as a community of practice enfolded within the drum culture, a community that largely determines and shapes drummer action. Positioning action at the centre of the interpretive web provides the single coherent picture of the experience of drummer creativity that this thesis aims to achieve.

In sum, this study is phenomenological (characterised by subjective constructed interpretation) rather than positivist (characterised by objective hypothesis testing). An inductive rather than deductive approach to data seeks to identify and assess rather than measure and count, and to understand meaning for individuals. The research design is accordingly qualitative, exploratory and interpretivist. The next section briefly sketches



the methodology employed to provide the data to investigate the research questions; a detailed explanation is provided in Chapter 5.

#### **1.4 Methodology: an overview**

The methodological approach chosen adopts a common qualitative sampling strategy, that of studying a relatively small number of special cases of expert practitioners; a good source of learned lessons. The characteristics of the semi-structured anonymous research interview, disinterested and focused on experience, might encourage a higher level of disclosure and forthrightness than is conventionally the case in the ‘career’ interview. Participants were selected to achieve the broadest representation of expert practice of the highest quality possible. Extensive international-level experience was evidenced by participants having led a music ensemble in multiple performances of his or her music.

An interview schedule of twenty questions was designed to elicit as much information as possible on ten topic areas of interest. Generated from the literature, three theoretical tools were constructed and applied to aid understanding; the difference / selection / communication / assessment framework for creativity in performance (DSCA), the functional / compositional continuum (FCC), and an integrated model of the circulation of meaning (IMCM). The data transcription process was both methodical and detailed. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher and imported into NVivo software for analysis within a research design based upon the precepts of flexible thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006), maintaining a full data trail at every stage. The justification for such an approach, the limitations and caveats surrounding it, and the rejection of other approaches are developed further in Chapter 5.

#### **1.5 Research challenges**

Two challenges were anticipated, both requiring constant vigilance. The first addressed the relationship between researcher and researched. The author’s perspective is that of an experienced expert performer in the domain under study. It is perhaps a paradoxical one demanding careful negotiation; balancing the emic and etic perspectives creates a tension (Smith 2013). Being acutely tuned-in to the experiences and meaning systems of others

while being aware of how one's own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand - to 'indwell' - is no easy matter (Maykut and Morehouse 1994:123). A partial resolution is afforded by adopting the 'complete-member' researcher perspective, seen as both "insider and outsider rather than insider or outsider" (Dwyer and Buckle 2009:54). A keen awareness of these issues and as to exactly whose meaning is emerging from the data was considered sufficient to ground the study.

A second challenge was inherent in the interview process; participants may misinterpret or misrepresent their own musical experiences. Monson (1996) warns of the vexed relationship between studier and studied; Lieblich (1996) details the entanglements occurring when conducting narrative research within one's own culture. A partial solution was provided by participant anonymity, avoiding the risk that participant input might be distorted by its attributed appearance in the public domain.

## **1.6 Assumptions and delimitations**

Participants were interviewed in respect of their achievement and experience of creative music performance. Initial enquiries established four facts. First, participants were members of a geographically-dispersed professional community of current experts, tied together in few regular and recurrent 'patterns of association' (Scott in Savage and Williams 2008:34). Second, members were aware of each other professionally. They read each other's interviews and heard each other's music in the shared media, and on occasion they met at professional gatherings, such as Drummer Days, workshops and trade shows. They had no other *a priori* common forms of outlook or social consciousness other than that as may be necessary to survive and flourish professionally. Third, participants were broadly interested in the topic of creative performance and had experience of it. The ideal situation was if the participant became a collaborative partner in the intellectual exercise at hand (Gubrium *et al* 2012:104). Finally, the researcher was known professionally to the participants to approximately the same degree that they knew of and about each other.

The group was delimited in two ways: first, to mature, peak-career participants of expert status, in part because anecdotal and experiential evidence<sup>2</sup> suggests that young, immature drummers beginning their careers have insufficient experience of any music performance (creative or otherwise) and are thus unlikely to have formed robust perceptions of the phenomenon. Second, the cohort was confined to a Euro-North American (i.e. ‘Western’) sphere of performance practice, in part to retain a sharp focus on the community of which the researcher is a ‘complete-member’, and in part because insufficient time and resources were available to investigate the phenomenon in all its pan-global manifestations. Within those boundaries, the data and the conclusions of this research should apply; outside those boundaries, it may be questioned whether the results will apply.

## **1.7 Outline of the report**

Chapter 1 has set the scene, having provided an overview of the research landscape, the research problem and subordinate questions, the thesis’ philosophical and theoretical stances, a brief background as to the particular methodology chosen and a justification for that choice. Several of these issues are drawn out in greater length in Chapter 5. Chapter 2 examines salient research on creativity, firstly in the general sense, then in the realm of music, and finally in respect to the creative performance of drummers. The difference / selection / communication / assessment (DSCA) conceptual framework is introduced and applied to the real world of the drummer. A functional / compositional continuum (FCC) situates performance practice on a spectrum of creative control. Finally, a systems theory (Csikszentmihalyi 1988) case-study of one exceptional individual, Max Roach, demonstrates that drummers may be creative at domain-changing level.

Borrowing from cultural psychology and action theory, Chapter 3 seeks to contextualise and link culture, creativity and meaning by combining the cultural psychology and

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<sup>2</sup> In view of the paucity of literature on the musical behaviours, intention and motivations of the Western kit drummer, authorial, experiential and anecdotal evidence may be the only evidence available in support of some assertions. This is always subject to review in the light of fresh evidence coming to hand.

action-theoretical approaches of Boesch and Glăveanu to recast drummer creativity in the mould of significant mediated action. An integrated model of the circulation of meaning (Figure 3.4 IMCM) depicts the relationship between the individual drummer, the drum culture and the way action gives rise to meaning within the cultural context.

Adopting the cultural psychology perspective as outlined, Chapter 4 argues that drummers live in a cultural tradition that regulates, expresses and shapes their experience of creative practice. They are characterised as creatures of community, and the sociocultural features of this community mediate, promote and inhibit the psychological behaviour, meaning-making and choice selection of the individual. Following Etienne Wenger, drummers are positioned as a community of practice enfolded within a ‘drum culture’, a concept interpreted here in terms of the key components of its narrative, ideology and psychology (Wenger 1998). The notion of sharing is examined in respect of groove, meaning, and the several problems surrounding practice. Lastly, the chapter examines how, within the constraints of multiple expectations, the practitioner might manipulate the temporal, metrical, dynamical and timbral dimensions of the music to both satisfy these expectations and fashion the individual ‘voice’ that facilitates creative expression.

Chapter 5 lays out and justifies the central aspects of the exploratory nature of the research design, its methodological approach and the rejection of possible alternatives. It explains the choice and use of the research tools needed to illuminate a single coherent picture of the experience of creative music performance. The chapter details the research method’s strategy, criteria, limitations and caveats, and goes on to explain and justify the sample selection, data collection, transcription and related issues. The most effective tool with which to analyse and interpret the rich data emanating from semi-structured interviews is taken to be thematic analysis, expanded here to encompass both autoethnographic and phenomenographical components.

Analysis and interpretation of the various themes and categories that emerge from the data are presented in Chapter 6, while Chapter 7 discusses the findings of Chapter 6 in the context of the literature. Finally, Chapter 8 offers conclusions about the research

problem and questions, locates possible usage for the research findings, and states the research contributions and implications for theory.

## **CHAPTER 2: Creativity in expert drumming: dimensions of creative performance**

### **2.1 Creativity and music**

Several scholars have brought forward comprehensive reviews of the main trends in the creativity literature (Sternberg 1988, Fillis and McAuley 2000, Lubart 2001, Starko 2001, Running 2008, Glăveanu 2010a, Parkhurst 2011); the history of the development of creative thinking has been elegantly described by John Hope Mason (2003). Rather than highlight and debate differences in the creativity discourse, this chapter seeks out and applies those key findings that may usefully illuminate the methodology of the creative drummer.

This thesis situates creativity within the socio-cultural milieu in which the creative act takes place (Amabile 1996, Boden 1994, 2004, Weisberg 1993, Barrett and Gromko 2007). Critics of the phenomenon's decontextualisation (Amabile 1996, Hennessey 2003) and over-rationalisation (Simonton 2004) have reinforced the distinction between the person-centric traditionalist approach found in earlier understandings of creativity and more contemporary systemic approaches (Csikszentmihalyi 1998, Gruber 1989). In the latter view, creativity is seen as a dynamic system working on a larger scale than that of the 'lone-genius' paradigm<sup>3</sup> posited by the Romantic conception and concomitant understandings (Amabile 1996, Boden 1994, Weisberg 1993, Mason 2003, Burnard 2012, Sternberg 1988).

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<sup>3</sup> Pre-Enlightenment conceptions of creativity were embodied within what has become known as the 'lone genius' paradigm, which characterises creativity as bestowed originally by the Muses, or the Gods or God upon the individual human creator (Hope Mason 2003).

No longer seen as a divine or mysterious process in the gift of the Gods and bestowed upon the lone genius, creativity can now be identified in us all (Boden 1994, Treffinger 1995, Burnard 2012). Not everyone will, but anyone might, become creative in meaningful ways (Treffinger 1995). Creativity is not only the province of the highly gifted; we all share a cognitive apparatus capable of creativity (Weisberg 1993, Webster 2002). Only some, however, are given to employ that apparatus in a manner likely to produce a creative act; one that might be defined on a spectrum of thinking ranging from the everyday sort of creativity employed by many, which has come to be known as ‘little-c’ creativity or ‘P’ creativity (Boden 2004), to the novel, useful and surprising creativity accepted as such by a field of experts and in the gift of very few, characterised as ‘Big-C’ creativity or ‘H’ creativity (Boden 2004) (see section 2.6).

Calls for the establishment of a general theory of music creativity are only very recent, music having hitherto been only infrequently viewed as an object of study in the creativity field (Deliège and Wiggins 2006, Burnard 2012). Increasingly, however, scholars have argued for greater critical attention to the topic and the meanings it is made to carry (Negus and Pickering cited in McIntyre 2006; Shuker 1994). Sternberg’s call to abandon the person-centric Ptolemaic approach mentioned above was addressed within the music sphere by several later thinkers from sociology (Frith 2012, Bennett 1999), education (Burnard 2012, Barrett and Gromko 2007, Green 2002), culture studies (Clayton *et al* 2003) and cultural psychology (Glăveanu 2009, 2010a, 2010b, Barrett 2011). 21<sup>st</sup> century approaches have tended to see music creativity as located in a social milieu (Berger 2009, Monson 1996) and within a “network of people co-operating” (Burnard 2012:14).

The scope of the study and available resources militate against a comparative analysis of the multiple approaches to the many dimensions of creativity within music, comprehensively expounded elsewhere (Deliège and Richelle 2006, Running 2008). The topic has been framed in multiple ways: for example, within the constitution and attribution of musical meaning (Burkholder 2006, Burnard 2012); as a matter of expert performance (Ericsson and Charness 1994, Ericsson 1996), perception (Berger 1999), reciprocal feedback (Hargreaves *et al* 2005), computer modelling (Boden 1994, Cope 2005) and communication (Miell *et al* 2005, Cohen 2005, Davidson 2005, Tagg 2013).

Music consciousness and its relationship to the instrumental practitioner has been developed by Clarke (2011) and Zbikowski (2011); within embodiment theory the works of Szekely (2006) and Corness (2008) have salience and utility (sections 3.3.1 and 4.4.1). However, most have neglected the study of the creative process, creative interaction and the meaning of either to the popular music instrumental performer (Pinheiro 2010). The discussion will revisit some of the tangential areas mentioned above as may be necessary in order to paint as rich a picture as possible of the cultural and psychological processes impacting upon creativity within performance.

This gap in understanding is examined here in the context of the cultural psychology of music performance, with the intention to show that action theory presents a useful approach. In particular, the theoretical insights of music-educationalist Pamela Burnard run as a leit-motif through this thesis, underpinning its conceptions of drummer creativity and acting as a framework for much of the ensuing discussion. The recent turn to the socio-cultural in musicology has been prompted in no small part by her conceptual expansion of the nature of musical creativities, elucidated in her book *Musical creativities in practice* (Burnard 2012). Her inclusive perspective, which sees a multiplicity of music creativities as within the grasp of many, acts as a powerful counterweight to the exclusive astringency of the systems theorists for whom creativity is by definition domain-changing and in the gift of few. Arguably, the lone genius paradigm has met its nemesis in Burnard's plurality of creativities drawn broadly and seemingly available to anyone by virtue of unique participation in the domain (Burnard 2012, Webster 2002).

Creative music performance has quite recently been reframed as “culturally situated human behaviour” (Cross 2003:21) and characterised as recombinational, exploratory, and/or transformational, with a component of problem finding or problem solving (Boden 2004). On Burnard's account it is less a discrete expression of individual will and more an activity constrained by and mediated between multiple actors and agencies (Burnard 2012). Her characterisation of individual music creativity as an aggregate of “inwardly directed practices that constitute the ‘self’, as ascribed by intention, individual vocabularies, musical languages, [and] original voice” (Burnard 2012:141) will be used



as an operational definition in the ensuing development of an action-theoretical approach to creativity and the meaning of drumming for drummers.

### **2.1.1 The composer / performer dichotomy**

The composer and composition have a long history of having been privileged, most notably by composers,<sup>4</sup> over the performer and performance. Music creativity tended to be seen as residing within the individual and made manifest in the creation/composition rather than its production or performance (Small 1998; Burnard 2012, Weinstein 2004, Frith 2012). Christopher Small observed that, until recently, the prevailing discourse located the essence of music and its meanings in the written text and that “musical performance plays no part in the creative process, being only the medium through which the isolated, self-contained work has to pass in order to reach its goal, the listener” (Small 1998:4-5).

The composition/performance dichotomy has led to the notion that the former act is creative and the latter re-creative, with profound resonances for popular music instrumental practice (Seashore 1938, Cottrell 2004). While to some extent the performer remains the mouthpiece of the composer (Benson 2003:13), s/he appears to be moving closer to the epicentre of music creativity (Rink 1995, Small 1998, Auslander 2004, Burnard 2012). Both process and product now tend to be construed as being embodied within performance, generally understood as the means by which the musical idea is realised and transmitted to the listener - as a step in a process. In his exposition of what he calls “musicking”, Small observed that without performance, there is no music (Small 1998). However, anecdotal and experiential evidence suggest that change may be slow. For example, the on-going elevation of the songwriter above that of the performer (instrumentalist, drummer) in popular music, firmly underpinned by copyright law and

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<sup>4</sup> For Schoenberg, the performer was “totally unnecessary except as his interpretations make the music understandable to an audience unfortunate enough not to be able to read it in print” (Schoenberg cited in Cook 2003:204). Pierre Boulez provided further evidence of the denigration of the instrumentalist with his comment that “Instrumentalists do not possess invention – otherwise they would be composers” (Boulez quoted in Frith 2012:67).

the consequent flow of remuneration, continues to mirror that of the composer/performer dichotomy of the classical tradition.

The socio-cultural strand of thinking has sought to reposition the locus of musical creativity away from the person or product and towards processual aspects such as of collaboration and interaction (McLean 2009, Burnard 2012). The perpetual revision now easily afforded by a technology unavailable to earlier composers tends to discourage the fixing of the text, and allows for audience and performer input in what is essentially a test procedure (or remix). In this way, composition may be considered as “a form of processual object [...] continually redefined through performance” (Burnard 2012:124). Amongst the young post-modern, post-classical academy art musicians Burnard interviewed, the composition tended to be seen as existing *in the performance*, with the recording a documentation that individuated the work (Burnard 2012).

Current literature has tended to view music less as an object, more as an activity with others in which creativity is seen as a set of decisions and choices (Burnard 2012:142; see also Cook 2012, Small 1998:10). Following Göran Folkestad, the discussion here prioritises the process of music creation rather than the completed product. This has the benefit of focusing attention on the creator’s perspective; it is not the music itself that is the focus but the practice of music creation (Folkestad cited in Armstrong 2011).

## **2.2 Creative music performance**

Anecdotal and authorial evidence suggest that there is some agreement about the extension or scope of creative music performance - that Nicola Benedetti is more creative than the fiddler in the pub, that Nina Simone is more creative than Robbie Williams, that an improvising jazz group may be more creative than a tribute band - but some confusion as to why that might be. If creativity is seen as a prerequisite for the production of musical art, it follows that where art lies there lies creativity. According to Seashore, the medium of musical art lies primarily in deviation from the fixed and regular (Seashore 1938). The question then arises as to who promotes these deviations. Instrumentalists on unpitched or semi-definitely pitched instruments have a history of being seen initially as noise-makers and subsequently as inherently less creative than instrumentalists on

pitched instruments (Brennan 2013b). Looked at another way, within current Western popular music there appears to be unequal creative potential lying dormant within the process of drumming and, for example, the process of guitar playing.

Among the studies of music performance that he reviewed, Gabrielsson found the great majority to concern themselves with performance of western tonal music, mostly art ('classical') music. The principal topics examined were measurement of performance, contributions concerning models of performance, and performance planning and practice. Engagement with the issue of creativity in performance was notable by its absence (Gabrielsson 2003). Palmer observed that many studies focus on the piano performance of compositions within the classical tradition for which notation is available, thus providing unambiguous performance goals (Palmer 1997).

Matters tend to become more confused in the less-researched world of unnotated music performance where the goals may be flexible, shifting, even negotiated live during the course of the performance, as is the practice in some jazz (MacDonald and Wilson 2006). Instrumental performance within popular music has thus received minimal attention as an object of analysis and is, as a consequence, poorly understood (Attas 2011a:302, Auslander 2004). For example, the term 'performance' itself remains ambiguous. It embodies understandings of both the end product (which may be captured in material form) and the process. Extreme understandings count theatrical live performance alone (see for example Pavis cited in Auslander 2004:5), but most include recordings, being the primary form in which the audience consumes popular music (Auslander 2004). Peggy Phelan's influential work on the ontology of performance identified it as that which "cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations" (Phelan 1993:146). Building on this, Will Shuler observed<sup>5</sup> how theatre and performance studies scholars "encourage us to revisit, revise and contest how 'ephemerality' relates to performance, asking: What remains? What haunts? What lasts? In short, what legacies does performance leave behind?" From Phelan's theoretical orientation, the recording session might thus be viewed as a

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<sup>5</sup> Personal communication 13.06.13.

performance *only part of which* is recorded for circulation. In the light of a variety of couplings with music technology, and the consequent blurring of a clear distinction between live and programmed performance, locating what ‘counts’ as a drummer’s performance is problematic. In Shüler’s terms, what lasts; what haunts?

In respect of the Western kit drummer, the literature had little to say in response to Shüler. Drawing on anecdotal evidence and authorial experience, this thesis qualifies a practitioner’s performance as a ‘playable’ performance, whose essential characteristics are that it is able to be performed in real time (or in one ‘pass’ in recording studio jargon); that it constitutes the ‘whole’ of that player’s contribution to that composition; that it has the clear authorship of one identifiable drummer; that it affords the possibility of creative expression; and that it is addressed to another. Following from this, the term ‘performance’ is interpreted throughout as live performance, construed as the studio recording of a playable performance or the live theatrical rendition of one. Other theatrical appearances in the form of, for example, miming to a playback or the inputting of data in the construction of unplayable performances do not afford the possibility of creative expression in the sense here intended and are therefore beyond the scope of this study.

### **2.2.1 The relationship between creativity and performance**

Generally there seems to be nothing in popular music that *a priori* demands or requires that a playable performance be ‘creative’, unless the mere activity possesses an intrinsic quality or qualities which answer to the definition of creativity. Creativity has been generally seen, by musicians at least, as a desirable phenomenon frequently governed by a sense of incompleteness<sup>6</sup> (Cottrell 2004). Anecdotal evidence indicates that the portfolio career of the 21<sup>st</sup> century drummer might require some creativity at the morning ‘originals band’ rehearsal, none at the afternoon recording session for a jingle, and plenty in the evening session of improvised music. Such a scenario implies ready access to, and avoidance of, the creative impulse. For most musicians, creative

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<sup>6</sup> “To me, playing is generally a never-ending state of getting there” (Musician Art Farmer cited in Berliner 1994:285).

performance is synonymous with putting something of yourself into the music (Cottrell 2004:113), an approach which sits uncomfortably with those composers from the classical tradition who appeared to require that the performer put nothing of herself or himself into the performance (Benson 2003:12-14).

Within the London music community, some saw music performance as craftsman-like with the performer essentially re-creative or repetitive, as artisanal rather than artistic (Cottrell 2004). Creativity is not always welcome (Clarke 2012:17). Berliner noted that not all jazz musicians welcome a ‘fancy beat’ from the drummer (Berliner 1994:410); Theodore Gracyk’s view of the drummer’s function prioritised *finding* a central rhythm rather than creating it (Gracyk 1996:137, author’s emphasis). Musicians frequently work in areas like traditional music that do not readily welcome creativity, seen as standing in opposition or tension with traditionalism (Nettl 1983). Stadium rock, theatrical shows, touring ballets, tribute bands and circuses generally require a stable, repeatable, standardised product on which others (fellow performers, dancers, actors, jugglers, listeners and, not least, promoters) may depend (Cottrell 2004). While many musicians teach or perform in private collaboration, eschewing the complexities of public performance, Lamont found that practitioners nevertheless tend to recognise the value of public performance. Some of their strongest experiences were characterised by engagement and a search for meaning in that endeavour, although they occurred largely with ‘non-chosen’ music (Lamont 2012).

Any level of creativity is unlikely should the practitioner decide to hide, avoid or disable the creative impulse, momentarily or over time, for reasons of accommodation, by which is meant ‘getting the job done’. Dictionary definitions of ‘uncreative’ tend to circulate around the absence of imagination or original ideas, but make little mention of the deliberate avoidance of such ideas. In his discussion of ‘quasi non-creational processes’, Lock takes such processes to mean “purely imitating, reproducing, acting without individual will and genuine ideas, being part of a system without having the possibility of interfering, quoting purely secondary sources, etc., because mechanically produced art and science are considered to be non-organic and without value” (Lock 2011:124). The literature did not appear to comment on the extent to which the popular instrumentalist may operate on a continuum of personal creativity, able to turn it on or off like a tap.

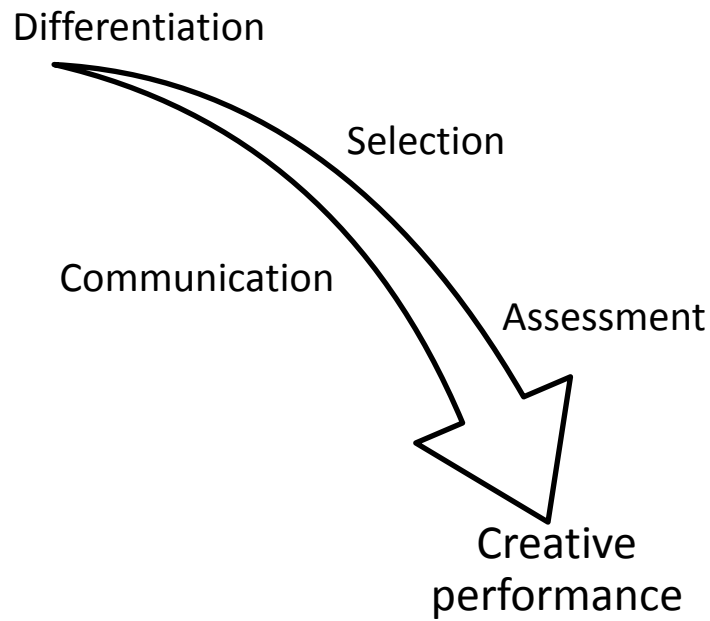
## 2.3 The foundational dimensions of creative music performance

For creative music to be enacted, neither composer, score, talent nor virtuosity are absolute requirements. Music may certainly exist without the composer; most of the world's music has been brought to fruition without the benefit of formal acts of composition (Merker 2006:29). It may exist without the written score. Highlighting the inadequacy of musical notation, Morrow found creativity within the music's performance rather than its score:

However inspired the music, written notes are mere symbols; a musical performance is an act of creation, and without the performer music does not exist (Morrow 1978:235).

Music creativity may have only a tenuous connection to talent or virtuosity. Schenker's argument that much of contemporary performance practice, rooted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century cult of the virtuoso, has resulted in an overemphasis on technical display (Schenker 2000:83), is particularly apposite within a contemporary drum culture that places high value on technical dexterity.

The question then arises as to the nature of the foundational dimensions without which creative popular music performance might be said not to exist. Without claiming to cover the entire field, four dimensions of creativity are drawn from the literature to represent a selective emphasis on a subset of dimensions which are necessary for the enactment of creative music performance. Taken together, the four strands of differentiation, selection, communication and assessment (DSCA) frame and delimit the ensuing discussion (Figure 2.1). Each of these dimensions is now considered in turn.



**Figure 2.1** The DSCA framework

### 2.3.1 Differentiation

First, some aspect of the performance needs to be different. For systems theorist Gregory Bateson, information consists of “differences that make a difference” (Bateson 2002:92), a position which echoes the writings of Hope Mason. In privileging significance over novelty as the key quality of the action, the decisive question for Hope Mason is not “Is it new?” but rather “Does it matter?” (Hope Mason 2003:233). Mason’s thinking suffuses the discourse throughout and will be returned to shortly in the context of the arbiters of significance, the people to whom making it matter matters.

Many accept that creative difference may be achieved by injecting some novelty or originality into the processes of extension, transformation, interpretation or expression (Boden 2004, Hope Mason 2003, Sternberg et al 2004). It is frequently part of the musician’s self-conception that s/he feels obliged to contribute to the performance in a way s/he perceives of as ‘new’. While novelty and originality may be taken as two of the

most important indicators of difference in a creative product (Tafari cited in Deliège and Wiggins 2006:135), they are not without contention in music circles.

For any type of creative artefact to be original, Williamon *et al* insisted on qualitative difference in some respect from any previously known instance of that type. They cautioned against conflating the idea of originality with the notion of uniqueness; for them, the two ideas were clearly distinct. Every performance is unique in the sense that it takes place at a different time and place, and every composition is unique in that it uses different notes in a different order, but to ascribe originality to all those actions is to devalue the term to the point of redundancy (Williamon *et al* 2006).

To the extent to which they seek it at all, drummers tend to seek differentiation in performance through a multiplicity of alternative creative pathways. For example, the use and manipulation of the timbral palette (Blake 2012) and metric dissonance<sup>7</sup>; the aleatoric unpredictability of improvisation; compositional or band-leading skills involving a collaborative creativity (Burnard 2012); stylistic individuation through ‘touch and feel’ (both concepts to be elaborated shortly within the construct of the ‘continuum of control’), and technical virtuosity (Martin 1998, Macan 1997);<sup>8</sup> all may, on their own or in combination, engender difference as a catalyst of the creative process.

### ***Interpretative and expressive difference***

Difference may further be sought through personalised interpretation and expression. Within Western art music, Davidson and Coulam suggested that for creative music performance to be enacted these two components were essential. Drawing on Webster’s (2002) research in music education, they concluded that for such performance, a “skilled, crafted, sensitive interpretation is necessary, operating within a specific cultural/stylistic framework (or context)” (Davidson and Coulam 2006:182).

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<sup>7</sup> See Covach 1997 for a discussion of the use of this device in ‘Yes’, and Pieslak 2007 for its use in ‘Meshuggah’.

<sup>8</sup> Doffman found that the unbridled pursuit of virtuosity tends to be frowned upon within both jazz and rock “unless married to an aesthetic that values a performed integrity” (Doffman 2008). Williamon *et al* had a similar perspective (Williamon *et al* 2006:161).



First, understandings of ‘interpretation’ within the classical tradition as an aspect of performance that is highly prepared in advance (Chaffin *et al* 2006:200) might be contrasted with the popular music conception of interpretation as unprepared, spontaneous and aleatoric, such as might be found in jazz and other contemporary popular music idioms (Berliner 2004, Monson 1996). Ambiguities in musical notation in either tradition, however, allow a performer considerable freedom in deciding how to interpret the music’s content (Dean 1992, Berger 1999, Attas 2011a).

The individualistic modelling of a piece of music according to the practitioner’s own ideas or musical intentions has at some times and some places been denigrated in both classical and popular music traditions (section 2.1.1). In the sphere of the contemporary drummer, such interpretive modelling may be deprecated as rhythmic inconsistency, as ‘taking liberties’ (Zagorski-Thomas 2010). For Dewey, by contrast, rhythm involves constant variation. Observing that artists have always taken liberties with music, he, like Lock some seven decades later, argued that such liberties mark the difference between mechanical or purely objective construction and artistic production (Dewey 1934:170).

From another perspective, the spontaneous micro-adjustment of a highly prepared interpretation is what makes each performance a creative activity (Chaffin *et al* 2006:200). Each performance might be characterised as existing at one end of a continuum of interpretative preparedness with, for example, a tribute band performance positioned as the polar opposite to a free jazz performance. However, if this spontaneous micro-adjustment defines each performance as a creative activity, then almost all drum performance would seem to be identifiable as creative, and thus a long way from a Csikszentmihalyian modelling of the work of a domain-changer such as Max Roach, described shortly in section 2.6.

Second, creativity in music performance was frequently linked to expression, interpreted as the aggregate of “large and small variations in timing, intensity or dynamics, timbre, and pitch that form the microstructure of a performance and differentiate it from another performance of the same music” (Palmer 1997:118). Expression within a unit such as a phrase has been characterised as the pattern of deviations of its parts with respect to the unit itself (Desain & Honing 1991). Musicians have been found to be able to replicate

their expressive patterns of timing and dynamics for a given musical piece with high precision, but measurements of performance expression sometimes differed across studies, making comparisons difficult (Palmer 1997). From the drummer's perspective, the practitioner might argue that freedom of expression presupposes a) that s/he has some degree of agency over what is performed, and b) that there is perceptible change as a result of his or her playing such as to permit evaluation of any creative input. It is to matters of selection, agency and control that the discussion now turns.

### 2.3.2 Selection

A second dimension of the DSCA framework proposes that, for creativity to be enacted, there needs to be selection. Creativity is seen as enabled by choice and control over possible courses of action, and disabled in their absence. If all art involves selection (Dewey 1934:99), then an inability to choose or to select from possible options certainly impinges upon, and may preclude, creative action. Even John Cage *selected* to relinquish control over sound for his composition *4'33"*.<sup>9</sup>

The extent to which individuals perceive that they have control over situations, what Dweck identified as an 'internal locus of control' (Dweck cited in MacDonald *et al* 2009:467), mediates thoughts about and perceptions of events (Kelly 1955).<sup>10</sup> In respect of creative music performance, the issue of control of musical material - both individual and collective, its possession, surrender, loss, requirement for, or absence of - has profound implications. Perceived of as either soloist or functionary,<sup>11</sup> the performer's ability to select may be highly constrained by the dictates of the text. A similar demand is in play in the pop recording studio: the score or text may be literally immaterial, but

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<sup>9</sup> Mermikides 2014: personal communication with the author. John Cage's 1952 alleged admonition that it is the composer's job to come up with "something better than silence" might usefully be expanded to include all music inventors.

<sup>10</sup> Dweck identified two loci of control; internal and external. Those with an internal locus tend to display 'mastery-oriented' behaviour such as persistence in overcoming setbacks. Those with an external locus tend to feel that circumstances are beyond their control. For further discussion in this area, see Dweck 2000.

<sup>11</sup> Stravinsky allegedly wanted only execution, not interpretation, from the performer (Cook 2003:204).

composition, construed as the strict putting in to play of an explicit will (Burnard 2012) may be very much present.

### ***Agency and control***

Selection, choice and control require some level of individual empowerment, as conceiving of oneself as agentive. ‘Agency’ is interpreted here as the intentionality and control an individual feels s/he has over his or her circumstances in a particular situation or at a given time in that situation (Wiggins 2011). It might be argued that it is the ability to determine key aspects of performance that both distinguishes and enables lower and higher levels of music practice. From an atomistic viewpoint, the creative act in this context is embodied at the micro-level within the agentive striking of the drum. From the striking emerges sound, to have brief life before decay, death and silence. Whether that sound leads an eventful life of change, collision, merger and elision with other sounds or exists in an-echoic near-silence, it is nevertheless in perpetual timbral and dynamic mutation within itself. It was given life by the agentive creator, who decided upon action determining the temporal length and dynamic and timbral qualities of the sound.

Control in performance may be degraded, surrendered or lost altogether. Many musicians have spoken of a loss of control, in being ‘taken over’ by the process of acting creatively (Negus and Pickering 2004:19). Popular music instrumentalists sometimes described the surrendering of control at the moment of ‘peak performance’ (Gabrielsson 2011, Hytönen-Ng 2013). Drummer Ian Wallace reported feelings of being “borne along at a tremendous rate by something you only just have control of. It’s almost like it’s controlling you” (Boyd 1992:172). There is a paradox here between the exertion of control over musical materials and aspects of their realisation and transmission (with which creativity might be enabled), and the loosening or surrendering of control which Wallace and others might deem essential to achieve peak performance. Cognitive psychology offered an explanation of the experiential feeling of loss or surrender as the change from *controlled* processing to *automatic* processing (Pressing cited in Berliner 1994:798 n39).

Historically, the ‘romantic genius’ paradigm within music saw the abandonment or surrendering of control at the “Eureka!” moment of creativity to the ancient muses. Igor Stravinsky was “just the vessel through which *Le Sacré* passed” (Stravinsky and Craft 1962:147–8). The art of music improvisation was much associated with a ‘mystique’ connecting it to a surrendering of control (Berliner 2004, Monson 1996). Many have found creativity to be conspicuously evident in this ancient and modern form of music-making, with implications of change, surprise, unpredictability and dealing with the unforeseen (Deliège and Wiggins 2006, Sawyer 2007), qualities not universally approved of (Montuori cited in Glăveanu 2012:35). The composer Donnacha Dennehy found inexplicability rather than explicit will to be an essential attribute of the creative musical act (Burnard 2012:132). These perspectives suggest that if the outcome of the musical act is already known, the creativity involved in its enactment is already compromised. If it is explicable, it is already known; if it is already known, it is not creative. In this way, the individual enacts creativity because s/he wants to know what happens.

Approaching from a more general psychological perspective, Simonton suggested that some essential catalysts for creativity were *beyond* individual control (Simonton 2004; emphasis added). His explication of the stochastic feature of creativity resonated with serendipitous compositional methods of progressive rock groups of the 1970s, where the author’s experiential evidence confirmed that trial and error, vague hunches, playful exploration and a sense of what could be ‘got away with’ all played their part. In practice, most drummers tend to move between an exertion and loosening of control in the text, on a spectrum of precise execution, interpretation and improvisation, sometimes within a single musical rendition. At one pole, a precisely defined part may indicate the dominance of the composer; at the other, composer functions devolve to the performer, now charged with responsibility for what s/he plays and thus partially determining that which is played by those around her or him.

Two further issues related to agency and control remain to be addressed in the identification of selection as an essential component of performance creativity. First, creative performance may be engendered through the negotiation of constraints upon selection. Björn Merker saw music as music “by virtue of the discretising constraints that provide it with limitless scope for creating qualitative novelty” (Merker 2006:32). A

highly commoditised Western popular music culture requires uniformity or standardisation of the product and its near-identical reproduction on a nightly basis. Such a product tends to emerge from the sort of standardised performance in which the groove or swing expected from drummers is generated “under increasingly rigid constraints, and now viewed through the oscillographic prurience of the ever-dominant computer” (Monson 1996). Drummers are further constrained by the relationship between patterns, which have to be understood, recognised and appreciated before departing from them (Moore 2013). Furthermore, what counts as rhythmic co-ordination within an ensemble is defined and constrained by the generic and cultural norms of the individuals within it (Berger 2009).

A second issue addresses the element of surprise. Anecdotally, the process of selection from possible courses of action frequently results in surprise at the effect of that selection. Several scholars have taken the idea of the ‘unforeseen’ or the ‘surprising’ to be a foundational construct of creativity (Bruner 1962, Benson 2003). The ‘unforeseen’ is linked through its Latin etymology to the notion of improvisation, a key skill of the jazz performer as s/he deals literally with the unforeseen in real time. In his discussion of the necessary conditions for creativity, Bruner decided that “an act that produces effective surprise - this I shall take as the hallmark of a creative enterprise” (Bruner cited in Fillis and McAuley 2000:9). In a similar vein, McLean proposed that creativity be understood, implicitly or explicitly, as “the processual encompassment by culture of the contingent, the new, and the unforeseen” (McLean 2009:214). These understandings invoke Whitney Balliett’s astute title for his collection of articles on jazz as the *Sound of Surprise* (Balliett 1959), a genre in which good jazz musicians tend to surprise themselves. Other scholars, however, warned against mistaking the real thing for a ‘pseudocreativity’ derived, for instance, from ignorance or lack of discipline (Cattell & Butcher cited in Cropley and Cropley 2008:156), or a ‘quasicreativity’ (Heinelt cited in Cropley and Cropley 2008:156) which has many of the elements of genuine creativity (such as the high level of fantasy generated in daydreams) but only a tenuous connection with reality.

The idea of surprise as an indicator of creativity was further evident in the work of Margaret Boden. Her background in Artificial Intelligence led her to assert that for a computer programme to show exploratory (as opposed to combinational) creativity, it

must “inhabit, and explore, a conceptual space rich enough to yield indefinitely many surprises” (Boden 2004:163). Greatest creativity may lie with those whose imaginations inhabit such rich conceptual spaces; those who exhibit what Feist has termed ‘ideational fluency’ (Feist 2004:74). While surprise for practitioner or listener (or both) may or may not be an essential component of creative music performance, it arises so frequently in the discourse that it may usefully be considered an indicator of significant creative action.

### **2.3.3 Communication**

A third strand of thinking from within creativity theory and reflected in the DSCA framework suggests that the qualitatively different music process or product must be communicated to someone as an essential prerequisite to assessment (Dewey 1934, Csikszentmihalyi 1988, Small 1998, Miell *et al* 2005). Adopting the view that creativity is both ordinary and exceptional, Negus and Pickering suggested a requirement for “the capacity to reach others and achieve a resonance with their lives” (Negus and Pickering 2004:32); in other words, to effectively communicate experience. Borrowing from the aesthetic philosophy of John Dewey, they observed not only that our experience of the world is shaped and given significance by the act of creation, but also that the element of communication is an essential component of creativity (2004:22). Be it material or non-material, an artefact needs to be produced, revealed and communicated; it is the processes of expression and communication that give form, meaning and value to the characteristics of experience (2004:24).<sup>12</sup> From this it might be argued that the purpose of creation is to make sense of the creator’s world.

Clearly, communication and assessment have the same object; that which is to be communicated is also that which is to be assessed. Research with classical music performance has shown that the object of the exercise tends to be the communication of emotion to the non-performing listener (Juslin and Sloboda 2001, Juslin 2005, Lamont 2012). Bloom reported how, in the final stage of training, his small group of high-

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<sup>12</sup> Viewed through this lens, all effective creativity is ultimately collaborative creativity between, at a minimum, addresser and addressee. See also Peacock 2008:252-3 in this regard.

achieving classical pianists was taught how to develop a personal style of communicating emotion, the communication of which entitled the activity to be looked on as creative (Bloom cited in Weisberg 1999:235).

Anecdotal and experiential evidence suggest an alternative view from the real world of drummers. Rather than the communication of emotion, drummers tend to frame their communication in terms of an expression of significantly different experience to co-performing listeners. Everything the performer has done, lived, thought and performed up to and during the moment of performance constitutes the experience that is expressed (literally, pressed out) during the creative moment (Dewey 1934). It thus includes the years of experience that provoked the innumerable small selections from amongst possibilities and the incalculable micro-decisions and selections that led to (and to some extent became) the work. It is this element that the participants in this study were asked to identify in their selections of tracks embodying their own creative expression of experience and the element that they mostly pointed to; the ‘something else’ that adds value to the functional performance, the alchemical component to be communicated prior to creative assessment.

Thus while the exertions of Bloom’s piano students may be assigned creativity in the classical domain, they do not appear to constitute creative performance as the expert drummer might recognise it. This discrepancy may have less to do with the differing classical / popular understandings of communication than the straightforward unpitched / pitched dichotomy. Extant research primarily involves expert performers on pitched instruments (Juslin 2005). Findings from among both expert classical and expert popular musicians show the idea of ‘playing expressively’ as largely defined in terms of ‘communicating emotions’ and ‘playing with feeling’ (Lindström cited in Juslin 2009:378). While some headway has been made in the investigation of emotional expression within pitched-instrument classical music performance (Juslin and Lindström 2010), further research in the communication of emotion by performers on unpitched instruments would shed light on this under-researched area.

Playing music together tends to engender a mutual physiological response; “two hearts beating as one” (Neugeberger and Aldridge cited in Ansdell and Pavlicevic 2005:199),

with communication emerging as a “mutual coordination of intention and action within concrete events in real time” (Ansdell and Pavlicevic cited in Miell *et al* 2005:199). A high level of communication with other musicians is generally understood to be the *sine qua non* of expert music performance. Pinheiro found the creative process of jazz musicians in jam sessions to be ‘routed in’ and strongly influenced by, *inter alia*, communication between participants (Pinheiro 2010:3; see also Seddon 2004). However, participation in stadium-level performances of progressive rock provides some evidence to support the obverse idea that functional performance may occur quite successfully with minimal intra-performer communication (Bruford 2009).

#### **2.3.4 Assessment**

The final dimension of creative music performance reflected in the DSCA framework addresses assessment. Without assessment, the putatively creative work is, at this point in its embryonic existence, on life support. *It has yet to acquire significance*. It has yet to connect with Csikszentmihalyi’s field of gatekeepers, or Burnard’s ‘field of struggles’ (Burnard 2012:38) or any outer world beyond the immediately supportive world of the creator. These fields have the potential to assign meaning and value to the infant work which may then be selected back into the domain as creative. But it has yet to find the oxygen of approval which will allow it to stand on its own two feet long enough to be deemed creative. The performances of the expert practitioners in this study have long since and repeatedly been appraised by colleagues and significant others in the community of practice and found to have significance in the domain.

The author borrows from Hope Mason in privileging significance over novelty as the key quality of creative action, and restates the pivotal question; “Does it matter?” The important argument here is that it is the *attributed significance* of the selection that is foundational to the assessment of the creative outcome or artefact, material or immaterial. Hope Mason identified creativity as significant action; significance is produced by the articulation of certain ideas, beliefs and aspirations within a common network of assumptions and meanings (Hope Mason 2003:7). “New ideas can only become significant by engaging with that network in order to change it” (2003:225).



Thus while the drawings and paintings of a child may commonly be called ‘creative’, they are, rather, individual; insignificant to others except, perhaps, immediate family. Failing to engage with the network of meanings of a broader culture they lack significance, and thus cannot be ascribed creativity. Significance itself is fluid, contested and frequently disruptive, as when it “engages with or denies some existing significance in order to introduce its own” (2003:225) but ultimately is seen by some as foundational to culture. Cole invokes Max Weber’s powerful image of mankind as an animal “suspended in a web of significances he himself has spun” when he, Cole, declares: “I take culture to be those webs” (Weber cited in Cole 1996:122).

### ***Arbiters of significance***

The recognition of creativity in music presupposes listeners, some of whom may also be assessors. Systems theorists who see creativity as a judgement by others tend to posit a field of gatekeepers, interpreted as the social organisation of the domain, as the arbiters of significance. These gatekeepers assess and retain selected variants in the putative creative action. Their identity, however, remains unclear and may differ between domains.

A Csikszentmihalyian list of gatekeepers in the field of Western kit drumming would include other eminent practitioners, manufacturers and retail store owners, magazine editors, record company executives, teachers and music critics; in short, all those who wield power and influence. Glăveanu sought to broaden the social organisation of the domain by adding the perspective of ‘significant others’ introduced to or affected by the creation (different groups or communities) to that of the creators (informed by their ‘creative identity’) (Glăveanu 2010b:153-4). Adopting a more consensual approach to the problem, Amabile asserted that “a product or response is creative to the extent that *appropriate observers* independently agree it is creative” (Amabile cited in Sternberg 1999:45. Emphasis added).

Anecdotally, expert drummers tend to find such characterisations of the gatekeepers in their particular domain somewhat nebulous. The opinions of non-performing listeners tend to be regarded with suspicion or dismissed. Within a somewhat inward-looking

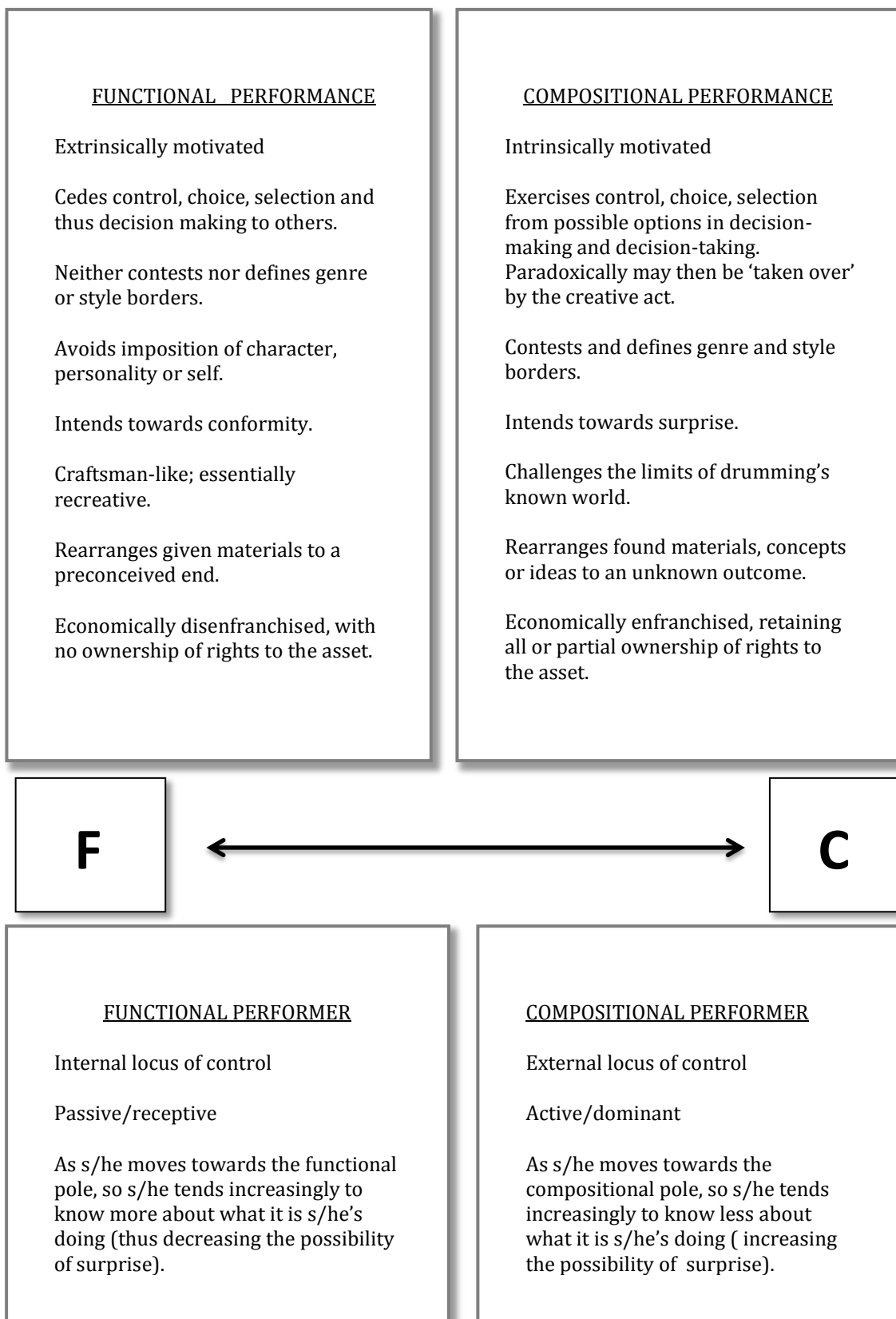
community, encircled and surrounded by ‘pitched’ practitioners with arguably a different quality of creative music experience, the wisest heads, the most appropriate observers, the most significant others, it is suggested, are other drummers. It is to other drummers that the question “Does it matter?” is addressed, and their answers are reflected in changed practice. Anecdotally, drummers’ assessments of other drummers’ creativity appear to alter practice incrementally and to substantial effect (Bruford 2009). The fact that assessment of innovation is usually made in retrospect, sometimes after many years, should not necessarily invest it with any greater virtue than ‘in the moment’ assessments made by musicians on the band stand, that day, that week, although it may act as a ‘double lock’ on quality. Neither is long term assessment necessarily any more stable than short term, as a critique of Csikszentmihalyi’s system model will shortly show (section 2.6).

In their discussion of the distinction between innovation and novelty in general creativity, Negus and Pickering’s acknowledged that “there is no single yardstick” for knowing “where variation ends and newness begins” (Negus and Pickering 2004:9). Such an approach appears to privilege innovation over variation. While accepting that “knowing what is significantly new may require guesswork as much as mature judgement” they declined to say whose guesswork and whose mature judgement counts (2004:9). In the sphere of music performance, however, it might be argued that all variation is in some way new, but not all is significant, and it is precisely the significant variation that begets creativity in the context of drummer performance.

Building on the observations, arguments and prior thinking examined above, it might now be possible to approach an operational definition of creative performance. In the context of Western kit drumming, *creative music performance resides in the ability to effect and communicate significant difference, such as to permit evaluation of the performer’s input*. If there is to be an ‘everyday life creativity’ (Glăveanu 2012) to be had at the drum kit, it may well be novel, useful and appropriate, but its difference should qualify as significant to appropriate observers.

## **2.4 The functional/compositional continuum (FCC)**

If all art involves selection, it is difficult to attribute creativity to any musician if s/he doesn't have a measure of control over what s/he plays and how s/he plays it, or if, to use Lock's word, s/he can't "interfere" (Lock 2011:124). A continuum of control may be helpful here. First, two artificial constructs of 'functional' and 'compositional' performance are introduced to distinguish between two modes of performance, the principal attributes of which are summarised in Figure 2.2. These constructs are seen as embodied in the distinction between those who generally do, and those who generally do not, determine what they play and how they play it. Second, individual practitioners are theorised as being located along the 'functional / compositional continuum' (the FCC) of control. At the functional extreme are those who typically play as directed by others with strictly governed license for interpretation; at the opposite extreme, practitioners determine and perform individual self-created parts. These constructs of functional and compositional drummer-practice are viewed throughout the discussion as focal points on a continuum, rather than as actualities.



**Figure 2.2** The Functional / Compositional Continuum (FCC)

At the left hand [F] functional extreme of the FCC are those who play only as directed by others. At the opposite [C] compositional pole, practitioners are theorised as determining and performing individual self-created parts, composed long before, just before, or in the moment of performance (Benson 2003). The part may exist on paper, in memory, or in the subconscious. It may be the result of prior consensual deliberation with colleagues, or it may be impossible to predetermine because it can only be determined and framed in the moment by other musical events. The continuum depicts how drummers exert variable levels of control and choice over central aspects of their music performance, contingent upon the context (or in the parlance, ‘the situation’). These central aspects include not only the four ‘levers of control’, the foundation blocks of a drummer’s expressive interpretation (see section 2.5) but also the social, psychological and cultural parameters within which the performance takes place.

The continuum is characterised as relatively structured at the functional pole, and relatively unstructured at the compositional pole. Moving from the former to the latter generally involves “a shift from exercising deliberative rationality [...] to embodied involvement in performance where we move on the turning wing with what is being done”; in other words, a gradual surrendering of control, a shift from learning how to act to knowing how to respond (Negus and Pickering 2004). Elements of functional and compositional practice may both exist sequentially within the one performance. The absolute poles of the continuum tend to be inhabited only by those unable, unwilling, or unmotivated to adopt broader positions.<sup>13</sup> In practice, most drummers tend to occupy a middle ground between the extremes, working from a variety of ‘scripts’ (Tagg 2013) of varying degrees of precision provided by others or self-generated.

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<sup>13</sup> Examples of extreme compositional practice might be that of the free-jazz practitioners of the late 1960s (for example, Milford Graves, or Sonny Murray) and the punk drummers of the 1980s; at the extreme functional end might lie the practice of tribute band, or that of circus or west-end show drummers. In these performance contexts, the self-identification is so pronounced that the occupants of either extreme remain unmotivated to more flexible practice.

### 2.4.1 Functional practice and the functional practitioner

Functional practice seeks to push no boundaries in the recording studio or on stage, to question no understandings, nor challenge any assumptions. It neither contests nor defines the stylistic- or genre-boundaries within which the drummer performs. Perhaps more accurately characterised as an attitudinal approach, functional drumming actively avoids the imposition of personality or individual character upon the music. Such practice is present in, quintessentially, a tribute band, for which the job specification is precisely circumscribed; namely, to reproduce exactly the sound, style,<sup>14</sup> performance (and sometimes appearance) of the original drummer. Functional practice supplies the expected and cedes control of musical materials and outcomes to others. Such ceding of control typically includes that of any economic ownership or share in the asset. Functional practice is disengaged, or disengages, from that part of the intellectual creation of the musical artefact which falls under copyright. Seeking no share in the principal business entity or group which creates the primary money-generating artefact, the functional performer generally plays no part as a stakeholder in the monetising process.<sup>15</sup>

As an accompanist to musical theatre, circus performer, night club artist or stadium rocker, the functional drummer's actions are typically determined by the appropriate idiomatic and stylistic conventions as translated through written text, verbal instruction or prior knowledge of appropriateness; the latter usually derived from the practitioner's previous experience and adhering closely to the basic stylistic characteristics of the genre. Indeed, the style of the functional drummer is not so much the avoidance of style, but rather the adoption of an appropriate style, that "clustering of traits which make each work a token ('piece') of and in a type ('opus')" (Keil and Feld 1994:147). The employer expects that the employee's performance will use sufficient appropriate musical gestures

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<sup>14</sup> For Moore, the term 'style' refers to "an individual manner of articulation of musical gestures", an operational definition of utility here (Moore 2013:120).

<sup>15</sup> Milton Mermikides identifies an 'asymmetrical currency of contribution' in respect of the default economic status of the drummer's contribution. Unlike the contribution of those who provide the melody, lyrics, production, or possibly arrange, publish, manufacture or distribute the product, the drummer's contribution has no necessary economic value (personal correspondence: 08.10.13).

to fulfil the necessary criteria for genre specificity. Such practice may be adopted by the skilled, chameleon-like studio drummer, who can perform efficiently within disparate styles without attracting, or otherwise diverting, attention from the ‘true owner’. His or her occupational understanding may be paralleled with that of the rank-and-file orchestral musician, (albeit without the flexibilities inherent within the various ‘popular’ idioms), whose output is predominantly governed by the written text and the conductor.

Functional practice assumes no responsibility for musical outcomes beyond the provision of a satisfactory performance, defined as the correct execution of the text in a manner which will as closely as possible satisfy the interpretive demands of employer, musical director or producer. In practice many drummers tend to gravitate to the functional paradigm (thereby eschewing much consideration of options). Performance tends to lie within the appropriate stylistic constraints that provide a rhythmic shorthand, only certain approaches being permissible if the drumming wishes to remain within that style.<sup>16</sup> Empirical and anecdotal evidence suggests that much of what drummers do could be construed as being re-creative rather than creative. Drummers are typically seen as reconstituting the ideas of others, from the written page (show, circus, theatrical drummers) or as interpolated from verbal descriptions or demonstration recordings. This is the sense in which, as a community, they are “not normally associated with creativity” (Peacock 2014: personal communication).

Degrees of direction from others may vary considerably along the continuum and within any single text or performance, as will required compliance to, interpretation of, and permissible variation from that direction. All will have implications for notions of creativity. In so far as it is determined by another, functional performance provides less scope for creative action than its compositional counterpart. The participants in this study may perform skilfully under the direction of others in the highly notated world of movie scores, studio dates and big bands, but it is to their work as *composers of drum music* that

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<sup>16</sup> Available options within a given style tend to be few; surprisingly clearly defined, rigidly adhered to and fiercely defended boundaries circumscribed by notions of authenticity (Gridley 1983). “If I do this, I am a jazz drummer”. “All hip-hop players do that”. “A gospel drummer would never do that, so he can’t be a gospel drummer”.

it is necessary to turn for the clearest evidence of the expressive depth of their creative choices.

#### **2.4.2 Compositional practice and the compositional practitioner**

If the core characteristics of functional practice are disengagement and disempowerment, the opposite is true of the localised imagining of ‘compositional’<sup>17</sup> practice. In contrast to the former, the latter fully engages with chosen music materials over which partial or complete control is exercised, subject perhaps to negotiation with others. Compositional practice seeks to push boundaries, question understandings, challenge assumptions, contest and define style and elicit reaction through the imposition upon the music of a personalised interpretation. It exhibits a willingness to break with ‘genre codes’ (Burnard 2012) and is subject to minimal editorial control. It offers greater latitude than its functional counterpart to juggle aesthetic and discriminative choice in a number of different areas simultaneously; compositionally (the actual notes played), temporally (when each note is to be played), metrically (where emphasis and accent is laid), timbrally (where upon which instrument and with what implement each note is played) and dynamically (what the relative amplitude of each note is to be).

These elements are variously combined to produce a more or less expressive performance, be it in studio or on stage. This may or may not have originated from, or come to be captured after the event within, notated music. Compositional practice is typically adopted within improvising jazz,<sup>18</sup> or some marginal forms of rock such as math-metal, punk, or progressive rock.<sup>19</sup> The occupational understanding here is more in keeping with that of the interpretive orchestral soloist, accepting of responsibility, identified and identifiable, exercising control through decision-making, transforming the materials in his or her own image. The orchestral percussion soloist Evelyn Glennie

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<sup>17</sup> The term is deliberately used to invoke western art-music notions of choice of materials and control over their production in performance.

<sup>18</sup> For excellent profiles on cutting edge compositional rhythmic practitioners in improvised percussion music, see Bettine & Taylor 2001.

<sup>19</sup> For further discussion on ‘compositional practice’ within progressive rock, see Macan 1997. Among cross-genre compositional practitioners might be counted Stewart Copeland, Joe Morello, Gavin Harrison, David Garibaldi and Sonny Murray and pushers of technical boundaries such as Thomas Lang, Virgil Donati and some of the research participants.



neatly summarises both her job and her locus of creativity. Her assertion that “What I have to do as a musician is do everything that’s not in the music” (by which is meant the written text) might serve equally for the jazz drummer, although their rock colleagues are seldom afforded such latitude (Glennie 2003).

Contrary to Boulez’ assertions (p.25 n.4), the compositional drummer, it is argued here, does indeed possess invention in the definition and realisation of her or his own performance. In the sense in which Western art-music composition or “humanly organised sound” (Blacking cited in Impett 2009:403) became an autobiographical statement inseparable from the identity of the composer (Impett 2009:403), the composing drummer seeks identity through the adoption of a similar ‘compositional’ approach. Originating from a self-governed text that resides in print, memory, the subconscious, or any combination thereof, the compositional performer may be afforded broader aesthetic horizons than that of her or his functional colleague; s/he may challenge, provoke, or unsettle either (or both) colleague and listener. Like many artists, the composing drummer tends to seek change in herself or himself, change in her or his co-performers and perhaps in the audience, but above all, in the music.

Individual parts tend to be devised either in real time as an improvising jazz musician, or (in the case of those forms of fringe rock in which the composing drummer is welcome) typically in advance of the performance, in the rehearsal room. What s/he chooses to play may have origins in the styles and vernaculars which s/he co-opts, mashes, bends and blends, but just as likely in disciplines and domains outside those of music and drums. This accords with the creativity thinkers such as Boden for whom combinational forms of creativity require rich stores of knowledge and experience outside the domain, and the ability to form links between them (Boden 2004). Composing drummers Terry Bozzio and Gavin Harrison have both spoken to the author about juxtaposing ideas from art and design as creative wellsprings.

Such practitioners tend to operate at the limit of drumming’s ‘known world’, and, as explorers, may strain to see what is over the horizon. How drums are played today is of interest, but of greater interest is how they may be played tomorrow. If functional practice is characterised by the approach of the craftsman, arranging given materials to a

known end, then compositional practice requires the attitude of the artist, re-arranging her or his own found materials to a yet-to-be-determined end. In so far as the compositional efforts of the drummer are realised within the asset-sharing framework of, for example, a royalty-sharing originals group, the compositional drummer is characterised here as economically enfranchised, retaining partial ownership of rights.<sup>20</sup> In so far as s/he is obliged to bring his or her own works to fruition under his or her own auspices, the drummer may retain full rights to the musical ‘property’, as all participants in this study except one have done on multiple occasions.

Whereas functional practice seeks to establish stylistic *competence*, compositional practice seeks to establish stylistic *individuation*, commonly manifested in choices surrounding the embodied constructs of ‘touch’ and ‘feel’. Within the drum community, both constructs are commonly applied to the expressive aspects of individual performance and tend to be interpreted as indicators of creativity. A drummer’s ‘touch’ may be understood as the aggregate of choice-selection in the timbral and dynamical aspects of how the instrument is to be played; broadly, which sounds to combine at what dynamics relative to each other and the musical context. His or her ‘feel’ addresses the metrical and temporal, and may be understood as an aggregate of decisions concerning emphasis, timing and placement of the note (Danielsen 2010). Neither concept is clearly bordered and understandings are subject to overlap; both, in combination, circumscribe and delimit a practitioner’s individuated approach to style, which in turn may be interpreted as her or his ‘voice’.

The functional practitioner may adopt multiple touches and feels, and thus styles, as the musical context may demand (be it a short phrase or passage of music, whole songs or compositions or collections thereof, or the demands and requirements of a particular producer or leader). Key skills here include the speed and flexibility to summon and reproduce the appropriate style at a moment’s notice from a mental library of possibilities. In pursuit of the chameleon-like quality peculiar to operations of the functional practitioner, his or her style is, ultimately, no style. Conversely, the compositional practitioner tends to seek differentiation through the development of a

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<sup>20</sup> For further discussion on monetising and rights ownership in popular music, see Frith 2012.

singular, identifiable musical voice, recognizable in multiple settings, and far from which s/he is unwilling, incapable or unlikely to depart.

### **2.4.3 Implications for creativity**

To the extent to which difference, selection, communication and significance are present, creativity may be said to be located at any point on the continuum, subject to the constraints of genre. It is far from axiomatic that the rhythms of rock, pop, rap, hip-hop and their multiple sub-genres, for example, are propelled primarily by functional drummers (in so far as they are propelled by human agency at all) and those of jazz by composing drummers. ‘Simple and repetitive’ (functional) rock drumming may be far from simple or repetitive. The tight constraints of tempo, meter and dynamics characteristic of functional practice tend to focus thinking on the surface of the beat, or around the micro-level of its timbral and rhythmic delivery. Here, innovation in sound and texture are prized. A minority in extreme forms of experimental rock, such as progressive rock or math-metal, may well interpret compositional practice as key to their creativity.

On the other hand, a large group of drummers in, for example, the oxymoronic but radio-friendly genre of ‘smooth jazz’, dependent as it is on delivery of uninterrupted backbeats, may see themselves as entirely functional practitioners. A compositional practitioner would find it difficult to avoid creativity altogether in a sphere in which the exercise of discriminative and aesthetic choice in the origination of the performed part is a necessity. One intention of the functional practitioner might be to do things because other drummers do them (or do the same things better); one intention of the compositional practitioner might be to do things because other drummers do not do them (or to do them differently). The latter tends to generate that which lasts, and that which haunts, but both may embody degrees of creativity.

With these considerations in mind, three characteristics of performance may tentatively be suggested when theorised as a continuum of control. First, imitation, variation, counterstatement, extension or transformation will necessarily be present in varying degrees in creative drum performance, be it functional or compositional. Second, there

exist greater opportunities for creative expression at the compositional rather than the functional pole of the continuum. Third, rock drum practice tends to a bias towards functionality, and jazz to a bias towards compositionality. More accurately, genres have asymmetrical biases along the continuum.<sup>21</sup> With these attributes identified, a stable framework of practice is in place from which to examine how the four principal levers of control are manipulated in the two modes of functional and compositional performance.

## **2.5 Four levers of control**

In practice, it is through the exercise of choice and skill over when and what to play, and the manner in which to play it, that the individual drummer exerts expressive control as a starting point for creative practice. The extent to which s/he does so is the extent to which the practice may be characterised as ‘compositional’ within the terms of the FCC. As s/he is afforded greater control of the levers of expressive performance - tempo, meter, dynamics and timbre - s/he appears to exhibit a rising level of aesthetic awareness and increasing proximity to creativity (Monson 1996, Berliner 1994, Berger 1999). While the several points of intersection and interrelation of pulse and metre (Pieslak 2007, Attas 2011a), metric dissonance (Butterfield 2010, Biamonte 2014), swing (Danielsen 2010, Mermikides 2010), beat, tempo and groove (Doffman 2008, Fraisse 1982) have attracted much analytical attention on the understanding that these are musical notions that might stand still long enough to permit useful analysis, the focus in this section is rather on how drummers actually define, constitute, hear and ascribe meaning to them.

### **2.5.1 The temporal**

The literature suggested that drummers’ primary function was construed, from within practice and without, as keeping time. The revered community ‘elder’ most frequently named by participants, Elvin Jones, allegedly said that “the rôle of the drummer is primarily to keep time” (Wilmer cited in Smith 2013:88). At the highly constrained, somewhat homogenised end of the FCC, proficiency was evidenced by the ability to keep a steady beat with minimal deviation and maximal consistency within tight stylistic

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<sup>21</sup> Personal correspondence with Milton Mermikides: 23.09.2014

boundaries (Attas 2011a, Tagg 2013, Moore 2013). Summarising the emotional effects of discrete musical factors, Gabrielsson considered tempo to be the most decisive (Gabrielsson 2009:145). In short, keeping time was seen as important (Hambuch in Palmer 1997:117).

There are, however, many ways way in which time may be kept and many people who may keep it. Personalised notions of tempo have long spoken to the Western drummer's sense of self-identity (Smith 2013), and continue to form one of the loci of creativity in drummer performance. Punk drummers like Rat Scabies and jazz drummers like Tony Williams, for example, tended to increase the tempo, as did Buddy Rich.<sup>22</sup> Blair Sinta spoke about his studio work in terms of “restraint and holding back as long as possible without having [the music] lack dynamics or energy”, a difficult feat of balance over ‘negotiated’ time<sup>23</sup> (Sinta 2012:72). Gareth Smith, a practitioner himself, spoke eloquently of the drummer being expected to both lead and follow, and to drive whilst accompanying (Smith 2013). The author's pre-computer experiences in progressive rock called for an ‘orchestral’ approach to time, whereby the drummer saw himself or herself as the conductor of the ensemble, at liberty to approach the tempo with the fluidity s/he thought appropriate (Bruford 2009).<sup>24</sup> The rather sudden and arbitrary removal of governance of tempo since the mid-1970s may have administered a seismic shock to the body percussive, lowering its status and questioning its purpose, with the important ramifications outlined in section 4.4.4.

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<sup>22</sup> Trumpeter Bobby Shew described Rich's drumming in these terms: “He had a habit of rushing the beat, and he'd change the tempo” (Myers 2010).

<sup>23</sup> This term indicates any performance made without recourse to the clock-time generated from a computer, or any otherwise automated click track. The tempo is ‘negotiated’ live between the performers with important implications for swing, groove, and placement of the beat.

<sup>24</sup> Jazz drummer Warren ‘Baby’ Dodds, an icon of the 1930s swing era, saw the drummer as “the conductor in the band” (Wilmer 1977:155 in Smith 2013:89).

### *Consistency and the expression of identity*

Any inter-agentive rhythmic creativity between music technology and human performance lies in the relationship between the click<sup>25</sup> and the human. Much discussed within practice, this has tended to be analysed in the literature from the perspective of measurable deviance between one and the other, and implications any such deviance might have for swing or groove (Mermikides 2010). Only recently has this relationship been addressed from the perspective of the psychology of performance and the real or imagined impact on creativity (Danielsen 2010).

The immediate beneficiary of the arrival of the automated click track in the mid-1970s was the producer, now afforded a greater ease of tape-editing in the surety that edited sections would at least be consistently in time (Zagorski-Thomas 2010).<sup>26</sup> One immediate consequence was to discourage the personalised attitudes to tempo already illustrated. Consistent tempo was now something scientifically measurable, no longer under the subjective control of the drummer or open to discussion. The use of click tracks became established as normal practice in the recording of commercial genres such as rock, pop, film, TV and advertising music. The author documented the ascending power of the record-producer/technologist over the practitioner/drummer in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in terms of the (respectively) expanding and contracting space afforded to each in the recording studio (Bruford 2009:308).

Despite anecdotal evidence of recent accommodations between practitioner and technology, a tension appears to remain between conflicting understandings of consistency and its relationship to the individual expression of musical identity.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> References to the 'click' or 'click track' throughout this submission identify any type of automated metronome, typically played to the drummer through headphones and designed to keep him or her in time.

<sup>26</sup> For further examples of the convenience to the producer or recording engineer of having a consistent tempo, see Zagorski-Thomas 2010:206.

<sup>27</sup> Approaching this topic from his background in record production, Zagorski-Thomas uses the word 'consistency' frequently. Representing the dominant discourse, he asserts that dynamic and timbral consistency are necessary to maintain the intensity of emotion and excitement associated with rock music, and that "dynamic compression is the principal technique used in record production" to achieve it (2010:204).

Drummers live in an awkward world between what the drum culture expects of them, what the public expects, and what they themselves expect (Danielsen 2010). On the one hand, the producer requires and expects performance consistency (a notion that is anecdotally interpreted by practitioners as limiting expressive possibilities) to facilitate cutting, pasting, looping, editing and beat-matching, and to fulfil a real or imagined commercial imperative (Zagorski-Thomas 2010). On the other, the practitioner may expect, through control and choice of musical materials, to use his or her own voice to express his or her self-identity (Smith 2013; MacDonald *et al* 2009). The jazz musician in particular spends much time developing a voice which eventually may, with its own ‘vocabulary’ (taken here to mean the stock of ‘licks’, phrases, timbral and sonic preferences, and habitual tendencies to approach the music in a personalised, idiosyncratic manner), speak clearly and expressively. For him or her, ‘consistency’ may be interpreted as the consistent use of the personalised language.

The tension tends to be resolved in practice through the sublimation of self-identity in the interest of successful performance. Functional practice expects such sublimation on demand; compositional practice requires the projection of practitioner identity as a component of the playable performance being assessed.<sup>28</sup> The extent to which (and the ease with which) the drummer is able to oscillate between sublimation and projection of an expressive identity is mirrored in the ongoing ‘identity work’ of advanced classical piano students in their struggle to bring forward, on the one hand, personally meaningful, creative interpretations, and on the other, interpretations deemed acceptable within the canon (Wirtanen and Littleton 2004).<sup>29</sup>

Identity may further be expressed in the ‘playing out of time with precision’. The playing or singing in tune, the adhering to a pitch standard in performance, is generally considered to be a normative standard of practice in Western music. Playing out of tune

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<sup>28</sup> For a longer engagement with musical identity, see MacDonald *et al* 2009 and, specifically with regard to drummers, Smith 2013.

<sup>29</sup> Wirtanen and Littleton (2004) interpret musical identities as plural, relational, ongoing and dynamic. This approach finds convergence with the author’s experiential evidence of his inability to find a single musical ‘home’ (identity) and thus creation of several homes (identities) along the highway between sublimation and projection in functional and compositional practice (Bruford 2009).

‘with precision’, however, has been conceptualised as a distinguishing mark of musicianship (Merker 2006:37n1). This exerting of tension and release between the ‘being-out of’ and the ‘being-in’ is paralleled in the rhythmic sphere in the playing out of time with precision.<sup>30</sup> Within the constraint of stylistic convention, the drummer becomes subtly adept at playing with time; that is, playing behind and ahead of the beat to create and release tension. The ability to play ahead of, with, or behind the computer’s clock-time to engender feel and groove has become a highly sort-after skill among exemplary practitioners such as Steve Gadd, Pat Mastelotto or the late Jeff Porcaro, key exponents of the second of the core areas of drummer expression to which the discussion turns; the groove.

### **2.5.2 The metrical**

Philip Tagg’s adroit characterisation of the groove as consisting of “one or more rhythm patterns, lasting, as single units, no longer than the extended present [...], but those patterns have to be repeated several times before they constitute grooves” (Tagg 2013:296) serves here as a working definition of the phenomenon. The groove has been conceptualised in several different ways within the literature: as external objects and embodied processes (Attas 2011a), as emerging from forms of sharedness and entrainment (Doffman 2008), as shared knowledge (Zbikowski 2009), as an engagement of experiences (Berger 2009), as an expression of empathetic creativity through attunement (Seddon 2004), in terms of cellular groove patterns (Hawkins 2003:90) and as, in Amiri Bakara’s beautifully concise phrase, ‘the changing same’ (Bakara 2010). The discussion would be detained unnecessarily were it to engage individually with each of these interesting approaches; rather, it seeks to pull together some dimensions of them in order to refocus the groove within a humanist/technological binary as the most useful way to think about the topic in the context of the discussion as currently framed.

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<sup>30</sup> Mermikides’ (2010:134) analysis of time-feel negotiation in a Michael Jackson rehearsal offers an excellent ‘real world’ example of the level of precision involved when this is enacted in performance.



### *A humanist perspective*

One line of thinking interpreted the groove (and grooving) as essential, expressive components of popular music, characterised by human agency (Berliner 1994, Monson 1996, Doffman 2008). From this viewpoint, the groove was something that has to be ‘found’ before it can be enacted between people (Berliner 1994). It was understood to be mutually constituted through human interaction arising from the timing behaviours of the players (Doffman 2008), and to be denoting “something negotiated between musicians that is larger than themselves” (Monson 1996:69). Charles Keil’s (1987) often cited theory of ‘participatory discrepancies’ has done much to evaluate the importance of these small and continuous negotiations; they not only help avoid the dehumanising feel of absolute metronomic co-ordination but permit the participatory interaction between people that is at the essence of groove (Berger 2009:81, Doffman 2008). Such views coalesce within a humanist perspective which posits groove as a framework for drummer creativity.

Approaching from a phenomenological perspective, Harris Berger saw groove as an “engagement of experiences”. For him, “the sense of what has been called groove in music (that the rhythm of a particular piece is stiff or flowing, mechanical, graceful, danceable or static) isn’t a product of the structure of a musical text and performance but of the engagement among the experiences of the musicians and listeners that the performance mediates” (Berger 2009: xiii). The author’s experiential evidence suggested that when three thousand seated people in a theatre stand as one to applaud a critical combination of tempo, key, lighting changes and a new groove,<sup>31</sup> this critical audience feedback confirmed that the groove was good, and the band grooved even harder. Some see this and similar situation-specific interpretive behaviours on behalf of the audience as necessary to the constitution of musical creativity (Burnard 2012).

The ‘polyphonic strands’ that comprise the groove as constituted and manipulated by several performers in a group (Attas 2011a) are, in solo drummer performance, collapsed into the four-limb co-ordinated independence of the single practitioner, as in, for

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<sup>31</sup>As observed by the author at a Tower of Power concert, Long Island, New York 1973.

example, the work of Max Roach. Street drummer and jazz soloist alike may perform alone, but never *in vacuo*. In so far as their efforts, shaped by the cultural psychology, are distributed and communicated within the community of practice, meaning may be constructed, significance assessed and creativity attributed.

### ***A technological perspective***

An oppositional ‘technological’ paradigm of groove asserted that no such human agency is necessary to its constituency. The proponents of electronic dance music or music for gaming, for example, asserted that machines can groove effectively on their own (Butler 2006, Katz 2012, Schloss 2004). In light of the digital age redefinitions which see the computer as a musical instrument and the inputting of data as performance (Burnard 2012), both musico-humanist and musico-technological creators may be said to function as composers, performers, and producers in collaborative acts of grooving (collaborative by nature of the musical environment in which both are agents).

The groove that both powers the humanist artefact and gives it meaning is *intra-performer* in nature, generated in real time in a collaborative act with, typically, an audience present. The technologist’s groove tends to be embodied in audience co-construction of a groove already part-composed in non-linear virtual time away from public scrutiny and with no, or minimal, intra-performer dimension (Danielsen 2010). The central commonality between both humanist and technological perspectives is that groove is something constructed with, or in the presence of, others. Difference lies only in interpretation of ‘others’; the former sees the groove as co-constructed between performers, or performers and listener/audience, while the latter understands the groove as a co-creative experience between DJ/producer and crowd (Burnard 2012).

Frederickson has argued that ever since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century introduction of the metronome, the practitioner’s rôle has been on a slow shift from one of interpreter to “reproducer of an ideal with exact specifications” (Frederickson 1989:212), from the ‘being human’ to the ‘being mechanical’. It is worth noting the ontological tension here: it is impossible for a human to be mechanical. It might be argued that the hardest thing to do, should the practitioner wish to do it, is to be mechanical in drumming. The very

absurdity of such an enterprise is matched only by the tenacity with which it is pursued, most notably in the twilight world of the tribute band. It remains a project doomed to failure because the individual persists in thinking and imagining in his or her own way:

He cannot give back unaltered what he gets, as the parrot does. He is not a repeating machine. His mental creations are much more vital and transforming. Try as he will he cannot exactly reproduce; and when he comes near to it his self-love protests and claims its right to do its own thinking (Baldwin cited in Glăveanu 2012:14).

### **2.5.3 The dynamical**

Recent research tends to support authorial and anecdotal evidence that popular music is performed loud and getting louder<sup>32</sup> and is becoming more repetitive (Lamere 2009, Sherwin 2007, Ni *et al* 2011). This dynamic constraint would be problematic for any music practitioner, but particularly so for the drummer. The effective absence of a requirement for dynamic control in much of modern popular music leaves the functional drummer tightly constrained in respect of creative expression. Dynamic compression on both the recording itself and the broadcast output of F.M. commercial radio may be deemed necessary in the attraction and retention of a listening audience (Zagorski-Thomas 2010), but tends to render performer expression through dynamic control largely redundant. Such minor dynamics as may remain in the original recording tend to be ‘smoothed out’ on broadcast.

Moreover, the ‘loud and getting louder’ paradigm impinges on what is physically playable on a drum kit and for how long it is playable. If carpal tunnel syndrome, hearing loss, tinnitus and blistered hands are the physical manifestations of the paradigm, the musical consequences for the art of the drummer are equally evident in the abandonment of finesse, restraint, seduction, metrical ambiguity and timbral control - in short, many of the aspects of drumming that embody its musicality. It is a commonplace that all percussion instruments have a maximum volume at which they sound well, after which, if struck harder, the timbral quality deteriorates and either they or the striker simply

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<sup>32</sup> The organization *Turn Me Up!* is a non-profit music industry organization working with a group of artists and recording professionals devoted to bringing dynamic range back to popular music. See Lamere 2009.

break. Optimum maximal volume is reached quite quickly. The Herculean quantities of performance effort evident on the arena circuit are thus sonically unnecessary, serving more theatrical than musical ends.

#### **2.5.4 The timbral**

Manipulation of three of the four levers of control, then, appears circumscribed by some combination of the engagement with music technology, the requirements of performance consistency and the flattening of dynamics. The timbral dimension, however, fares better in two respects. First, multiple timbral options and variables are available to the drummer in matters of strikers (hands, sticks, mallets, reed-like Blasticks, brushes and shakers of all description, held butt-end or orthodox, matched or unmatched) and instruments struck (choice of drum heads, shells, dampening), all attenuated by the immediate audio environment (room reverberation, choice of mics and their placement) and the whole subject to the whim of sonic fashion. Experimenting with boundaries of timbral colour established by guardians of the canon, within and without the community, may attract approbation in the musical arts similar to that in the visual arts. The author's efforts to extend the sonic possibilities of the drum kit by developing a hybrid-electro acoustic set in the mid-1990s led to a somewhat chequered intercourse with both technology and the commentariat (Dean 2012, Bruford 2009).

Second, it is worth briefly considering the timbral implications of the drummer's 'chords', evidenced particularly in the work of Terry Bozzio and Max Roach (Wilson 2003). Assuming a four limbed-drummer is playing a standard seven-piece drum set of bass drum, snare drum, hi-hat, high tom, low tom, ride and crash cymbals, s/he may strike any combination of seven instruments with any combination of up to four limbs. Conceptualising each of these combinations in terms of unpitched 'chords', they may be likened to the sixty-chord family of the jazz pianist, comprising twelve each of the major, minor, augmented, diminished, and half-diminished chord types. The timbral implications of a drummer striking a chord of her or his three highest-pitched instruments (all metallophones: hi-hat, crash and ride cymbals) are quite different from those arising when s/he plays her or his three lowest-pitched instruments (all membranophones: bass drum, low tom, and high tom).

The *sforzando* attack of the bass drum and crash cymbal in unison, a direct import from the symphony orchestra, is now so ingrained in practice that many drummers avoid using a crash cymbal without a bass drum in support. While providing a good example of the homogenisation of performance practice, this two note chord has become so common that the seeker after a different musical identity may wish to avoid it altogether. The drummer's chord family comes to life with a) the timbre (tone colour) occasioned by the position of the strike; b) its volume (amplitude) caused by the velocity of the strike; c) its placement in the measure; d) its placement relative to the preceding and following 'chords' or blocks of sound, and e) the implements with which it is struck. Within that schemata the possible variables affecting timbre, it may be argued, are infinitely gradable.

## **2.6 The gold standard: a systems model case study**

One central concern of all creativity studies is that of attribution. It is crucial to find the point at which a unique act or action assumes significance in the broader domain, and thus becomes eligible for the ascription of creative value. In theoretical paradigms which posit a creative feedback loop within a systems model comprising field, domain, and individual creator (Gruber 1989, Csikszentmihalyi 1988, Glăveanu 2010b) the cultural variation in the cultural process or product is first assessed by intermediaries previously hypothesised, in this context, as other drummers. If found to possess a satisfactory combination of originality, effectiveness and significance, the work is absorbed into the drum culture. Interestingly, success and failure can be equally valuable in an assessment of creativity, and there is nothing in systems models *per se* that insists that the creative act requires a successful outcome, merely a valuable one (Weisberg 1993).

Jazz drummers are generally known and identified by their 'swing'; their unique touch on the commonly played ride cymbal beat. This cultural artefact is both measurable and understandable (Mermikides 2010). Tony Williams' 'feel', for example, is qualitatively

and quantitatively different from that of Elvin Jones.<sup>33</sup> All top players have by definition a unique version of that particular artefact, although not necessarily recognisably and significantly so. The systems model requires that for creativity to be enacted in this example, the musician's 'feel' must be recognised by the field and selected back into the domain, as 'Tony's swing' or 'Elvin's thing'. Not until or unless that happens can high level, Big-C, domain-changing creativity be said to have been enacted, as may be demonstrated by the following case study.

### ***Max Roach***

Max Roach (1924-2007) has come to embody everything reasonably considered to be creative on the drum kit. In the short period from approximately 1944 to 1953 he redefined the rôle of the drummer in several areas, opening up new vistas for subsequent practitioners. He is acknowledged as the founder of a modern style of jazz drumming that became standard procedure for players in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. His unaccompanied drum pieces are conventionally regarded as a gold-standard of creative practice (Gitler 1985, Wilson 2003, Keepnews 2007, Vernick 2010a & 2010b). Since Roach spent much of his career breaking musical barriers and defying listeners' expectations (Keepnews 2007) it might be fruitful to outline the nature of the domain he inherited and the variations he brought to it.

Jazz drumming underwent a particularly fertile period in New York City in the post-2<sup>nd</sup> World War period. The US Federal Government taxed any venue that was offering singing and dancing, so instrumentalists were preferred to singers when it came to hiring (Sippel 1944). In front of a seated audience, the musicians were able to fashion a tougher, less inclusive music, designed in part with eyes on an African-American ideal of high art, (Berger 1999:169) and in part to exclude other players in displays of technical bravado known as 'cutting competitions'.

Roach's first variation was occasioned by both a problem and its solution. The problem was unsustainable tempi (Gitler 1985, Keepnews 2007, Vernick 2010a & 2010b). Until

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<sup>33</sup> For a thorough examination of latency in the swing feel in jazz, see Mermikides 2010.

Roach's arrival, the bass drum had conventionally been played four beats to the bar in 4/4 time, generally without accent, its primary function being to provide a steady pulse for dancing. But marking out the steady four beats to the bar at tempi around 300 beats per minute (bpm) for long periods rapidly became unmusical, unfeasible and, in the absence of dancing, unnecessary. The solution was to assign the time-keeping to the right hand on a 'ride' cymbal; allowing a wholesale re-interpretation of the bass drum function in a process which became known as 'dropping bombs'.

Roach's choice of rhythmic placement echoed, underlined or displaced melodic motifs that lay implicit within the composition or any given solo. With the rhythmic continuum now taken care of, his left hand on the snare drum and right foot on the bass drum were free to prod, cajole, comment and support in an endless conversation with and between each other and the top line melodic information. In discussion of Roach's work, the word 'conversation' is in frequent use, specifically to describe the interaction between his limbs, and more generally to describe jazz musicians' interaction within the ensemble (Monson 1996, Berliner 1994). Indeed, his own composition *Drum Conversation* is a cornerstone track on one of the most celebrated bebop albums of all time, *Jazz at Massey Hall* by Charlie Parker's Quintet (1953).

This first variation - removing the rhythmic continuum from bass drum to ride cymbal - appears to have prepared the ground quickly for a second, more conceptual innovation. Almost simultaneously, Roach underwent a subtle shift in perspective which went on to inform the essence of his playing, most notably in his ability as a drum soloist. Crucially, he now came to see the drum kit as one instrument rather than a set of several. The blocks, bells, and whistles of the 'traps' set of the vaudeville and music hall era were performed upon by players with the approach of the symphonic percussionist with a technique appropriate to each individual instrument, albeit handled by one performer.

Even as the traps set was giving way to the trimmer standard drum set, Roach came to see the instrument as one whole. Like notes on a piano, his four limbs on any combination of the seven (standard) instruments could produce chords, colours, and semi-definitely pitched melodies. Roach saw it architecturally:

My first solo piece was called ‘Drum Conversation’, and people would ask me, “Where are the chords? Where's the melody?” And I would say, “It's about design. It isn't about melody and harmony. It's about periods and question marks. Think of it as constructing a building with sound. It's architecture (Roach cited in Mattingly 2008).

The short excerpt from Roach's 1966 piece *Big Sid* (Appendices 1a and 1b) shows some of his favoured techniques within the AABA 32-bar song form: for example, the stretching, compressing and fragmentation of rhythmic motifs and their redeployment around multiple combinations of drums and cymbals.

### ***Creative evaluation***

These two key variations of 1) changing the locus of the rhythmic continuum from right foot to right hand, and 2) reframing the drum solo in terms of structural design, together repositioned the drummer as equal with others in the co-creation of a valid and durable new popular music style known as bebop. Roach's methods have become accepted techniques of the day; almost any drummer who sits down at the kit plays something of Roach. He came to be credited with raising the level of the drummer from the lowly functionary who kept time for the band, to equal conversationalist within the whole band, when, for example, ‘trading fours’ with the leader in Sonny Rollins' *Freedom Suite*. His work was widely acknowledged within and outside the domain, with numerous honorary citations from the French and American Academic communities in particular.<sup>34</sup> Viewed from the perspective of the systems model then, it might be argued that Roach satisfies all the criteria of Big-C creativity. A set of rules and practices has been transmitted from the domain to the individual, two novel variations have been effected in some aspect of the content of the domain, and those variations have subsequently been selected by the field for inclusion in the domain.

Csikszentmihalyi found it useful to invoke the work of Richard Dawkins; “to think about creativity as involving a change in memes - the units of imitation that Dawkins (1976)

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<sup>34</sup> The drummer was The MacArthur Foundation Award Winner of 1988 in the US, and named Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters in France.



suggested were the building blocks of culture” (Csikszentmihalyi 1999:316). Dawkins famously interpreted the ‘domain’ as a system of related memes that changes over time. On this account, Roach’s domain-changing creativity might be interpreted as memetic; that is, as structured information embodied in a meme, the valuable and memorable ‘unit of imitation’ transmitted from one generation to the next (Dawkins 1976).

Three issues surrounding Roach’s creativity appear, however, to run counter to the requirements of the model. First, and perhaps unsurprisingly, there seems to be an unresolved tension around the originality of the variation that the systems model requires. Definitions of originality coalesce around it being applicable to something that is not derived, copied, imitated or translated from anything else. Music that could be so described would be effectively unlistenable and probably go unrecognised as music. The great drumming ‘originals’ like Buddy Rich, Max Roach, Roy Haynes, John Bonham, and Ringo Starr have clearly delineated antecedents in the work of their rhythmic forefathers, and it is precisely these connections that ensure their cultural value, relevance and potency, if not their creativity. The minimum requirement is perhaps for an original or unique *approach* which results in the variation.

Second, if notions of originality also imply ‘being the first’ to bring something about, there is evidence to suggest that Roach was neither the first nor the only drummer to make these changes. Drummer Shelley Manne, witness to events as they developed, is reported to have said: “Big Sid (Catlett) and Klook (Kenny Clarke’s nickname) were the first ones to move away from your accepted traditional way of playing” (Manne cited in Gitler 1985:51). Thirdly, Roach’s creativity may be seen as co-constructed; as much collaborative as individual. There is some anecdotal evidence to support the idea that the new drumming was as much initiated and nurtured by colleagues Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie as by Roach (Vernick 2010, DeVaux 1997:174, Gitler 1985:56).

### ***Shortcomings of the model***

The preceding exercise thus tells us almost as much about the efficacy of the systems model as it does of Roach’s creativity. Theoretical paradigms like this which comprise field, domain, and individual creator (Csikszentmihalyi 1996, Glăveanu 2010b) go some

way towards providing an understanding of how an observable effect (domain change) may be brought about but appear too coarse-grained in three respects. First, this sort of model appears to indicate that creativity amongst drummers is practically non-existent. Since creativity is construed as the domain-changing activity of an *individual*, very few other drummers in many years of practice could be said to have fulfilled its requirements. From this perspective Roach may be seen as highly unusual - an extreme case, or outlier.

Second, it might be argued that the model has difficulty digesting the more clouded, multi-ascriptive creativity that tends to emerge from collaboration. Musical creativity theorists, it has been noted, now tend to view the phenomenon as socio-culturally constructed; an activity done with other people (Burnard 2012) in a community of practice (Wenger 1998). The extent to which inwardly-directed artefacts, such as Roach's unaccompanied drum compositions, were in fact created *socially* as a by-product of musical relationships with others, even if enacted individually and without accompaniment (Cook 2012:452), is an interesting question which is not addressed by the systems model. In this respect, it fails to accommodate much current socio-cultural thinking on creativity.

Finally, temporal issues abound. Changing the way people live and think and act, the ultimate goal of domain change, takes time. Ascriptions of creativity are also notoriously fluid and changeable over time; as in, for example, the case of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Italian painter Botticelli, or the Pre-Raphaelites, or anyone who played in progressive rock. The meaning of creativity is tied to ever-changing historical processes, technologies and social conditions, and conceptions of individual and society. The systems model can at best, it seems, ascribe creativity at only a frozen moment in time.

The contention, then, is that Roach's work fulfils the criteria of the model, but is an exceptional case. Creativity in drumming cannot in most instances be understood in the terms set forth by Csikszentmihalyi. Big-C, domain-changing creativity, such as that of Roach, can only exist where the ecology permits (Hargreaves *et al* 2012:455). The systems model is perhaps too coarse-grained, admitting only a few drummers in the last century of practice, and needs reframing in the context of the ordinary drummer. Further research to bring forward an adapted, expanded model that accounts for a lower-level

personal creativity that neither seeks nor demands domain change, and which foregrounds the rôle of the socio-cultural milieu in which the creative act takes place (Burnard 2012) would be welcome.

## **2.7 Chapter summary**

Many aspects of the phenomenon of creativity have not been pursued in this chapter, not because they are unimportant, but because limitations of space require selection of those aspects that might be demonstrated to resonate most within the community of drummers. With that constraint in mind, four dimensions of creativity - differentiation, selection, communication and assessment (DSCA) - were chosen to frame and delimit the concept. The essence of creative music performance was distilled and interpreted as a post-hoc judgement by others (Csikszentmihalyi 1999, Toynbee 2003, Cottrell 2004, Ingold and Hallam 2007) of the outcome or outcomes of domain-level action that is different (Williamson *et al* 2006), novel and effective (Runco and Jaeger 2012), certainly significant (Dewey 1934, Hope Mason 2003) and probably producing a reaction (Grayling 2009) that may surprise (Bruner 1962, Boden 1994, 2004) without necessarily changing the domain.

Creativity in music performance has thus far been characterised as a set of choices and decisions, selected from possible options, with the purpose of producing a work or an event that exists for a reason. For the individual drummer, those selections tend to be made, at whatever level of consciousness, from a palette of temporal, metrical, timbral and dynamical options available ‘in the moment’ of performance (section 2.5). The freedom to make those selections may be constrained by his or her perceived position on a continuum of control (the FCC). In this way, creative difference is embodied in the options selected, the constraints negotiated and the surprise occasioned at the effect of those selections.

## **CHAPTER 3: Why Action? Dewey, Boesch and an integrated model of the circulation of meaning**

Building upon approaches from cultural psychology and action theory, Chapter 3 seeks to develop an original model whose purpose is to depict the relationship between the individual drummer, the drum culture and the way action gives rise to meaning within the cultural context. The chapter begins by problematising traditional approaches to creativity and maps out an alternative path to understanding based on the precepts of the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey. It draws on the action-theoretical work of Ernst Boesch and Vlad-Petre Glăveanu to connect meaning and creativity through the construct of significant situated action. Finally, the key points are used to construct and underpin an integrated model of the circulation of meaning (the IMCM).

### **3.1 Problems with traditional models**

The discussion so far has detected little cohesion or convergence within the numerous approaches to creativity or their application within communicated music performance. Traditional ‘stage’ models of creativity emerging from a background of science or mathematics such as that of Hermann von Helmholtz 1896 and Poincaré’s 1908 four-stage theory of creativity refined by Wallas in 1926 (Martindale 1999:137) tend to have limited use in the creative assessment of instrumental performance. The meaning of the activity is seen as fluid, unstable, and complicated in no small part by the co-occurrence of the process and product. These approaches to music creativity tend to display both a lack of transferability from the Western art music tradition to the domain of the popular instrumentalist, and an awkward fit with the notion of individual drummer creativity.

Sender/channel/receiver models of post-2<sup>nd</sup> World War communication theory proposed by thinkers such as Shannon and Weaver (1949) provided an early framework within which to examine the way in which music is communicated. The composer’s musical

idea, it was suggested, is brought into acoustic reality by a performer (who may or may not be the same person), travels along an information channel within the mind of the receiver, and is decoded with more or less efficiency (Cohen 2005:66). From the performer's viewpoint, the central flaw here is that such a model posits a minimum of two actors; sender and receiver (Hargreaves *et al* 2005:4). Both sending and receiving are, by contrast, actions of the performer's single musical mind. Other accounts sought to go beyond the basic transmission model by incorporating the multiple personal, musical, and contextual variables in expanded models. For example, Hargreaves *et al*'s work on reciprocal feedback comprised two separate but complimentary models depicting the reciprocal feedback of, respectively, musical response and musical performance (Hargreaves *et al* 2005:7-17). Neither, however, fully addressed the meaning-making of the single mind of the individual practitioner, which both transmits and receives.

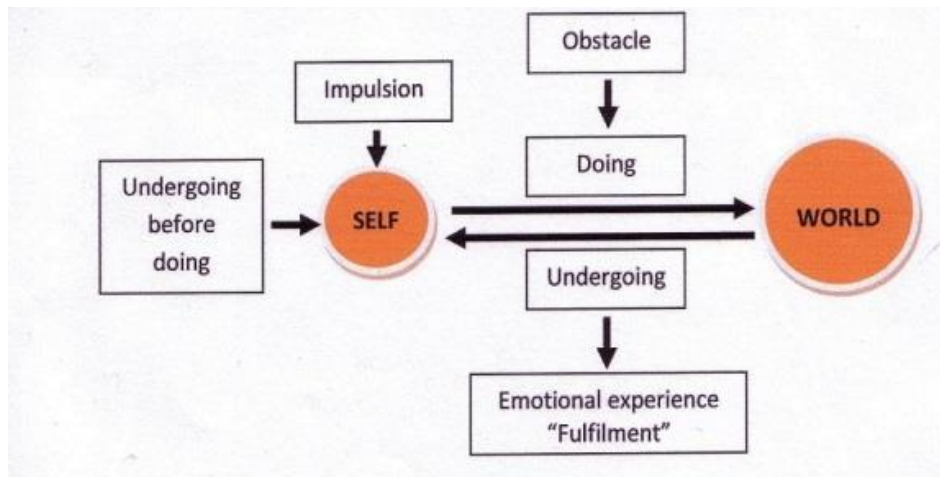
Modern systemic approaches to creativity represent a step forward from the longstanding debate between psychological and socio-cultural accounts of creativity. If there is an orthodox position in creativity theory, it is surely to be found in the 'environmental' or 'evolving systems' approaches propagated most notably by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 1999) and Howard Gruber (1989) respectively, and reflected in the work of Pamela Burnard (2012). These perspectives represent an attempt to go beyond binary choices towards a comprehensive and integrative perspective, where there is "an 'and' rather than a 'versus' relationship between individual and social creativity" (Fischer *et al* cited in Glăveanu 2010b:155-156). However, the extremes of these approaches appear unproductive in so far as they have been applied to the context of popular music performance. As evident from the case-study of Max Roach (section 2.6), they seem to be drawn either too tightly, permitting creativity in only domain-changing action (Csikszentmihalyi 1999, Arieti 1976), or too loosely, seeing creativity in almost any musical engagement (Burnard 2012, Treffinger 1995, Toynbee 2000).

Resolution may subsist in two parts. First, a constructivist research design, embedded in phenomenology and guided by Glăveanu's (2013) work, asks those who engage with the issue how they view the experience of creativity from their perspective. Multiple practices and experiences were identified by this study's research participants as important for creative participation in the event, working within the constraints of

tradition and culture but with sufficient room to strategically interpret and extend them (Sawyer 1998:15). Second, a more pragmatic perception of creative music performance drawn from the philosophical orientation and fertile thinking of John Dewey may provide a clearer framework within which to view the relationship between action, experience and meaning.

### **3.2 The philosophy of John Dewey**

Three precepts of the philosophy of John Dewey, addressing respectively the production, expression and communication of experience, have particular salience to the developing argument. For Dewey, it is the cumulative experience of action over time, in a continuous cycle of doing and undergoing, that constitutes experience which, in turn, may inform meaning for the creative music performer (Dewey 1934, Glăveanu 2013). The first precept addresses the production of experience. Beginning with the live organism in its environment, Dewey observed the interaction of the two from embryo to maturity, the crucial product of which is experience (Dewey 1934). Through his lens, culture is viewed as the outcome of a prolonged and cumulative interaction with environment, and experience is characterised as both a ‘doing’ and an ‘undergoing’ (a mirror to incoming and outgoing energy). As we listen (doing), so we hear (undergoing); as we touch (doing), so we feel (undergoing); as we look, so we see (Dewey 1934). As his model of human experience shows, action starts with an impulsion and is directed towards fulfilment (Figure 3.1).



**Figure 3.1** A model of human experience, after Dewey. Reproduced from Glăveanu *et al* (2013)

Second, and central to Dewey's thinking in this area, is the idea that creativity is the expression of experience, literally ex-pressed out of experience. If creativity is, in this way, a process which brings experience into meaning and significance (Negus and Pickering 2004: vii), so "the actual work of art is what the product does in and with experience" (Dewey 1934:1). To say something to us, Dewey contended, the art object needs to be expressive (1934:85); for example, he distinguished between Wordsworth's 1798 poem on the subject of Tintern Abbey and the factual, scientific statement of an antiquarian on the same topic (1934:89).

What gives the creative art object - "the juice expressed by the wine-press"- its vitality, novelty and distinctiveness is its connection to a prior (experienced) act or acts. If separated from the act of expressivity which brought it into existence, the art object becomes merely representational (1934:86). The self is characterised as assimilating 'common-world' materials in a distinctive way to reissue into the public world in a form that builds a new object, but for that experience is needed. More experience creates a greater potential distance between scientific statement and artistic expressivity (1934:112).

Finally, the work of art does not work until it is communicated. Dewey argued that a work of art, "no matter how old and classic, is actually, not just potentially, a work of art

*only when it lives in some individualised experience*” (1934:113. Italics added). In other words, a work of art is what the receiver makes of it. On his account, the several arts are placed on a spectrum. At one pole lies sculpture, expressing “the enduring, the stable and universal”. At the other pole is music, expressing “stirrings, agitation and movement [...]”. The structure of things yields and alters, but it does so in rhythms that are secular, while the things that catch the ear are the sudden, abrupt, and speedy in change” (1934:245-6). Following this, the IMCM, developed shortly in section 3.4, throws the emphasis firmly on the stirrings and agitation of creative action as the means by which the individual (drummer) within the (drum) culture may be best understood.

The developing argument now has two strands. The first, developed in the previous chapter, uses the DSCA construct to hypothesise that drummers achieve creativity in music performance by the effective communication of difference. In the next section, a second strand proposes that creativity, viewed through an action-theoretical lens, is both experienced and assigned meaning through significant *action* in context. The two are combined here to propose that drummers find creative meaning in the actions of making it work and making it matter.

### **3.3 Creative performance as significant action**

At approximately the same time as Dewey was conceptualising art in terms of experience, three Russian psychologists - Vygotsky, Leont’ev and Luria - were developing Activity Theory. One of the first postulates the Soviets agreed upon was the principle of unity and inseparability of consciousness (i.e. human mind) and activity. To summarise, the essence of this principle is that the human mind comes to exist, develops, and can only be understood within the context of meaningful, goal-orientated, and socially determined interaction between human beings and their material environment. (Vygotsky 1974, Boesch 1987, Nardi 1996, Cole 1996).

Activity Theory shifted the focus from the psychology of the individual to the interaction *between* the individual, a system of artefacts and other individuals. Such an approach posited that activity is undertaken by a human agent (the subject, in this case a drummer) who is motivated toward a purpose or the solution of a problem (the object;



creative music performance) and mediated by tools and artefacts (the work of previous practitioners; technical aspects of the instrument) in collaboration with others (community or culture) (Boesch 1987, Wertsch 1998). Activities are composed of goal-directed actions that must be undertaken to fulfil the object. The structure of the activity is constrained by rules, traditions and conventions, and its meaning is constructed in action (Lave cited in Nardi 1996:40). Actions are understood as consciously directed, and different actions may be undertaken to meet the same goal.

Clearly, there is a good deal of overlap between the situated nature of action theory and the overarching meta-principles of Activity Theory,<sup>35</sup> the precise details of which are not germane to the argument. The focus here is on the former, not least because action theory asserts a common primacy of not only human action but also human experience and meaning (Marshall 1998, Custodero 2012).

### **3.3.1 Linking action to meaning**

Action is crucial to both the way music is experienced and the meaning that it is made to carry. In this regard, the developing field of embodied music cognition emphasises the corporeality of this kind of meaning-making; the way music action is understood through the body. In his analysis of the ‘body at work’ in the case of Björk, Szekely describes the singer’s facial convulsions and the unsettling reactions of the uninitiated listener on hearing the sound produced. One explanation for these reactions, he suggests, is because “the palpability of the body in Björk’s singing seems to immediately register with/in our own bodies” (Szekely 2006). In the same manner as Björk, the body in my own drumming registers large quantities of sensory data which determine perception. Some modern rock drummers purchase sound reinforcement systems allowing them to feel and experience the bass drum via transducer systems that deliver a powerful reproduction of the drum without any volume, transmitted through bone conduction (Dolbear 2011). The incoming sense data and their perception by the performer are altered by such mediational means.

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<sup>35</sup> The nuances of the debate within cultural psychology as to which is the most effective route to a successful integration of culture into psychology are elaborated in Eckensberger 1995.

It is through action, construed as artefact-mediated, goal-orientated and intentional, that the individual thus transforms and is transformed. S/he is what s/he does, and what s/he does is embedded in a complex social matrix of people and artefacts.<sup>36</sup> The relationship between mind and culture is not a direct process, but is mediated by tools or instruments; conceptual, physical or symbolic (Santamaria *et al* 2010, Wertsch 1998). These artefacts tend to reflect the experiences of other people who have attempted to solve similar problems at an earlier time and invented or modified the tool to make it more efficient. They may be seen as “culturally impregnated resources, available for change in unpredictable ways” (Arieti 1976:4).

A further link between action and meaning binds the individual to the situational context in an ‘indissoluble [sic] bond’ (Eckensberger 1990:43). Drummers share learning, meaning, problems and constraints within the context of culture and community, an important notion further articulated in Chapter 4. These correlates determine action, and action is always action in a context (Rosnow and Georgoudi cited in Eckensberger 1990:43).

### **3.3.2 Linking action to creativity**

An action-theoretical approach also offers a firm theoretical basis from which to link significant action to creativity in drum performance. First, it provides the ideal lens to focus on individual action and experience in respect of actors’ contributions to culture; ideas which crystallised in Boesch’s symbolic action theory (Boesch 1991, 2001). Drawing together the three elements of culture, individual and action, all seen as inseparable from one another as well as mutually constitutive, action theory offers the most appropriate way to understand the learning and negotiation of meaning that goes on between (music) actors (Marshall 1998). Music creativity is seen as a socio-cultural, intersubjective, interactive construct; an action in between actors and their environment rather than ‘inside’ individuals as a psychological phenomenon entirely located within the individual mind.

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<sup>36</sup> There may be an involuntary component to this. Miles Davis allegedly said “I have to change; it’s like a curse” (Rogers 2003).

Second, an action-theoretical account takes one function of culture as defining the possibilities and conditions for action (Boesch 1991). Lave's identification of the basic unit of analysis for situated action as "the activity of persons acting in a setting" is relational; the unit is neither the individual, nor the environment, but *the relationship* between the two (Lave cited in Nardi 1996:36; added emphasis). The fundamental nature of music lies in action, "in what people do" (Small 1998:8). Through action, relationships are maintained and restored and humans may learn the patterns that connect (1998:109). It is through action that Lave and others have critiqued the shortcomings of the traditional cognitive science approaches to creativity, seeking to avoid the 'cognitive straightjacket' (Nardi 1996:36) of the problem-solving frameworks of some creativity theorists (cf. Treffinger 1995).

Other scholars have sought to link creativity to significant action. Hope Mason observed that "to create is to act in the world, or on the world, in a new and significant way" (Hope Mason 2003:7). Some have directly or indirectly promoted the action-theory project within the literature with regard to music performance (Small 1998, Deliège and Richelle 2006, Custodero 2012). For example, recommending an examination of the behaviours involved in creative music-making and trying to account for them by identifying the processes involved, Deliège and Richelle argued persuasively for getting rid of creativity and examining instead the creative *act* (Deliège and Richelle 2006; original italics). Following this thinking, music-making is interpreted here as 'creative action' and drummers as potentially creative actors. If drumming is creative action then practitioners, it might be argued, are not only agents of change, but also make meaning from their participation in change.

### **3.3.3 The action theoretical perspective of Glăveanu**

Several of the preceding ideas have been developed most recently by Vlad-Petre Glăveanu in his Action Theory of Creativity (2013) (ATC). Glăveanu wove key tenets of Dewey's philosophy into a strand of thinking closely allied to Soviet activity theory, itself later modified by Boesch into symbolic action theory. Here, Glăveanu outlines those elements upon which his theory is built. Action starts with an impulsion:

and is directed towards fulfilment. In order for action to constitute experience though, obstacles or constraints are needed. Faced with these challenges, the person experiences emotion and gains awareness (of self, of the aim, of the path of action). Most importantly, action is structured as a continuous cycle of “doing” (actions directed at the environment) and “undergoing” (taking in the reaction of the environment). Undergoing always precedes doing and, at the same time, is continued by it. It is through these interconnected processes that action can be taken forward and become a ‘full experience’ (Glăveanu 2013:2-3).

This key passage has been quoted in full because of its centrality to the ensuing argument. It is here that systems models of creativity on the one hand, and action theories of creativity on the other, overlap and find convergence. It is here that the cultural psychology understanding of creative action as taking place “not ‘inside’ individual creators but “in between” actors and their environment” (Glăveanu *et al* 2013:1) converges with the socio-cultural leanings of scholars for whom music is less an object, more an activity done with other people in a community of practice (Burnard 2012, Small 1998, Wenger 1998). It is here that human experience brings action and creativity together (Dewey 1934, Glăveanu *et al* 2013:2), here that action informs and is informed by the broader drum culture, and here that action informs experience which informs meaning for the individual music practitioner. Ultimately, it is here that significant mediated action in context may beget creativity.

As both a theoretical and methodological tool, the ATC not only helped integrate earlier cognitive models of creativity into a more contextual perspective, thus reuniting the psychological and behavioural aspects of creation with its material and social effects, but also advanced the broader concept of creativity as action (Glăveanu *et al* 2013). Glăveanu is the most recent thinker to connect the pragmatism of Dewey to the action-theoretical approaches of Boesch and Eckensberger, the whole construct mediated by the cultural psychology understanding of Polkinghorne and Hiles. This thesis adopts and adapts this approach.

Glăveanu’s perspective, however, suffers from some of the same flaws as those of the traditional ‘stage’ models of creativity mentioned in the previous chapter. It does little to

engage with issues surrounding the performance creativity typical of, for example, jazz musicians or improvising actors whose functionality, usefulness and validation tend to be construed as being ‘in the moment’ (see Sawyer 2003 in this regard). The reified product of solitary creative labour enacted away from public scrutiny may be easier to identify, isolate and analyse, as in Glăveanu and his colleagues’ (2013) work on designers, composers, scriptwriters, artists and scientists, but tends to exist at one polarity of a creativity continuum whose opposite pole is occupied by the processual, publicly enacted and predominantly collaborative creative labour of the actor, dancer or musician. None of the five creative domains examined by Glăveanu embodies the sort of live entanglement with the (musical) obstacles and constraints from which the performer experiences emotion and gains awareness, and from which emerges the full experience which it is the work of art to communicate. All five domains permit revision of the creative product before its revelation to others.

In sum, any new model seeking to illuminate the meaning-making of the drummer in culture will need to combine the reciprocal feedback of culture and mind that determines the musician-in-action. Building upon the same Deweyan foundations as Glăveanu’s theory, an original model of the circulation of meaning (the IMCM) is introduced in the next section to address some of the shortcomings of existing models. In its depiction of the circulating cogs of domain meaning and individual meaning, and their intersection at the point of action, the new model seeks to illustrate the way in which culture and psyche are mutually dependent, and how, through action, drummers make meaning of their lived experience.

### **3.4 The IMCM in action**

The IMCM is a situated action model that emphasises the emergent, contingent nature of human activity, and the way that activity grows directly out of the particularities of a given situation. Its purpose is to model the relationship between the individual drummer, the drum culture and the way action gives rise to meaning within the cultural context. Building on the work of John Dewey (1934), Sylvano Arieti (1976) and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1999), the IMCM presents a framework for understanding the circulation of meaning within the drum culture. Simply put, it shows how drummers

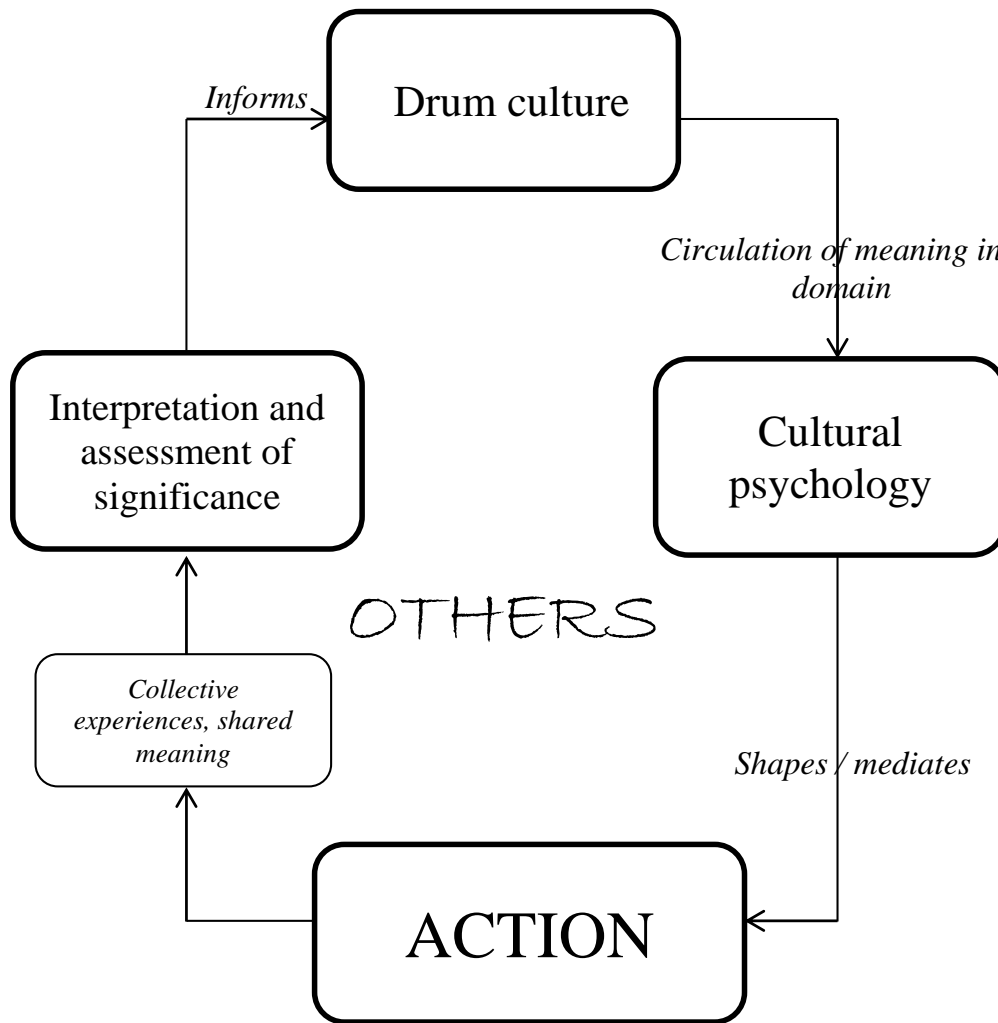
make meaning from lived experience through action, itself shaped and partially determined by culture. Such a model may prove useful because existing transmission and reciprocal feedback models of creativity are seen as problematic in the context of music performance (section 3.1).

The model attempts first to integrate two individual and collective (cultural) meaning systems, their development and interrelationship, and situate them within the same theoretical framework. Second, it seeks to bring culture in from the ‘outside’ to the ‘inside’ of creative action as a constitutive part. This is the objective of what Glăveanu calls the “cultural psychology of creativity” (Glăveanu 2010b:152). Third, it complements Glăveanu’s (2010b:156) framework which includes the Self, but “a Self that does not create alone but in dialogue with an Other, both embedded within existing socio-cultural systems”, here construed as the localised system of the drum culture.

The function of the model is to show how, through action, drummers make meaning of their lived experience by integrating two levels of meaning. The clockwise circulation of the cog of the upper, domain-level meaning (Figure 3.2) and the cog of the lower, individual-level meaning (Figure 3.3), and their intersection at the point of action, represent the mutual dependency of culture and individual mind. *Individual-level lived experience* (comprising variables such as learning orientation, risk-taking propensity and self-efficacy) intersects with *domain level variables* (expectations of the drum culture, the assessment of creativity, quality of the action, of working collaborative relationships) in action. Over time, drummer action generates lived experience, which, interpreted by Self (on the individual level) and Others (on the cultural level), assigns meaning to the experience (Figure 3.4). Meaning forms a basis for reflection and possible change in practice or the domain.

### ***The circulation of domain-level meaning***

As outlined in section 3.2, Dewey posited that the organism interacts with the surrounding environment from embryo to maturity. In overcoming obstacles, that interaction produces experience. In the human experience, the product of prolonged and cumulative interaction with environment informs culture through action (Figure 3.2).



**Figure 3.2** The circulation of domain-level meaning

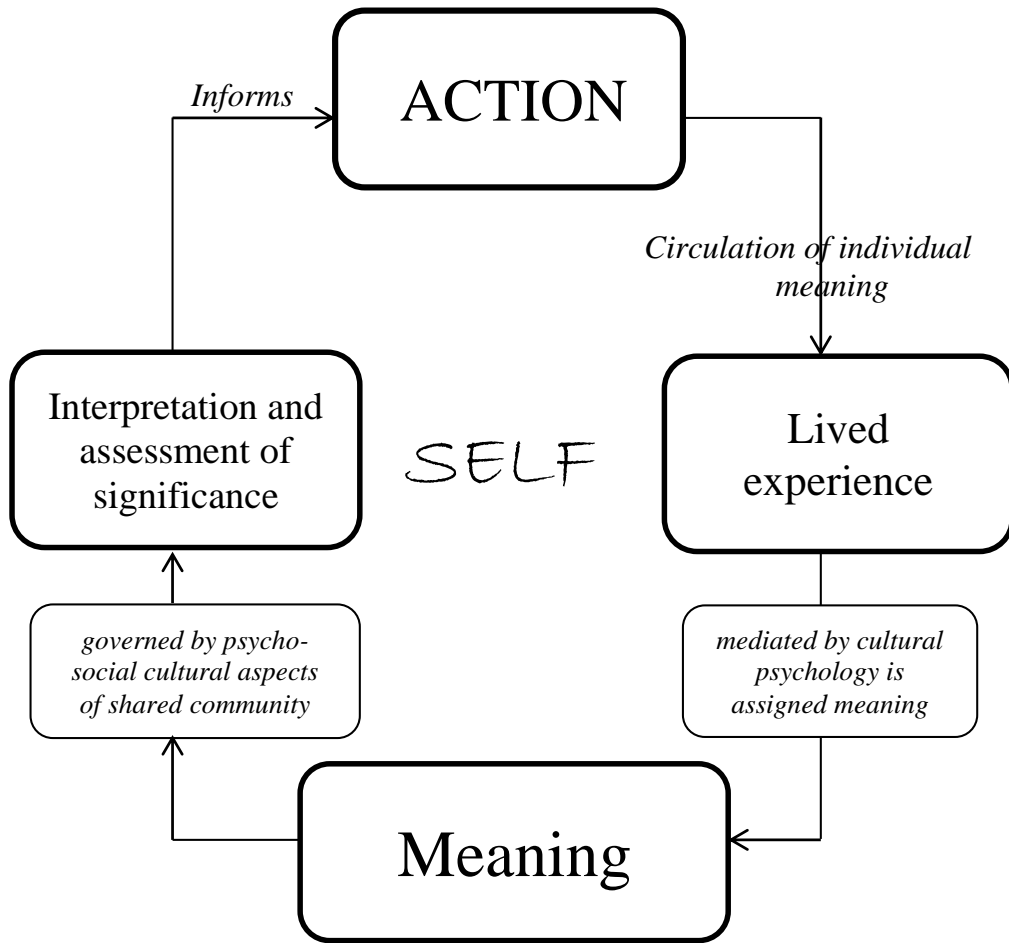
- *Goal-orientated action informs meaning in the domain but only after communication and assessment of experience.*
- *The cultural psychology embedded within the culture shapes and partially determines individual action.*

The actor acts upon the cultural environment and undergoes feedback from it. Everywhere there is movement and perpetual change. Like all cultures, the drum culture is a process in flux. Meaning and community are seen as co-constructive: meaning constructs community which constructs meaning (Drath and Palus 1994:13). The left side of the figure addresses the assessment of the action for creativity by the cultural

gatekeepers or significant Others identified by systems theorists of creativity. The creative variation is then accepted or rejected by the (drum) culture, which in turn shapes the cultural psychology and future action.

***The circulation of individual-level meaning***

At the individual level of Self, action connects the individual to the cultural context. Action is seen as generating lived experience, which is interpreted, assigned meaning and reflected upon and that in turn instigates further action in a cyclical process.



**Figure 3.3** The circulation of individual-level meaning

- *Over time, drummer action generates lived experience, which, interpreted by Self, informs meaning.*



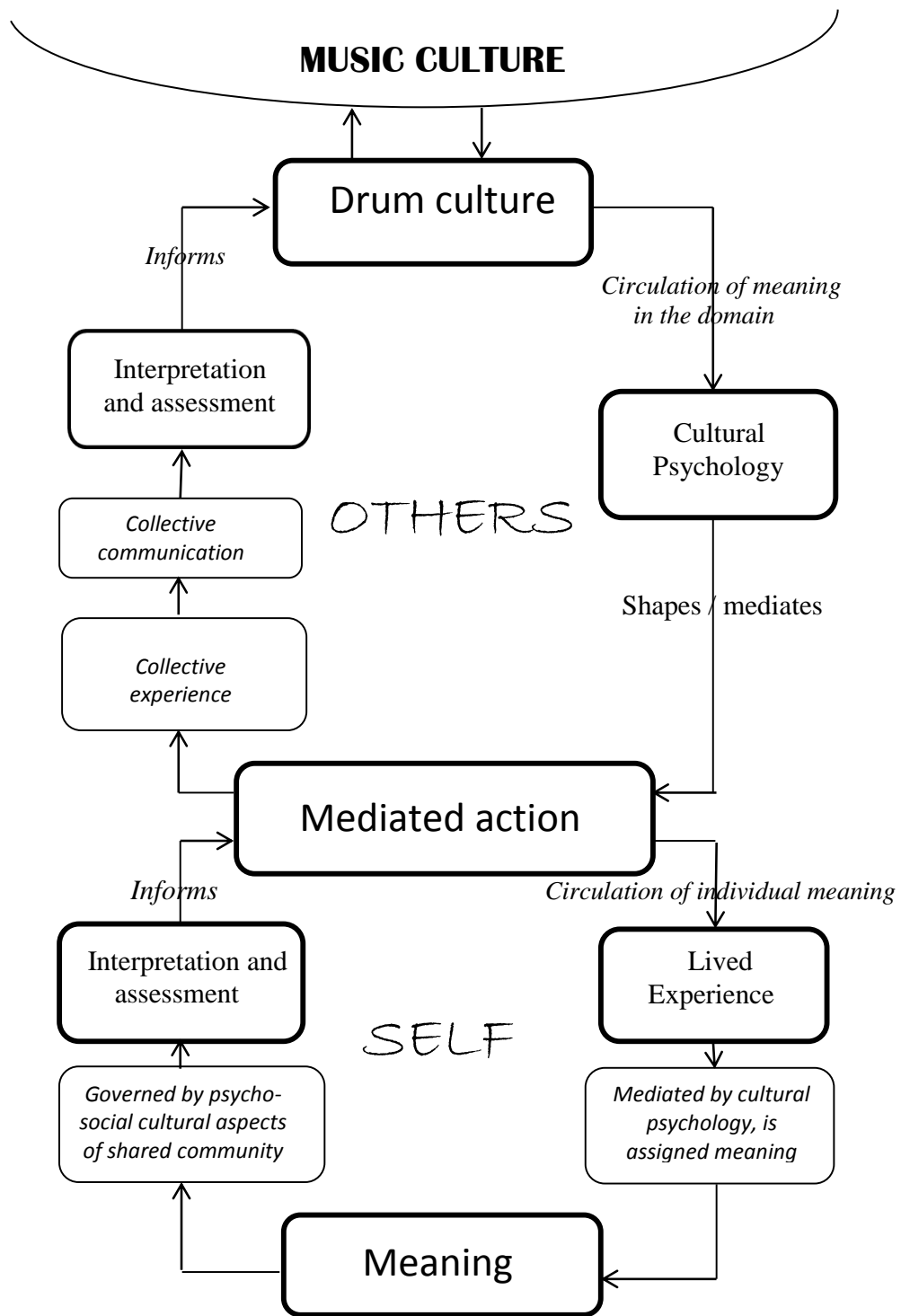
- *Meaning forms a basis for possible change in practice.*

For Dewey, lived experience, which here comprises variables such as learning orientation, previous playing experiences, risk-taking propensity and self-efficacy, is generated by the interaction with the domain in both a ‘doing’ and an ‘undergoing’ characterised as outgoing and incoming energy respectively (Dewey 1934). Experience is necessarily cumulative and its subject matter gains expressiveness because of cumulative continuity (1934:108). Polkinghorne’s assertion that “experience is meaningful and human behaviour is generated from and informed by this meaningfulness” (Polkinghorne 1988:1) encapsulates the phenomenological undercurrent of this project, which concerns the structure of lived experience. An individual drummer engages with the text through performance within a community of practice. Should s/he wish to seek meaning in that engagement, to make sense of it, s/he must actively bring it into lived experience, here understood as the content of consciousness (Smith *et al* 2009:16). Individual interpretation of that experience assigns it meaning.

Drummers, it might be argued, derive meaning from a sense of shared community; an important point which will be returned to shortly (section 4.4.1). Extrapolating from Seidman, their making meaning of lived experience, and particularly lived creative experience, affects the way they carry out that experience in their actions (as musicians), as the model indicates (Seidman 2006:10). In effect, the notion of culture may be less important than that of community because the latter provides the more immediate framework for the making of meaning. Maintaining a focus on shared meanings of experiences, rather than nominal social groupings, may be a more appropriate and productive path toward achieving the goal of expanding and refining our understanding of the cultural psychology of drummers (Cohen 2009, Bergey and Kaplan 2010).

### ***An integrated model of the circulation of meaning***

Figures 3.2 and 3.3 may now be integrated to give a fuller picture of the way drummers, through action, make meaning of their lived experience (Figure 3.4).



**Figure 3.4** An integrated model of the circulation of meaning (IMCM)

Figure 3.4 depicts the co-construction of a particular structure: drummer action. In a clockwise circulation the lower half of the diagram shows how individual music action generates lived experience, which, interpreted by self, informs meaning. In turn, interpreted meaning forms a basis for possible change in practice (change being, as has been suggested, a *sine qua non* of creative practice). The upper half depicts, also in a clockwise direction, how the predominant drum-culture shapes and is shaped by individual or collaborative action. Informed by both domain and individual meaning, action occurs at the interface between the individual practitioner and the culture in which s/he subsists (the intersection of the two circles).

The model shows how a) through action, drummers make meaning of their lived experience; b) the cultural psychology shapes and partially determines individual action, a precursor to meaning-making; and c) drummer action is informed by and informs Self and Others in a fluid circulation of individual and domain meanings. Mediated action is then taken forward to become full experience, the communicative performance of which may be assigned creative significance by contributing to or changing the domain.

In the model, the individual's interpretation of creativity is affected by individual-level lived experience intersecting with domain level variables such as the expectations and demands of the drum culture, its corrosive ideology, the assessment of the creative quality of the action and risk-taking propensity. Over time, mediated action, as the unit of analysis<sup>37</sup>, is interpreted and assessed by Others for, *inter alia*, evidence of creativity. Focusing on the interdependence of mediated action and cultural context as previously discussed, action may thus be seen as the link between the individual drummer and the drum culture, and accordingly is positioned at the heart of the model.

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<sup>37</sup> Not all cultural psychology theorists agree on appropriate unit(s) of analysis in the discipline, but the history of this disagreement is not germane to the introduction of the IMCM. For a detailed discussion of the issues surrounding the unit of analysis in cultural psychology, see Santamaría *et al* 2010: 86-89. The author adopts the position stated succinctly by them, and taking the notion of 'mediated action' as the unit of analysis, situates it at the core of the model.

### ***Application of the model to Max Roach***

To understand how such a theoretical model might map onto the real-world actions and choices of the individual drummer, it is worth returning to the case-study of Max Roach (section 2.6) and applying the model to his action-choices. Roach was faced with an obstacle; the action of playing four beats to the bar at 300 bpm for long periods of time was unsustainable. Other options and methods may have been tried in the Deweyan process of ‘doing’ and ‘undergoing’; the prolonged and cumulative interaction with the musical environment (Dewey 1934:28) which generated experience. The experience was interpreted and assigned meaning by Roach; presumably it was perceived as ineffectual and ultimately meaningless. After reflection, the action was altered significantly by his creative leap which assigned the rhythmic continuum to the ride-cymbal, thus permitting a complete re-interpretation of the bass drum function. The model suggests that this significant action generated further lived experience, which, interpreted by appropriate Others, was assigned creative meaningfulness. In sum, the experience, having been produced, expressed and communicated by Roach, was attributed domain-level creative status. There was Western kit drumming before Roach and there was Western kit drumming after him. The two were qualitatively different.

### ***Limitations and justifications***

Two shortcomings of the model will become apparent. First, assessments, judgements and meanings as interpreted by individual and domain frequently diverge, and the model has little to say in this regard. For example, authorial experience and anecdotal evidence support the frequently encountered disjunction in performance assessment by, on the one hand, the performer (or ensemble), and on the other, the listener (or audience) immediately after sharing an experience of the same event. So great might the disagreement be that performer and listener, it might appear, had attended different concerts.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> This syndrome was so prevalent in *King Crimson* dressing rooms and the following days’ press reviews as to pass mostly unremarked. It did however strongly reinforce the “them-versus-us” occupational culture identified in Howard Becker’s (1963) study of deviancy.

Second, there are temporal considerations that the model does not address. Clearly the circulation of meaning in the domain is much slower than circulation of individual meaning through performance action. The former may take months or years, as in the case of domain-changing creativity, identified as such in some cases only after the domain-changer's death. The latter may be nearly instantaneous with immediate localised change in the action, as may be the case of the jazz improviser. The implications of these discrepancies have yet to be examined and are not, as yet, reflected in the model. Further work may permit their subsequent integration.

Far from a global theoretical construct, the IMCM is rather a localised application of cultural psychology theory to the specific case of the drummer, drawing on the existing thinking of John Dewey and Silvano Arieti. Arieti's (1976:306-309) schema illustrates the relationship between man and culture, which he viewed similarly as a dynamic circular process, in which man and culture are in a mutual dependency and in which the entire process begins and ends psychologically (Glăveanu 2010b). Creativity is seen as an essential part of this relationship.<sup>39</sup> The new model presented here, however, both builds on and extends Arieti's approach. A similar dynamic circular process is elaborated, showing not only the reciprocal nature of the individual and cultural levels of meaning-making, but also how the meaning systems depict the manner in which drummer agency is informed by and informs Self and Other. The model accords not only with Wenger's assertion that in a community of practice people are involved with one another in action, but also with current understandings of musical creativity as a socio-cultural, intersubjective, interactive construct, best seen as an action between actors and their environment rather than 'inside' individuals (Burnard 2012).

To recapitulate the principal points of the argument, an action-theoretical perspective suggests that creativity and meaning may best be connected through significant situated action in context; in this case, the context is that of popular music performance. The IMCM shows how, over time, drummer action generates lived experience, which, interpreted by Self and Others assigns meaning to the experience. Meaning forms a basis

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<sup>39</sup> For a detailed explanation of Arieti's model, see Glăveanu 2010b:157-158.

for reflection and possible change at individual or domain level. Significant action may be assessed as creative.

## **CHAPTER 4: A cultural psychology view: shared meaning in culture and community**

### **4.1 Chapter overview**

With some of the aspects of creativity most salient to an assessment of drummer performance thus identified, the question arises as to the extent to which practitioners might share a consciousness or ideology that in part determines meaning. Chapter 4 adopts a broader cultural psychology approach to focus on some of the many ways by or through which drummers experience creative performance within their community of practice, and give meaning to those experiences. It first highlights approaches in the cultural psychology literature to some foundational tenets with particular importance for the ways in which drummers construct creative meaning. From these it develops the view that first, drummers live in a cultural tradition whose mythology, ideology and other artefacts regulate and mould their experience of creative practice; and second, that they are creatures of a community whose sociocultural features mediate, promote and inhibit the psychological behaviour, meaning-making and choice selection of the individual. In this way, the cultural psychology of the group is seen as a crucial determinant of members' experiences of creativity. The final section focuses on sharing within the context of community and culture; specifically, the sharing of meaning, groove, 'Flow'<sup>40</sup> and problems. In respect of the latter, a set of issues surrounding marginality, technology and identity, and homogeneity are identified as particularly salient within the drummer discourse.

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<sup>40</sup> Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of 'Flow' is developed in section 4.4.3. It is capitalised throughout to distinguish it from other possible meanings or usages of the word.

## 4.2 Positioning drummers in culture

There are many dimensions to the argument as to whether drummers might best be positioned, for the purpose of study, in a culture, a sub-culture, an occupational culture or a community (see respectively Wilshere 2002; Gelder 2005; Becker 1963, 1980; Wenger 1998) and only some can be suggested here. Two overlapping social constructs in particular have the most salience for the creative milieu within which drummers make meaning: culture and community. The word ‘culture’ is interpreted here broadly as the totality of what a group of people think, how they behave, and what they produce that is passed on to future generations. Wilshere’s understanding of a ‘drum culture’ as the “totality of the musical paradigms and cultural preferences of drummers as a group” serves here as a working definition (Wilshere 2002:21). The view of culture adopted here as a prolonged and cumulative interaction with environment (Dewey 1934:28) speaks not only to the creativity systems theorists like Gruber and Csikszentmihalyi but also to action-theorists such as Boesch and the anthropologist Jean Lave.

As noted above, the importance of culture to drummers is as a framework for meaning-making; it guides and governs the individual’s development within it (Much 1995 cited in Smith *et al* 2009:194). The idea that the act of music performance might both possess and create meaning is a new one (Small 1998), largely arising from an educational or developmental perspective. On Margaret Barrett’s account, we begin, as children, to make sense of the world in the context of place and participation in the sociocultural context that surrounds us (Barrett 2005). For her, culture is more than a mere causal factor; rather, it is “formed by and formative of human thought and action, and inseparable from human development” (2005:263). Seen in this light, music does not work effectively until and unless participants belong to a shared culture that gives it meaning (Barrett 2011). These views not only converge with ‘Darwinian’ creativity models such as that of Csikszentmihalyi (1988) which posit an individual’s variation on existing domain knowledge being accepted back into the domain as a creative improvement, but also suggests how meaning might arise as much for adult drummers as children in the construction of new performative artefacts.



Cultural influences on drummer's practice and meaning-making tend to be multiple and ebb and flow over time. Initially, they might include parents, siblings, friends, peers, teachers, and other music-makers in school or college; then audio-visual mediated sources found on television, CDs, films, DVDs, videos, the radio, and the Internet. Later on in a career they may include experiences of other cultures through international travel, teaching, and perception of success and failure (Barrett 2011). The results of these multiple influences as mediated through practice then appear to be offered back to the music community. This is the sense in which Etienne Wenger suggested that a community of practice produces its own practice (Wenger 1998:80). Wenger's construct of a 'community of practice' is foundational to, and frames, the ensuing discussion and is examined in greater depth shortly in section 4.3.

#### **4.2.1 Culture, meaning and experience**

Several important dimensions of drum culture might fruitfully be examined from the perspective of cultural psychology's phenomenological approach to the process of interpreting lived experience. This field of study is both central to the meaning-exchange and the meaning-circulation process and a useful tool for an examination of human behaviour and experience (Hiles 1996:1). Its insights give rise locally to the IMCM but also, more generally, to implications for any study of creativity. The meaning drummers make of their experience(s) affects the way they carry out that experience in their actions as musicians (Seidman 2006).

Like Hiles, Donald Polkinghorne was interested in meaning-making, but his approach was through narrative discourse, which he foregrounded as the primary scheme by means of which human existence is rendered meaningful (Polkinghorne 1998:7). Becoming a cultural being and arranging for others to become a cultural being are closely linked parts of the single process of enculturation (Cole 1996:109). Pre-existing cultural traditions from within a community offer a store of 'plot lines' that can be used to configure events into stories (Polkinghorne 1988). A plot narrative, for example, which says that to live an authentic life as a jazz drummer in the bebop business one had to endure an unhappy existence around substance abuse, racial harassment and indifference to one's music, was a powerful driver in the author's teenage experience, despite the obvious disconnection

with his comfortable white, middle-class background and his uncertainty about exactly which substances to abuse.

Narrative discourse was understood as a complex form of meaning-making which “recognises the meaningfulness of individual experiences by noting how they function as parts in a whole” (Polkinghorne 1998:36). Over time, drummer action generates lived experience, which, interpreted by self, informs meaning. Meaning may then form a basis for possible change in practice at the individual level. This idea is echoed in authorial experience. “Personally, I see music as a path to change. It works much like a mirror: music will show you your reflection, but if you don’t much like what you see, you can change through music. You can become a different person through your striving, possibly a better person” (Bruford 2009:141).

The personal narrative thus formed partially explains a drummer’s past and directs her or his future. In this way too, the practitioner may assign more or less importance to intrinsic and extrinsic attributions of creativity as part of her or his identity construction, as mediated through her or his cultural narrative plot line. The manner in which s/he makes meaning of the drumming process is determined by, and determines, the drum culture. Narration and description are value-laden and culturally contingent; even in telling one’s personal story, it is the voice of the culture surrounding the action that is heard in the description (Crotty 1998:64). Having arrived from a variety of different routes, cultural psychology theorists have tended to converge around several generally stable core precepts, of which three have particular salience to the discussion at hand.

The first precept holds mind and culture as fundamentally interdependent (Bruner 1986, Shweder 1991, Hiles 1996, Ratner 1999). When Carl Ratner insisted that culture be construed not as an external independent variable but rather as “a system of relationships and processes which organize psychological phenomena in a particular manner” (Ratner 1999:7), he underlined the discipline’s core contention that culture is embedded within the mind rather than outside as a set of rules and descriptors; culture and psyche should be regarded as inseparable. Unfortunately, academia separated them when the human sciences split into the social sciences and the humanities. When psychology became institutionalized as a social/behavioural science, the constituent parts of mind were

divided among several other sciences (Cole 1996:328). The history of cultural psychology has thus been to put back together again something that was torn apart (1996:328). Arguing that change in the pattern of an individual's activities can only be effected by addressing the surrounding situations in which those activities live (1996: xiv), Cole's discussion of the 'act in context' echoes the action-theoretical approach of Boesch, and, in the context of music creativities, the thinking of Burnard.

The way human beings think, feel and act cannot easily be explained by 'natural laws' alone; 'cultural rules' have also to be taken into consideration (Eckensberger 1990:37). A cultural psychology approach acknowledges that we think not only as individuals and human beings, but as members of particular communities with distinctive *cultural* traditions that allow humans (and specifically drummers) to ascribe meaning to creative experience, and to circulate and exchange that meaning. Precisely because, as Michael Cole reminds us, "we fail (like fish in water) to see culture because it is the medium within which we exist" (Cole 1996:8), does not mean that the medium is any less a life-source of crucial importance to drummers and the meanings they make.

The second precept has already been touched upon in the context of action theory; namely, that the way to the human mind is through its cultural products and artefacts (section 3.3.1). These products, material and immaterial, inform the drummers' collective world-view and open a window onto her or his experience and behaviour (Hiles 1996). Some understand culture as the entire pool of artefacts accumulated by the social group in the course of its historical experience (Cole 1996). This might include, for example, the culture's mythology (of, quintessentially, the drum hero<sup>41</sup>); its technological language ('batter heads', 'triple-flanged hoops' or the language associated with the grading and classification of drums and cymbals); its pedagogical language ('ratamacues', 'paradiddles', 'flammed mills' and 'ruffs'); its particular narrative; and its own literature, embodied in the blogs, webzines, chat rooms and monthly magazines which dominate and border the culture, connect its far flung members, circulate meaning,

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<sup>41</sup> The embattled drum hero is passed on by cultural elders and tends to be accepted unquestioningly by acolytes. Smith (2012:204) found that Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich were two of the most commonly cited drumming influences among his respondents, a fact which he connected to the pervasive influence of the two drummers' 1952 recording of a 'drum battle'.

and attempt to “impose a satisfactory graspable, humanizing shape on experience” (Polkinghorne 1998:62).

To these artefacts may be added the culture’s icons (for example, Max Roach, Buddy Rich, Ringo Starr, John Bonham); its iconoclasts (Keith Moon, Rat Scabies, Andrew Cyrille); the multiple potential identities - drummer as guru-teacher (Freddie Gruber), movie-star (Gene Krupa), drum-hero (John Bonham, Buddy Rich, Carl Palmer), and hell-raiser<sup>42</sup> (Keith Moon, Ginger Baker); the drummer-as-animal<sup>43</sup> or intellectual (Max Roach, Terry Bozzio). From the chimera of the one-handed roll to the narrative of the culture’s elders’ past experiences, all these artefacts and others in aggregate constitute the drum culture. As has long been accepted, creativity builds on what has gone before; it does not come from nowhere (*ex nihilo*) (Glăveanu 2010:153). No drummer is working in a vacuum. “No living organism is closed; it needs exchanges with the environment to maintain a steady state, and no culture or society is immutable” (Arieti 1976:308). The action-theoretical account situates Arieti’s ‘culturally-impregnated’ resources as tools with which the individual drummer connects with others in goal-orientated, intentional action.

A third precept is based upon the most recent revolution in creativity studies, and is associated with the idea that any satisfactory account of creativity should include the cultural context (Montuori and Purser 1995, Glăveanu 2010b). Feedback from the environment to the organism, or field to creator, is both an embedded and useful component in creativity (Holloway 1969, Ratner 1999, Kitayama 2002). Collaborative and individual creative action is continually interpreted and assessed by the wider culture and the community of practice; at the highest level, such action may change domain practice. In this way drummers shape the drum culture and the drum culture shapes drummers.

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<sup>42</sup> The phrase is used as the title for drummer Ginger Baker’s autobiography (Baker 2010)

<sup>43</sup> Effectively portrayed by 1) a person in a gorilla suit playing drum kit for a 2007 Cadbury Schweppes TV ad, and by 2) the house drummer called ‘Animal’ on the popular TV show The Muppets.

#### 4.2.2 Ideological tropes

Problematically, however, the link between creativity and the drum culture is mediated by the culture's organising ideology. Interpreted here as "an articulated system of meanings, values, and beliefs of a kind that can be abstracted as the 'worldview' of a particular group" (Comaroff and Comaroff cited in Monson 1996:12), several aspects of the shared ideology may act not only as cultural identifiers, reinforcing distinctions between the culture of drummers and other instrumentalists, but may, in part, be the source of Western music culture's perceived predisposition against the rhythmist.<sup>44</sup> The ideology of the drum culture may be taken as both a fundamental sociocultural determinant of creative activity (Hill 2012) and the locus of the elements that differentiate the drum culture from other musical cultures. On Hill's account, different cultures have different beliefs concerning which types of people have the ability to be musically creative (Hill 2012:93). The ensuing part of the discussion is structured around three sets of issues.

A first trope derives from an historical insistence that notions of aesthetics, mind, harmony and the intellect are superior to hedonism, body, rhythm and the 'natural'. It has become embedded in a drum ideology based on a racist misconception, in turn buried deep in 19<sup>th</sup> century primitivist myth (Gioia 1989). This perspective may be traced to René Descartes and the 17<sup>th</sup> century dualist notion of the 'mind/body split'. Frith traced how the equation of 'serious' with the mind and high culture, and 'fun'<sup>45</sup> with the body and thus low culture, became established in the United States and Europe in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. He observed how a good classical performance became measured by the stillness it commanded, in contrast to a good rock concert, as measured by the audience's physical response and bodily movement; how quickly they get out of their seats or onto the dance floor (Frith 1996a).

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<sup>44</sup> The term, synonymous with 'drummer', was coined by Stewart Copeland for an album, film and DVD of that name. The perception here is based on authorial and anecdotal evidence.

<sup>45</sup> Both drumming and the popular music which embodies it are generally seen as fun. We are wired to respond to sound and particularly rhythmic sound (Koepchen *et al* cited in Hodges 2009:126).

This musical equation of aesthetic/mind versus hedonistic/body was depicted by Frith as one effect of the mental/manual division of labour built into the Industrial Revolution, and into the consequent organization of education. Feelings, he suggested, were then taken to be best expressed spiritually and mentally, perhaps in Church, or in the contemplation of Art, with a stiff upper lip, but never to be displayed in public (Frith 1996a). Bodily responses were, by definition, mind-less, now a term of disparagement<sup>46</sup>. The brain came to be associated with art music, brainlessness with popular music. By 1962, it was, on Peter Stadlen's account, "a reliable symptom of Light Music that a minimum of brain activity is required for it to be savoured and understood" (Stadlen 1962:353).

Jazz, also, was not a music that had to be thought about. When popular music engaged with black American music in the early part of the century, a long history of Romanticism stood ready to define black African culture as the 'body', the other part of the European bourgeois 'mind'. Ted Gioia argued that the French intellectual view of the 'primitive', the myth of the 'noble savage',<sup>47</sup> meant that jazz was heard as emotionally charged but largely devoid of intellectual content, while the jazz musician was taken to be an inarticulate and unsophisticated practitioner of an art which s/he scarcely understood (Gioia 1989).

A favourable view of the primitive pre-civilised world from the sophisticated over-civilised world thus found primitive people to be innocent, uncorrupted by culture and still close to some undefined human 'essence'. Such a tortuous logic asserted that African music, held to be more 'primitive' or 'natural' than European music had to be more in touch with the body - the difference between the two being the emphasis on rhythm. By such a racist and confused ideological route has the Western kit drummer thus become imbued with the primitive, the sexual and the mindless.

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<sup>46</sup> This split is in evidence in the traditional Irish dancer, whose rigid upper body is counterpointed with feverish leg and footwork in shows such as *Riverdance*.

<sup>47</sup> American critic Henry Krehbiel, music editor of the New York Tribune in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and an important figure in the music appreciation movement of that period saw rhythm favourably as the "starting-point of music". Unfortunately, he then also concluded that it "stirs the blood of the savage" (Krehbiel cited in Brennan 2013b).

A second ideological trope has its roots in the first, and manifests itself in the downplay of intellect. For years Western kit drummers have been considered, and come to consider themselves, as a breed apart and a breed below (Smith 2013). In response to continual questioning of their musical abilities (Monson 1996) and years of ridicule and trivialisation of their skill and the music that embodies it, some drummers have come to perform to type. Downplaying any connection with intellect, they tend to adopt an ‘us-against-them’ occupational culture of the kind documented by sociologist Howard Becker (1963). Anecdotally, many practitioners and music producers will insist that successful performance in either functional or compositional mode is all about ‘the feel’<sup>48</sup>, but this study contends that musical rhythm is as much a mental as a physical matter. Deciding when to play a note is as much a matter of thought as deciding which note to play.

In an apparent effort to distance themselves from technical expertise (or knowledge), some practitioners choose to foreground their ineptness, espousing a determined incompetence.<sup>49</sup> Pre-empting the British punk-rock movement of the late 1970s, American proto-punk groups like *The Godz* were among the first to articulate the (then) radical premise that anyone could, and indeed should, be a musician. Patrick Burke found the group to be “flagrantly, outrageously, unabashedly incompetent” and admittedly an “extreme case” whose ideas “represented a third stream of revolutionary thought in rock” (Burke 2011:38). The conception of drumming as ‘mind-less’<sup>50</sup> will be resituated shortly in the context of the low status of drummers; the focal point here is the way in which the cultural ideology has given us the drumming, rather than the drumming giving us the cultural ideology. “Of what am I capable?” asks the drummer. “Not much”; comes the ideological response.

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<sup>48</sup> For Copeland, for example, drumming is “something you feel and play without thought” (Sutcliffe 2008).

<sup>49</sup> While asserting that his contribution to Fleetwood Mac’s *Go Your Own Way* is a “major part of that song”, Mick Fleetwood quickly and tellingly adds that his part came, “I’m ashamed to say, from capitalising on my ineptness” (Black 1995). See also Cohen’s study of two Liverpool bands for more in this area (Cohen 1991).

<sup>50</sup> Many who’ve attempted to coordinate four limbs playing four instruments simultaneously in one coherent rhythm will testify to at least a minimal amount of mental involvement.

A third strand to the drum culture ideology, the worldview which this thesis contends does much to determine the way in which drummers are perceived and perceive themselves, encircles the most obvious difference between drummers and other instrumentalists; the Western drum kit is unpitched, or more precisely, of indefinite pitch.<sup>51</sup> A prejudice against unpitched instruments, revolving around the distinction between drums and noise on the one hand and musical sounds on the other, can be traced back almost as far as their introduction to Western classical music (Small 1998:121, Brennan 2013b).

In this way, a powerfully corrosive Western art music ideology has nurtured a sense of inferiority of those who perform on unpitched instruments to those who perform on pitched instruments. Embedded in a racist misconception and spawning the falsity of the mind/body split, this ideology exacerbates the separation of thought from feeling and the concomitant downplay of intellect among un-pitched or indefinite-pitch practitioners. The supremacy of pitch and the marginalisation of those who perform ‘only with rhythm’ has created a circling of the wagons which, it is suggested, finds the less secure practitioner unwilling to engage with the broader musical picture lest s/he be found lacking in inventiveness. The contention here is that 20<sup>th</sup> century developments on the drum kit have, on the contrary, evidenced sufficient musical creativity that belated study of the work of this community of practice in the round would assist in an improved understanding of the power and place of creativity in our rhythmic culture.

### **4.3 Positioning drummers in community**

It has been argued above that drummers may be characterised as acting within a clearly defined, bounded drum culture constituted through its own language, mythology, ideology, and praxis. Going further, it is suggested that drummers are situated within the “intermediate space” (Jovchelovitch 2007:71) of a community of practice (Wenger

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<sup>51</sup> A tone may be identified as a note of clearly discernible fundamental pitch. The instruments comprising the Western drum kit generally do not have discernible fundamental pitch; they are of indefinite pitch (Tagg 2013:275). It is quite possible, however, to roughly detect the relative pitches of two sounds of indefinite pitch. The high, medium and low tom-toms of many drum kits afford an approximate sense of a melodic contour. Wilson (2003) elaborates the concept of melodic drumming in the work of Terry Bozzio and Max Roach.



1998), itself enfolded within the broader culture. Anecdotal and authorial evidence suggests that drummers tend to be people of like mind, exhibiting remarkably uniform and sometimes intensely held worldviews that sustain them and position them relative to other musicians and outsiders. Writers like Barrett who inhabit the terrain between music education and ethnomusicology have found that children learn music in communities of musical practice (Barrett 2005, 2011). A community of practice is characterised as having mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire; dimensions that define a group of people as a community (Wenger 1998). Anecdotal and experiential evidence indicates that drummers substantially satisfy all three criteria.

First, mutual engagement is seen as manifest in specific forms of participation that contextualize meaning, rather than as intrinsic or universal (Wenger 1998:62). The action-theoretical approach developed in Chapter 3 suggests that drummers participate through situated action, and that they participate creatively through significant situated action. This is supported by the community of practice, in which people are engaged with one another in action (Lave and Wenger cited in Drath and Palus 1994). A practice does not exist in the abstract; it exists because people are engaged in actions *whose meanings they negotiate with each other*.

From the moment the beginner emerges from the practice room to engage with others, her or his engagement is mediated through one or several social structures. Drummers exist as part of a profession, an industry, a market and a business. They mutually engage at Percussive Arts Society Conventions, ‘Drummer Days’, ‘Drum Festivals’, at a single artist ‘Drum Clinic’, or just a workshop at the local store. At these events, information and gossip are freely exchanged and new community members recruited. The traditional location for the acolyte’s enculturation was the local drum store, where more experienced players would ‘hang’ and share information. More recently, the locus of engagement has both expanded to include real and virtual magazines and websites and contracted as physical retail space dedicated to the drummer has diminished. Band-leading drummers such as the respondents in this study might employ musician X on a Monday, be employed by him or her on Tuesday, and both function as employees in Y’s band on the Wednesday. Mutual exchange of employment opportunities in this way has been

identified as one factor promoting a sense of kinship within other music communities (Cottrell 2004).

Second, participants in a community of practice tend to have a detailed and complex understanding of their enterprise as they define it which outsiders may not share (Wenger 1998). As already noted, drummers have come to underestimate their skills, downplay their contribution, and save their 'best' for appreciation by knowledgeable colleagues at drum clinics and workshops. Research within the community of jazz improvisers has begun to explore how membership both crystallises individual identity and helps to conceptualise the very nature of the music being performed (MacDonald and Wilson 2005; 2006). Capitalising on this, it might be surmised that membership of the drum community provides a similar function for drummers. The community draws on what its members do and what they know, as well as on their ability to connect meaningfully to what they do not do and do not know; that is, to the contributions and knowledge of others (Wenger 1998).<sup>52</sup>

Finally, Wenger suggested that community members will have developed a repertoire for which outsiders miss shared references; in effect, their own language. It is now a commonplace in anthropology not only that the shared language of a community is the most essential carrier of its common culture, but that to study the culture of a foreign people without also becoming acquainted with their language is unimaginable. The drum culture's onomatopoeic jargon has already been noted in the context of its pedagogy (section 4.2.1). Comprehension of this ever-changing technological and pedagogical lexicon is essential for membership of the community. In the author's experience, to be unable to distinguish the sound of birch from maple, 'triple-flanged' drum hoops from wood hoops, or 'resonator heads' from 'black dots', is to imperil that membership.

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<sup>52</sup> At a Percussive Arts Society Convention it is possible to observe the intensity of, for example, the military snare-drum specialist's attention to the presentation of a castanet player from Andalucía. It was at one such convention that the author adopted an innovative horizontal and symmetrical layout of the standard drum kit following consideration of the ergonomics of the symphony timpanist of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra. Wenger argues that participation in the community, indeed the existence of the community itself, depends on mutual engagement of this sort.

The language of melody and harmony shares a commonality with the other musicians in most popular music groups, but the language of the drummer is (perhaps deliberately) arcane. It is generally accepted that humans use language as a way of signalling identity with one cultural group and difference from others. Even among speakers of one language several different ways of using the language exist, and different dialects are used to signal affiliation with particular subgroups within a larger culture (Lazear 1995). Like wine tasters, cymbal manufacturers have developed a large vocabulary to describe the subtle distinctions between, for example, ‘warm ride’ and ‘dry ride’ cymbals in a manner similar to the wine-taster’s distinction between differing hocks or burgundies. For the majority of drinkers or drummers, these distinctions are those between a better or worse, or a more or less agreeable, wine or cymbal. Wenger acknowledges that our sense of ourselves “includes the objects with which we identify because they furnish our practices. Mastering the wine-tasting vocabulary and being able to appreciate and discuss all the nuances of a good wine can become a source of distinction, pride, and identity” (Wenger 1998:70). What may seem to the outsider like the fetishisation of drum equipment is seen from this viewpoint as part of the desire to belong, and as such, as part of the interplay between what Wenger calls the “participation and reification that makes people and things what they are” (1998:70).

In brief, the notion of “field” from systemic models of creativity mentioned earlier takes on a new meaning when social groups are theorized as communities. A community is understood less in terms of its topography or as a local social system; more in terms of the close ties and the feeling of belongingness between its members (Urry 2007). A community can describe different social realities, from small groups to organizations and larger social structures. Communities exist where they are felt and experienced as such (Jovchelovitch 2007).

#### **4.3.1 Community, creativity and meaning**

From community, drummers derive meaning (Cohen 1991). Cohen observed that her group of Liverpool rockers “drew strength from this vague but crucial feeling of belonging to a “community” (Cohen 1991:225). This is the way in which meaning constructs community which constructs meaning. Indeed, Drath and Palus went so far as to assert that the primary process of meaning-making in collective experience is culture-

building (Drath and Palus 1994:10). Berger's view that different musical cultures lead to different ways of structuring experience and hence to different meanings (Berger 2009: xiv) underpins a central tenet of this study; namely, that the meaning-making processes of drummers are qualitatively different from other groups of popular instrumental practitioners (see also Hytönen-Ng 2013:51). For example, in much Western popular music, the drummer (or the drumming) tends to start at the beginning of the song and finish or fade at the end in an uninterrupted flow of notes from at least one or more elements of the kit. This contrasts with the contributions of wind, brass, reeds, and vocalists who must necessarily pause for breath, and guitarists and keyboard players who frequently 'lay out'. In several sub-genres of rock (metal, punk, drum'n'bass) there is a very real sense that if the drummer stopped the music would be unable to continue. This tends to reinforce the idea that the drummer is in 'a world of his own': in effect, in a community of practice with its own shared learning,<sup>53</sup> situated within a clearly defined drum culture constituted through its own language, praxis, and mores.

The notion of community is important because first, it is within community that descriptions and narratives are meaningfully constructed; and second, community has been identified as a major factor in the analysis of any creative act (Glăveanu 2010a, Buber and Eisenstadt 1992, Jovchelovitch 2007, Burnard 2012). Creativity "needs a milieu to invoke influence; the convergence of self and source is meaningful when it finds resonance in community" (Custodero 2012:372). For Glăveanu, community is both the context for and a major factor enabling creativity (Glăveanu 2010a). Building on Boden's bi-level depiction of creativity as either a) historical H-creativity which makes a contribution to the culture of a society, or b) personal P-creativity which contributes to the individual's own life sphere, Glăveanu sought to interpose a third level between the two at the level of community (C-creativity). In this way, he emphasised the fundamental reality that "humans live and create within communities and each community membership brings with it a distinctive set of resources and practices, a specific knowledge and identity. Placed between the P and H levels, C-creativity focuses on the vital role of communities as social contexts" (Glăveanu 2010b:160).

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<sup>53</sup> Dean found that most drummers learn by watching other more senior members of the community (Dean 2012).

## 4.4 Sharing

Common to both constructs of collectiveness - culture and community - is the notion of sharing, identified as a critical factor underlying creative work (Moran and John-Steiner 2004, Hytönen-Ng 2013, Bergey and Kaplan 2010, Custodero 2012). For Dewey, sharing is the “fruit of communication” (Dewey cited in Bamberger 2005:143). Culture in the broadest sense is evidenced by “shared values, assumptions, rules, and social practices that make up and contribute to personal and collective identity and security” (Lull cited in Barrett 2011:42). Cultural psychology accords high importance to the notion of sharing; its processes emerge from and manifest in shared experiences in lived contexts (Cole 1996).

Within the drum culture there are multiple sharings: of musical knowledge shared and transformed in rehearsal (Cook 2012:452), of pedagogy, of practical advice, of emotional support, of the groove, of Flow, of the construction of meaning and identity (Smith 2013, Hargreaves *et al* 2002), of the sharing of meanings of experience (Cottrell 2004, Bergey and Kaplan 2010)<sup>54</sup> and, not least, the sharing of problems. These sharings were seen by participants as being either temporary or sustained, located off-stage in collaborative content-generation in rehearsal or recording, or post-concert analysis, or on-stage at the point of delivery of the collaborative product for evaluation by a live audience. This section focuses on sharing in terms of meaning, groove, Flow, and the sharing of problems.

### 4.4.1 Sharing meaning

It has been argued, in reference to the IMCM (section 3.4), that drummers derive meaning from a strong sense of shared community. The way they make meaning of lived experience, and particularly lived creative experience, affects the way they carry out that experience in their actions as musicians, as depicted in the model. For Schutz, the way to

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<sup>54</sup> Burnard points to John Blacking’s 1973 discussion of empathic experience in the context of African drumming, in which two drummers might achieve such an experience “unavailable in any other way” (Burnard 2012:161). This is in direct line with the author’s own experience as a practitioner (Bruford 2009).

meaning is to be able to put behaviour into context (Schutz cited in Seidman 2006:10); in this sense, it is the connection or relationships among events that is their meaning.

However, meanings are produced not only by individuals who register certain experiences as connected to others; cultures also produce meanings. They maintain collections of typical narrative meanings in their myths, fairy tales, histories and stories (Polkinghorne 1998). The narrative stereotype of the drummer as a hard-drinking hooligan who defenestrates TVs and drives cars into swimming pools, endorsed by those who seek confirmation that drummers are gorillas, is in turn emphasised by a 2007 television advertising campaign for Cadbury Schweppes in which a gorilla is featured as a drummer. To participate as a member of a culture requires a general knowledge of its full range of meanings. Cultural stocks of meaning are not understood as static but rather as added to by new contributions from members, and deleted by lack of use (Giddens cited in Polkinghorne 1988:6).

Phenomenology can make a fundamental contribution to the interpretation of meaning in the study of expressive culture (Berger 2009: ix), and the phenomenological focus throughout has emphasised the meaning-making process of the individual, from his or her point of view. For some musicians the experience of creativity lies entirely within, and may occur irrespective of background distraction, performance parameters, listener or co-performer approval or disapproval, or indeed the presence or absence of any listener or co-performer at all. At the opposite polarity creativity is experienced necessarily in conjunction with others and is defined and ratified by their external approval. Participants each adopted an individual stance towards the experience of creativity.

There may be multiple interpretations of the creative moment from several perspectives; physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social or virtual. To illustrate, the physical experience may be characterised in terms of the rate of heart beat, raised blood pressure, sore hands or advanced motor function. The mental experience among improvisers has earlier been addressed as a being under varying degrees of control. The relationship to the passive musical instrument may be intensely emotional, seen as falling in and out of love with drums, drumming, or music, as if these were lovers, or as quasi-religious,

“monastic, timeless, and unchanging. It may be a relationship as close as and as exclusive as man and wife, or even more so, as many a spouse will attest” (Bruford 2009:316).

When the Christian drummer in an evangelical rock group dedicates his or her work to God, s/he invokes a spiritual dimension to his or her creativity. For others, the creative moment is experienced socially and irrespective of genre; meaning is located in the social and collaborative. Creativity may be experienced entirely online in a virtual garage band in a collaborative cyber-community of internet musicians (Harvey 2009, Burnard 2012). These and other interpretations assign meaning to performance practice. While the discussion retains a tight focus on action-within-culture, two dimensions of perception from embodiment theory may help to illuminate experience and meaning-making in music performance and thus demand a brief overview.

First, drawing on theories of embodiment from philosophy and science, Corness (2008) helps to explain the human ability to assign meaning to the sounds and gestures performed by others. Taking embodied experience as his starting point for analysis of human participation in a culture, Csordas emphasises Merleau-Ponty’s use of the concept of reversibility to explain our existence in terms of reciprocal interaction, a notion which converges with the present line of thinking that runs from Dewey through Boesch to Clarke (Csordas 1993). A Deweyan view of this reciprocity would suggest that in the creative moment the performer both expresses experience and experiences that expression. S/he engages with the world of sound as both subject (the one drumming) and object (the one drummed to); “the one both hearing and being heard” (Corness 2008:21). Reciprocity, too, is at the heart of Clarke’s observation that “perceiving organisms seek out and respond to perceptual information that specifies objects and events in the environment, and this perceiving is a continuous process that is both initiated by, and results in, action” (Clarke cited in Moore 2013:248).

A second observation drawing upon an embodiment perspective derives in part from Barthes’ musical semiology, which aims to explore “the body in a state of music” (Szekely 2006). According to Szekely it is, for Barthes, “not just important that we hear and feel the voice, but that we hear and feel the materiality of the voice” (Szekely 2006). He goes on to reference Barthes’ erotics of music: “the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs” (Szekely 2006). Barthes’ approach is

interpreted by Moore as “acknowledging that the way listeners listen is greatly determined by whatever bodily knowledge they have of producing music” (Moore 2013:4). Moore points to current research in neurology to advance this claim, which indicates that first, a drummer in performance (always a listener) possesses an involuntary neurological response to drum music determined in part by the intimate physiological experience of producing the drum sounds; and second, that that response will always engage him or her more completely than the response of non-drummers (Moore 2013:4). Drummers, then, respond to, experience and make sense of drumming differently from others by virtue of being drummers.

Borrowing from and building upon the strands of thinking discussed above, it is possible to foreground the following central dimensions of meaning-making:

- Drummers in performance are at once making and listening to the music, and experiencing it ‘in the moment’; they may then interpret it (which is to assign it meaning) *post hoc*.
- Perceiving, experiencing, acting, and evaluating are all enacted through a nexus of meaning-making, meaning-transmission and meaning-circulation encapsulated in a personal plot line or narrative.
- The performer is simultaneously perceived, experienced and evaluated by two groups of hearers - co-performers and non-performing listeners - who are to a greater or lesser degree sharing the same nexus of meaning-making with him or her.
- The popular music instrumentalist may have a measure of control over the production of his own work, but little over its interpretation upon reception.
- The concept of reciprocal interaction would suggest that in the creative moment the performer both expresses experience and experiences that expression.



#### **4.4.2 Sharing groove**

Good drummers care about the ‘groove’; the way it is reliably constructed, produced, sustained, intensified or relaxed. The groove is characterised here as a socio-musical construct embodied in the practice of one or more in shared performance. The topic of the groove was examined as one of the four core areas of drummer practice in section 2.5.2; the emphasis here is on its shared co-construction. Drummers enjoy and share with others the pleasure of what Doffman calls “the mutual tuning-in” accomplished through entrainment (Doffman 2008:1). This phenomenon has been characterised as task movements coincident with the rhythmic pulses of the music, giving the activity elements of a dance (Sloboda *et al* 2009:431). The human tendency towards rhythmic coordination and entrainment is not only particularly obvious in activities that require rhythmic coordination to improve work efficiency (Clayton 2009:38),<sup>55</sup> but may also engender a smoothing effect (Zerubavel 1997, Kitayama 2002) with implications for homogeneity within practice.

A central paradox within the community of drummers, which, reduced to its barest essence, states that more and more drummers play less and less, has already been noted. One explanation of this reduction in available temporal, metrical, dynamical and timbral options may have its origins in the co-regulatory smoothing process that Zerubavel and Kitayama have identified through a cultural psychology approach to socialization in the ‘thought community’, and which may now be seen to have a close cousin in entrainment (Zerubavel 1997, Kitayama 2002). Homogenisation is a key constraint on expressivity and the topic will be problematised shortly in a discussion of its wider implications for drummer practice (section 4.4.4)

#### **4.4.3 Sharing Flow**

The Csikszentmihalyian concept of Flow, described as a “merging of action and awareness” and thus a “convergence of knowing and doing” (Custodero 2012:371), has

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<sup>55</sup> In popular music culture, this aspect manifests itself in work songs, sea shanties, military music and so forth.

received considerable attention in connection with peak performance (Gabrielsson 2011), group creativity (Sawyer 2006), and jazz performance (Hytönen-Ng 2013). Its cultivation and co-construction is a central dimension of the experience of group performance and finds meaning at its intersection with action-theory and Deweyan philosophy.

It was argued in section 3.3 that action theory holds situated action as goal-orientated and intentional. In having purpose, it fulfils a central criterion for Flow: “to experience Flow one must set goals for one’s actions” (Csikszentmihalyi 1992:217). For example, deliberate practice on the drum kit prepares the ground for the Flow moment when there is minimal or no delay between thought and action, when the two are completely fused. When Csikszentmihalyi states that “the purpose must result in strivings; intent has to be translated into action” (1992:217), he converges not only with the action-theorists but also with the philosophy of Dewey, who considered that obstacles or constraints are always necessary for action to become experience. Undergoing always precedes doing and, at the same time, is continued by it. These interconnected processes take the action forward to become full experience (Dewey cited in Glăveanu 2013:2-3). The concept of Flow gathers these strands of thinking and frames them such as to illuminate the experience of individual creative music performance.

#### **4.4.4 Sharing problems**

Drummers, then, experience sharing in terms of meaning, groove, and Flow. A final dimension addresses the common obstacles and problems that not only heighten the sense of sharedness, of confidence under threat, but which also mediate creativity. One strand of thought posits culture as arising essentially in response to a problem or set of problems faced in common by a group of people<sup>56</sup> (Gouldner 1957, Becker and Geer 1960, Martin 2006:106). In this view, the drum culture is *strengthened* by the very problems with which drummers must contend. Brennan’s astute characterisation of the drummer as oscillating uncertainly “between centrality and marginality, between

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<sup>56</sup> Becker and Geer linked problems to culture. The “organised whole” of the solutions to shared problems is the culture of the group (Becker and Geer 1960:305).

virtuosity and incompetence, between useful supplier of good quality human groove and unnecessary adjunct to the terrain that music technology has now secured as its own” (Brennan 2013; personal correspondence) neatly summarises the prevailing ecology within which drummers are obliged to perform. Crucially, it also highlights the ‘useful/useless’ dichotomy which tends to presage the common understanding of what drummers are for. The discussion might usefully unpick the dualities packed into Brennan’s characterisation by focusing on the several interlinked problems loosely grouped within the three dimensions of practice previously mentioned; marginalisation, the relationship between technology and identity, and homogeneity.

### ***The marginalisation problem***

As a corpus of popular music instrumentalists, outsiders to the playfulness of pitch by nature of their chosen instrument but insiders to the art of the groove, drummers in particular have been characterised as standing apart from others (Monson 1996:27, Smith 2013), with their contribution generally unrecognised within the literature (Allen and Veal 2013:3). The negative ideological tropes of the mind / body split, the downplay of intellect, and the pitched instrument prejudice outlined in section 4.2.2 have been implicated as possible causes as to why this might be so and need not be restated. The consequences of such denigration, however, have profound implications for the action-choices drummers make and their perceptions of creativity.

Elite attempts to construct a socially exclusive, highbrow tradition of legitimated art music in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century necessitated a deprecation of lowbrow, ‘light’ (later, popular) music as “an important element in the process of sacralisation” (Levine 1998:136). On this account, efforts to foreground tonal harmony enlisted and promoted the pitched-instrument prejudice in the concomitant deprecation of the rhythmic element in music. Popular music, itself framed as an object of “disdain, derogation, and disgust” has only recently been habilitated as a subject for analysis (Keightley 2010:91). It comes as no surprise, then, that drummers tend to remain reticent about their skills and wary of allying them with any notion of creativity. A causal connection might exist between the constant misunderstanding and denigration of the art of the drummer from outside the community, perpetuating the ‘substandard musician’ stereotype (Wilson 2003), and a

corresponding lack of creative confidence within, but, if so, its extent has yet to be fully examined.

In seeking to distance himself from such negative introversion, Max Roach may have found powerful creative motivation: “Drummers who just played straight time never did much for me. I’ve always felt the drummer shouldn’t be a subservient figure” (Korall cited in Wilson 2003:7). From this it may be inferred that he thought drummers probably *were* subservient figures. “I always hated the idea that the drums were the musical coons of the band, just the support systems [...]. I played in a way that meant the drums weren’t in the background anymore, they were the front line with everybody else” (Crouch cited in Wilson 2003:9). Joe Chambers offered a similarly Afro-centric point of view when detailing the rôle drums have played in American history, their overall acceptance in Western music and, ultimately, why he no longer wished to be considered a jazz drummer (Murph 2012). From the evidence presented by several scholars in this area, it might be argued that a causal connection exists between the status of kit drummers as substandard musicians and a heightened sense of the embattled culture of deviancy noted by many<sup>57</sup> (Becker 1963, Dobson 2010:250, Frith 1996b, Kemp 1996). Drummers tend to share and take strength from their embattled cultural identity.

### ***The music technology problem***

It might further be suggested that recording practices afforded by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century arrival of computer-generated and quantised clock-time, progressively adopted as common practice in Western recording studios, further conspired to marginalise the drummer. In the pre-digital tape-based era of the 1960s-1990s, anecdotal evidence and authorial experience indicated that the drummer’s performance was among the first to be committed to tape. The requirement was for, as far as possible, a flawless performance with only guide accompaniment from band-members (who generally replaced their parts later) and based on a supposition of what instruments s/he may eventually be accompanying. Other instrumental parts might be considered *post hoc* in their relationship to a steady, unvarying drum track, to which they could be added or from

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<sup>57</sup> For a further perspective on shared history based on notions of deviance, see Dobson 2010:250.

which they could be removed. The provision of the necessary but functional ‘backing’ track as playground for others revealed “an asymmetry of instrumental function” (Mermikides 2015; personal correspondence).

Under the ‘oscilloscopic prurience’ of the ubiquitous computer, drummers unsurprisingly tended to avoid the exotic, the excitable, or that which might exist at the limit of their technical ability. Through the later decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, marginalisation of the drummer proceeded apace through injudicious edits producing ‘unplayable’ performances, inappropriate over-dubbing, quantised and automated clock-time, flattening of dynamics, and eventually, with the arrival of digital recording systems, the wholesale ceding of whatever control remained of the individual’s performance to the producer in post-production.

### ***The homogenisation problem***

A further obstacle to be circumvented is provided by the perceived homogenisation of some dimensions of performance. Cultural homogenisation is readily apparent in numerous areas of modern life, from clothing, hotels and advertising to architecture, car design and popular music. With respect to the latter, it would seem likely that its component performances are also becoming homogenised, although research in this area is not yet entirely convincing. Zils *et al* found homogeneity of tempo and meter in a substantial majority of the titles of a 10,000 item rock music catalogue but produced little evidence for this (Zils *et al* 2002:1). Tamlyn’s exhaustive enquiry into the prevalence of the backbeat in early swing, rhythm and blues and rock and roll found remarkable stylistic consistency within drumming, but tells us little about anything after 1960 (Tamlyn 1998).

More contemporary work asserting that hit songs are getting louder and more rhythmically repetitive (Ni *et al* 2011) and predictable (Levitin *et al* 2012) converged with both authorial experience and Serrà *et al*, who found a number of trends in contemporary Western popular music that point towards potentially poorer volume dynamics (Serrà *et al* 2012:5). A drummer’s sound, or timbral presence, is at the heart of his or her character as a musician. To restrict or delimit a drummer’s expressive palette is

to separate the individual from his or her character, render him or her faceless, and reduce him or her to anonymity. On Blake's account, it is timbre, more than any other musical parameter, which musically expresses differentiation (Blake 2012:1).

In respect of predictability, a reading of the FCC would suggest that at one end of the FCC the functional drummer operates with an *intention towards* predictability; at the other, the composing drummer does so with an *intention towards* surprise. In part because of the easily replicable and, arguably, the increasingly predictable patterns of the functional drummer, the computer has impinged most upon his or her traditional domain. Several popular music genres (for example house music, rap, pop or hip-hop) are frequently layered upon a bed of automated percussion generated from the computer or sampler. This predictability, coupled with a preference towards louder, dynamically more stable music and improving music technology, enhances the possibility of automation which some see as a threat to their practice.

Anecdotal evidence of older practitioners transitioning from the analogue to the digital world, suggested that they tend to find the latter ethically and aesthetically unwelcoming, underscoring his or her own sense of inferiority and questioning his or her competence. The author's experiential evidence tends to support the idea of both an intentional, narrowing homogenisation of tempi, dynamic range and stylistic appropriateness in the mainstream, and an intentional broadening heterogeneity of timbral and metrical possibilities at the very margins of practice. An oppositional position that asserted that Western kit drumming was, on balance, becoming more heterogeneous was difficult to find in the literature.<sup>58</sup>

Pending further research, increased homogenisation of some dimensions of the performed part may have had consequences in several areas. First, as has been noted, it may have fostered a susceptibility to its reproduction by computer, the human performance being correspondingly surplus to requirements. Secondly, it may have

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<sup>58</sup> Recent studies show that supposedly 'metronomic' styles like funk actually contain significant and meaningful tempo variations between sections (see Millward 2001a, 2001b). Mermikides has examined the subtlety of rhythm under the powerful microscope that modern technology affords (Mermikides 2010).

heightened the attention afforded by both producer and practitioner to surface detail, especially in the recorded artefact. Thirdly, it may have shifted the area of innovative work to post-production. The skilful application of outboard analogue and digital treatments (often referred to as ‘ear-candy’) locate the post-production work on the recorded drums in the world of ‘sound enhancement’, of the kind much used in commercial advertising. Anecdotally, this type of work is frequently undertaken by the drummers themselves, whose occupation, especially in the context of the stay-home drummer, is in the process of much redefinition.

Such heightened attention to these processes may herald a permanent shift in the meaning of drumming and what it means to be a drummer. A drum performance without cosmetic enhancement, for example, now comes to be seen as ‘authentic’ and intimate, the preferred option for many introspective singer-songwriters or jazz performers. Moore’s construct of the ‘sound box’ would suggest that drums played quietly, and foregrounded in the mix with little or no electronic processing possess a different quality and convey a different meaning to those played hard, heavily processed and set well back in the mix (Moore 2013).

A full examination of the connection between the strength of a culture and its requirement for conformity is beyond the scope of this enquiry, but within the domain of music this conformity may be interpreted as playing out in homogeneity. Several scholars within anthropology have noted the smoothing effect of a strong cultural identity, in which idiosyncrasies are smoothed out and perceived within classes of behaviour (Tomasello 1999, Holloway 1969, Kitayama 2002). On this account, personal psychological processes and structures are actively organized to coordinate with the pertinent cultural systems of practices and public meanings (Kitayama 2002). In short, it would seem on a balance of probabilities that the drum community harbours, nurtures and shares problems of marginalisation, technology, identity and homogenisation about as fast as its members can devise creative solutions.

## 4.5 Recapitulation

To recapitulate in brief, the preceding chapters have raised and begun to answer some central questions around creativity and meaning in drummer performance. They have done this by moulding the construct of significant situated action from a synthesis of elements of creativity, culture and psychology.

Following an examination of the foundational elements of creative music performance, Chapter 2 applied a systems-theoretical approach to the attribution of creativity in music performance to counter the sociocultural thinking of those such as Burnard (2012), which posits a multiplicity of creativities in that domain. In Chapter 3, the action-theoretical approaches of Boesch (1991) and Glăveanu (2013) were combined to situate significance within mediated action, providing the genesis for the IMCM. With action positioned at the centre of a web of individual level relationships between lived experience, interpretation and meaning, and integrated with domain level cultural variables such as expectations of the drum culture, assessments of creativity and quality of the action, the model begins to explain both how drummers construct notions of creativity, and the way in which meaning informs change in practice.

Chapter 4 developed the cultural psychology approach in positioning drummers in a community of practice, itself enfolded within a dominant drum culture which to a large extent governs and determines the ways in which drummers construct, circulate and share meaning. The literature was found to be broadly supportive of three interconnecting ideas; first, that drummers live in a cultural tradition that regulates, expresses, and shapes their experience of creative practice; second, that they are creatures of community; and third, that the sociocultural features of this community mediate the psychological behaviour, meaning-making and choice selection of the individual.

Chapter 2-4 have thus identified and expanded upon several research questions; the next chapter describes the methodology used to provide data to investigate them. An overview of the methodology was provided in section 1.4; Chapter 5 aims to build on that introduction and to provide assurance that appropriate procedures have been followed.



## CHAPTER 5: Methodology and method

### 5.1 The research design: an exploratory paradigm

As outlined in Chapter 1, this thesis is informed by the philosophical and theoretical dimensions within which the detailed research design is framed; here, those dimensions are phenomenological rather than positivist. An inductive approach to data seeks to identify and assess rather than measure and count, and to understand people's meaning at the individual level. The detailed research design laid out in this section is accordingly qualitative, exploratory and interpretivist, with its "emphasis on multiple realities, the researcher and phenomenon as mutually interactive, the belief that causes and effects cannot be separated, that research is value laden and that the outcome of the research is socially constructed" (Brown cited in Goulding 1998:56).

A constructivist research model is both interpretivist and embedded in phenomenology. It is characterised by and affords reflexivity and interactivity between the researcher and researched who together view knowledge as a construction of reality. Such a paradigm identifies a 'construct' as a value or a belief, or a set of values or beliefs, and 'reality' as a personal construct in permanent negotiation with incoming experiential evidence. From this perspective, the totality of all one's constructs may be seen as one's personality; the self.

Forgoing the precise definition of relationships between variables, an interpretivist approach asks rather what those variables might be (Easterby-Smith *et al* 1991). The exploratory nature is guided by Glăveanu's work, wherein he asks of his respondents "What are the impulsions? What kind of obstacles do creators come across? What do they 'undergo'? How does the cycle of doing and undergoing actually take place?" (Glăveanu 2013:3). A Deweyan line of questioning such as this warrants the construction

of a more particular descriptive model for the domain of Western kit drumming in particular, which may have relevance for popular music instrumental practice in general.

So far this thesis has developed a cultural psychology perspective which characterises drummers as an identifiable, coherent group lying within the broader group of popular musicians, possessing common marks of identity, tradition, and language. These marks are made manifest in a broadly negative ideology based on a pitched-instrument prejudice that corrodes confidence, downplays intellect, marginalises rhythmic ability and accords low status. The drum community has been positioned as both a context for and a major factor enabling performance creativity which may be at domain changing level. However, the factors impacting upon the way drummers construct that creativity have been little interrogated within expert popular music performance. To fill that gap, the research seeks to explore participant perceptions of the causal attributes and factors affecting their experience of creativity, the meanings they derive from it, and how any such meaning-making might inform practice; in sum, the *stance*<sup>59</sup> participants adopt towards the experience of creative music performance (Berger 2009).

### 5.1.1 Research criteria

The research design described here is intended to provide a better understanding of the research problem and a means to answering the research questions. Any design, however, “inevitably reflects some imperfect interplay of resources, capabilities, purposes, possibilities, creativity, and personal judgments by the people involved” (Patton 2002:12). Appropriateness, dependability, trustworthiness (indicating that an audit trail is available and records have been kept) and transferability are principal criteria for successful research. To be sure, all drummers are not the same, but this inquiry contends that there is sufficient commonality adhering to their practice within a strong drum culture to permit cautious generalisability. With ‘thick description’ as a database, a judgement can be made as to possible application to other settings. As Bent Flyvbjerg has asserted: “Predictive theories and universals cannot be found in the study of human

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<sup>59</sup> For Berger, meaning arises not from the text alone, but from the “culturally specific ways in which people grapple with texts and cog them into structures of lived experience” (Berger 2009: xiv). This he identifies as ‘stance’.

affairs. Concrete case knowledge is therefore more valuable than the vain search for predictive theories and universals” (Flyvbjerg cited in Denzin and Lincoln 2011:304).

### **5.1.2 Justification for the research and potential usefulness of findings**

The need for research in the specific area of the psychology of creative music performance is underlined by the relative neglect of the area by others. Originating from the classical music tradition, the existing body of research indicates limited transference of findings to the popular music domain. Berger’s call for an examination of how the participants in various musical cultures constitute the facets and phenomena of their musical experience has largely gone unanswered (Berger 1999); to ask how Western kit drummers constitute and make meaning from the experience of creativity is in part a response to his call. Findings may also begin to correct an over-emphasis on the creative work of the individual composer (Nettl 1983, Burnard 2012). Littleton and Mercer (2012) suggest that more needs to be understood about collaborative and creative interactional processes in music and other artistic spheres.

As has been noted briefly, much of the scholarly work on musical creativity has been conducted with students or young professionals in classical music, and predominantly with respect to the piano.<sup>60</sup> There remain hardly any high quality emic approaches to music creativity, and results from this study should further understanding of the experiences of expert peak-career practitioners from other-than-classical music (Montuori and Purser 1997; Westwood and Low in Glăveanu 2010a). A study of the work of the drummer’s community of practice might first, assist in a reappraisal of the power and place of creativity in our rhythmic culture; second, balance historical misunderstandings of the experience of creativity among a substantial subset of popular music instrumentalists; and third, contribute to the growing understanding of the psychology and practice of music creativity. The process here follows phenomenographer Ference Marton, who suggests that a careful account of the different ways in which people think about phenomena “may help uncover conditions that

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<sup>60</sup> See Charyton and Snelbecker 2007 and Doğantan-Dack 2012 for a sample of studies in this area.

facilitate the transition from one way of thinking to a qualitatively ‘better’ perception of reality” (Marton cited in Sherman and Webb 1988:146).

## **5.2 The research methodology**

This section outlines the information required to address the research questions and the strategies most effective for obtaining such information. The first step in the selection of the research methodology was determined by the core research question, which is orientated towards an understanding of essence rather than a science of facts: how do drummers achieve and interpret creativity and meaning in music performance? The object of the research being human experience, it was unlikely to reveal itself in absolutist, non-situated hard data that can be captured by pre-programmed questions (Douglas 1985). The qualitative researcher believes lived experience to be partially situated and unpredictable; best approached with an exploratory strategy that investigates the qualitatively different ways in which people experience something or think about something (Marton 1986).

With this in mind, and acknowledging also the centrality of the alignment between the epistemology and the research methodology (Smith *et al* 2009:46), a qualitative interpretivist paradigm is adopted, using semi-structured interviews of expert practitioners to generate rich data. The most effective tool to achieve this is thematic analysis, expanded here to encompass both autoethnographic and phenomenographical components. But first, it is important to describe how such a position was arrived at.

### ***The search for an appropriate methodology***

The boundaries between neighbouring research methodologies and methods within an exploratory interpretivist approach are somewhat porous and frequently in flux, making the selection of a single ‘branded’ tool appropriate for this study no simple matter. The research design accordingly adopts strands of thinking loosely allied to other methodologies. For example, a micro-level orientation focusing on close-up human interaction in specific situations, such as this study aimed to maintain, has elements of a symbolic interaction approach. Continually oscillating between the ‘inside’ and ‘outside’

of events is redolent of the participant observer method; “on the one hand grasping the sense of specific occurrences and gestures empathetically, on the other stepping back to situate these meanings in wider contexts” (Clifford 1988:127). While elements of the discussion circulate around story-telling, the narrative life history method is avoided because the very specific area of interest and participant criteria neither permit nor warrant the expenditure of time involved in researching full life histories. Rather than an entire life story, the focus remains on achieving a clearer understanding of individual professional experience.

Central to interpretative phenomenological analysis and a constructionist methodology is acknowledgment that it is not possible for the researcher to be completely detached. Her or his involvement in setting the agenda, selecting participants and devising the interview schedule inevitably impacts on the results. Concerns circulating around separation of dispassionate academia from ‘the field’ are balanced, in this case, against the advantages of my lifelong immersion in the phenomenon; namely, that the language is known, access and trust are given, distractions and cul-de-sacs are potentially circumnavigable.<sup>61</sup> It was indeed through my experience in the field that the lack of understanding of the issues surrounding the subject under investigation originally became a topic of profound interest.

The meaning drummers make of their experience affects their practice as musicians in an iterative feedback cycle, as depicted in the IMCM. The importance of music lies in part in its ability to provide both a space for creative action and a feeling of social connectedness through partial sharing of experience (Berger 1999). When one (enculturated) drummer attends to another, the latter’s prior experience, understanding, predilections and courage are manifest in his or her musical choices and eventual outcomes, plain for the former to see and hear.

The inquiry adopts the viewpoint shared by Polkinghorne and Chase, that the narrative researcher’s primary aim is “not to discover whether narrators’ accounts are accurate reflections of actual events, but to understand the meaning people attach to those events”

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<sup>61</sup> Hughes 2012 : private email correspondence with the author 09.10.2012

(Chase in Denzin and Lincoln 2011:424). Broadly, I attempt to elicit insight rather than find solutions; the purpose of the study being not to prove something, but rather to learn something and communicate that learning. My chosen methodology thus governs the choice and use of the research tools needed to collect and then illuminate the data to address my questions.<sup>62</sup>

### **5.2.1 Cultural psychology with a phenomenological component**

My study of drummer psychology begins at the intersection of cultural psychology and hermeneutic phenomenology. Cole suggested that cultural-psychological processes emerge from and manifest in shared experiences in lived contexts (Cole 1996). Following Cole, Bergey and Kaplan recommend that researchers begin by seeking the shared meanings of actions in those lived contexts that play important rôles in people's lives (Bergey and Kaplan 2010).

Action theory is the primary theoretical lens through which I view the participants' constructions of creativity. Borrowing freely from the work of Ference Marton, Harris Berger's (2009) theory of 'Stance' and Van Manen's (1990) conceptions of Human Science research, I add a phenomenographical component to the cultural psychology framework; the emphasis is squarely on obtaining detailed descriptions of experiences in order to discern essences. Following Berger, the argument explores meanings, patterns and power relations, but more in line with ethnography tries to show how those meanings and social groups arise as the outcome of constitutive practices (Berger 1999:32). Rather than analysing the musical structures of drumming in the abstract, I seek to show how drummers engage creatively with the universe of sound in culturally specific practices.

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<sup>62</sup> In Nietzsche's elegant phrase "Whoever is searching for the human being must first find the lantern" (Nietzsche cited in van Manen 1990:4)

### 5.2.2 Rejection of other research methodologies and designs

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) might also have been a candidate for this study's methodological approach. With its focus on contextualised and detailed accounts of experience, it is an effective tool within cultural psychology. However, I ultimately selected a research design based upon the more flexible precepts of Thematic Analysis. This would allow the research to be informed by theories outside of the tightly defined scope of IPA. A narrative enquiry such as this might also adopt the phenomenological viewpoint and develop descriptions and interpretations of the phenomenon from the perspective of participants, researchers and others (Denzin and Lincoln 2011).

In devising a custom methodology in the form of a phenomenological variant of thematic analysis, it was thus found necessary to retain certain aspects of other methodologies. For example, in keeping with Grounded Theory (Goulding 1998) I strive to develop fresh theoretical interpretations of the data rather than explicitly aim for any final or complete interpretation of them. In keeping with IPA, I challenge the traditional linear relationship between the number of participants and the value of research. I retain an idiographic focus, with nine participants at the higher end of most recommendations for sample sizes (Smith *et al* 2009).

Section 5.2 has outlined the search for a methodology appropriate to the exploration of meaning; in particular, the meaning of creative drumming for those who drum. It may prove easier to identify complexities and multiplicities than to identify commonalities in fields such as that of music creativity. My position as a complete-member researcher, outlined in section 1.5, requires a custom-built methodology because to attempt to interpret another's experience is a project full of hubris. It requires a level of phenomenological 'bracketing' that may prove unattainable, even as it provides me with the interpretive framework from which to begin.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> 'Bracketing' refers to a key skill of phenomenological enquiry into the essence of lived experience. Developed by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), the question of the real existence of a contemplated object

The work seeks understanding of shared essence, interpreted here as the most invariant meaning for a context (Giorgi 1997:242). It asks if there is a defining essence to drummer creativity without which the phenomenon itself cannot be said to exist. It asks what a creative drummer looks like, and whether one might recognise another by a shared essence that both might recognise. The acquisition of such information is best approached from within a qualitative interpretivist paradigm, using semi-structured interviews and autobiographical data. The most effective tool with which to achieve this is the thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews, explained and justified in the next section.

### **5.3 The research method: semi-structured interviews**

One way to look into the experience of the creative process in drumming might be to ask some of the Western world's most expert drummers and look for commonalities; a procedure similar to that of several creativity investigators (see Miller 2013, Peacock 2008, Burnard 2012). Following this strategy, I adopted a qualitative/interpretivist approach to data collection, opting to use semi-structured interviews – ‘conversations with a purpose’ (Kinash 2006) - their analysis to be viewed through the methodological prism outlined above. With this method, I had a core set of open-ended questions, supplemented with probes and further questions. This approach I considered appropriate to the elucidation of subtle aspects of creative practice, which seeks to understand people's meaning at an individual level. “Just as the botanist finds and classifies previously undiscovered species of plants, the phenomenographer must discover and classify previously unspecified ways in which people think about a certain aspect of reality” (Marton cited in Sherman and Webb 1988:147-8). I followed Marton's botanist in setting out to discover previously unexplored ways in which drummers experience and understand creativity.

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is set aside, or bracketed out, in order that the phenomenon is examined and analyzed as it appears in consciousness (Husserl 1969, 1991; Hopkins 2011:110).



### ***Advantages and justification***

According to Anthony Seldon, “warm, vivid, contemporary history has almost always been written by authors who have conducted interviews” (Seldon, 1988:9). Others find interviewing not always a completely sufficient avenue of enquiry (Seidman 2006, Moore 2013; personal correspondence). Cognisant of both but unpersuaded by either strand of opinion, I aimed to draw on the cultural forms and common-sense practices inherent in the drummers’ world-view to explore the meaning of creative drumming for those who drum.

Fraser observed that by entering into dialogue with others, narrative interviewers “may unearth hidden or subordinated ideas” which may cast doubt on official accounts and established theories” (Fraser 2004:184). Furthermore, I was in a position to offer reciprocity in eliciting and co-constructing the meaning of ‘creative drummer’ because I was held by others, and hold myself, to be one of that group. Such an approach informed the constructivist epistemological underpinning of the project; that the knower and the known interact to shape one another and co-create knowledge. In giving primacy to participant perspectives, this participatory paradigm of enquiry re-designates participants as co-researchers. Several scholars emphasised the time needed to develop the emotional competence, sensitivity and life experience of the successful facilitator/researcher (Denzin and Lincoln 2011, Lieblich cited in Denzin and Lincoln 2011). Many years of practice, I suggest, have afforded me the time to develop sufficient quantities of all three competences.

The research attempted to elicit the subjects’ experiences of creativity, and then deconstruct the meaning of those experiences consciously allowing for interpretation. A key component in such a project is a willingness to engage the participants as “fully fledged intellectual interlocutors and potential co-producers and to enter into dialogue with, rather than seeking to explain away, the ontological and metaphysical claims that they put forward” (McLean 2009:235).

Notwithstanding the previously mentioned concerns about the evidential grounding of some sociological ethnography, other scholars were consistent with Seidman, in that their

analyses of a variety of musicians' experiences seemed to benefit from differing blends of in-depth interview and case study (Spellman 1966, Berliner 1994, Monson 1996, Berger 1999, Cottrell 2004, Davis 2005 and Burnard 2012). With the intention always of illumination through evidence-based observation, the tripartite aim of the interview approach was to a) render the artistry of the drummer comprehensible to outsiders; b) dispel many of the myths surrounding its perception and practice; and c) to explicate the rôle of the drummer by relating musical meanings to drummers' daily occupational practice situated within a larger environment of powerful economic, cultural and social forces.

### ***Limitations and caveats***

It was necessary to proceed with caution. Several dangers and advantages in the evaluation of oral evidence in elite studies have been assessed (Moyser and Wagstaffe (1987). Monson (1996) and Sawyer (2006) have issued warnings as to the unreliability of musicians' interviews. As outlined in Chapter 1, participants may misinterpret or misrepresent their musical experiences (Stokes 2003:223, Frith 1996a:109). Interviews may produce mixed results, with interviewees being highly selective in what they choose to say and the ways in which they choose to represent themselves. Scholars have noted the vexed relationship between the studier and the studied (Monson 1996:212), the entanglements that may occur when conducting research within one's own culture (Lieblich 1996) and the limitations of both researcher and researched. For example, Monson found that musicians rarely focused on negative experiences when commenting on musical issues; they tended to comment instead on "the ideal aesthetic and communal experiences" (Monson 1996:20). In pursuit of what Dobson called 'professional sociability', participants may seek to avoid dwelling on tension or difficulties in public (Dobson 2010). It seemed reasonable to expect that my many years spent finding out how to listen to musicians, combined with the friendly expression of a known colleague, might mitigate or avoid such potential problems.

A variable ability to verbalise individual awareness and experience of complex phenomena might impact upon findings. Popular music scholarship has often assumed musicians know little about what they do and have less to say about it, a problem which

Stokes suggested is partly methodological (finding out how to listen to what people are actually saying) and partly one of making sense of conflicting data (Stokes 2003:222). Conceptualising creativity and being able to discuss its attributes theoretically is not every drummer's preference - many want to 'just play'. My participants might best be seen as storytellers; that is, "producers of a reality endowed with its own dynamisms, its own historicities and its own signifying potentialities, irrespective of the meanings ascribed to it by human acts of culture making" (McLean 2009:231). Precisely because these experiences have not yet been vocalised, some hesitation and uncertainty was to be expected. The opposite problem, namely that because the researcher is of the culture and known to participants they may have displayed demand characteristics, has already been noted.

Three further concerns in respect of the conduct of the interviews, the integrity of the research and ethical issues surrounding anonymity remain to be stated. First, I sought to be the "non-directive, phenomenological aware counsellor" (Smith *et al* 1995:53), aware that what participants say may be less informative than the choice of what is said and the context in which it is said. Second, it was important that the integrity of the research should not be compromised by allowing participants to have a voice in deciding what is published and where (Ostrander cited in Hertz and Imber 1995). Professional musicians (as distinct from celebrities) are not, typically, paid for their interviews and do not expect control over publication; thus the issue did not arise. Finally, the study followed the general rule in the social sciences of participant anonymity (Douglas 1985). Anonymity avoided the risk that participants' input might be influenced by its imminent attributed appearance in the public domain; they may have wished to appear more creative than they thought they were. The transcripts were assigned altered initials; identifying dates, names, colleagues, concerts and published works were changed to protect anonymity.

### **5.3.1 The research sample**

There were two criteria for selection. First, participants had to have evidenced extensive international-level experience by having led a music ensemble of any size in the

performance of his or her music. Second, they had to have directed the production of at least one commercially available recording.<sup>64</sup> The production of contemporary work for commercial release in the name of the practitioner was assumed to embody performances that required the exercise of choice and control and afforded the freedom to exercise them. One exception was permitted in the interest of covering the broadest possible range of practice; AA2 eschewed the nurturing of a parallel solo career in the interest of his development as a studio drummer.

Accordingly, nine expert current Western drum-kit practitioners were selected, performing with a wide variety of experience at an international level. The aim was to achieve the broadest possible representation of expert practice of the highest possible quality. Eight participants were male; one participant female. In the absence of verifiable data, anecdotal evidence suggested that this gender ratio was broadly representative of a cross-section of drummers actively engaged in the profession at any given time.<sup>65</sup> African-American, Israeli-British and Norwegian drummers added a degree of ethnic and cultural diversity to the remaining three Anglo-American and three British participants.

Between them, the participants are currently engaged in almost all possible uses of the drum kit in Western popular music, including solo drum performance, drum duets, ensembles from trio to musical theatre to big band to orchestral size, in most possible performance contexts ranging from the entirely scripted to the wholly aleatoric. All but AA2, the confirmed studio musician, have developed parallel ‘solo’ careers, identified by the publishing of CDs, DVDs and /or instructional DVDs of their own compositions under their own direction, unconstrained by the demands of others, in the performance and production of which, it was assumed, the notion of creativity had played some part. Overall, the work experience ranged between 10 and 35 years, and the number of such

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<sup>64</sup> Auslander observes that “those who take music seriously, either as art or culture, dismiss performance as irrelevant” (Auslander 2004:3). The selection of participants who are both composers and performers is designed to render the venom less potent.

<sup>65</sup> Despite his best efforts to find females for his research on drummer identity, 91% of Smith’s respondents were male (2013:140). Mindy Abovitz, editor of the feminist drum magazine *Tom Tom Club*, estimated that “5-10% of professional drummers might be female” (private conversation 04.09.2014). Accordingly, just one of this research’s nine participants is female. For further discussion in the area of female practitioners, see Smith 2013.

recordings ranged between 2 and 48 per individual. Although it was not a criterion for participation, all participants stated that they had undergone the lengthy period of knowledge and skill acquisition without which some propose that no one can make contributions to a domain (Ericsson 1996, Hennessey 2003), variously expressed at the ‘ten year rule’ (Hayes 1989) or the ‘ten thousand hour rule’ (Gladwell 2008).

### **5.3.2 Data collection, transcription and analysis**

An interview schedule of twenty questions (Appendix IV) was designed to elicit as much information as possible on ten topic areas of interest (Appendix III). All questions were asked of all participants, but not necessarily in the same order or in precisely the same way. Participants were asked to describe events and experiences they had not previously vocalised (Fraser 2004). In most interviews there was some overlap and blurred bordering between questions. The pre-existing DSCA framework was only obliquely reflected in the topic areas and questions (it being felt that the enquiry into the participants’ understandings of creativity should not be straight-jacketed into authorial understanding), but the data appeared sufficiently orientated towards those aspects as to provide valuable insight.

As a novice researcher might best be advised, the schedule adhered to established protocols with particular attention being paid to the effectiveness of various types of questions (Kvale 1996). In attempting to discover the interviewees’ shared experience and subjective understandings, the exploratory research questions supplemented without displacing the subjects’ own meanings and interpretations; that is, they provided an indication of areas of interest but were unlikely to be the only areas discussed (Perry & Coote 1994; Patton 1992). To be avoided was what Plummer has called ‘verification by anecdote’ or ‘exemplification’, by which is meant that the researcher’s own story is supported by examples taken from the interviews, but with insufficient justification as to why some were selected and not others (Plummer cited in Smith *et al* 1995:61).

Until recently, the unit of analysis in such a project might have been the individual practitioner. Keith Sawyer, however, identified the Russian sociocultural psychologists, most importantly Vygotsky, as protagonists in a reappraisal of the unit of analysis,

shifting it “from the individual to the event or activity” (Sawyer 1998:15). This shift to process rather than product, to mediated action rather than “endpoints of development” (Sawyer 1998:15) is an important dimension underpinning the action-theoretical background to the analysis.

Understood here as the “first stage of analysis” (Langdrige 2004:266), the transcription process was methodical. I transcribed the interviews myself to get a feel for the data and then imported them into NVivo software, maintaining a full data trail at every stage. Since my focus was the content of the speech rather than way it was said, the prosodic, paralinguistic and extralinguistic elements inherent in a full Jeffersonian transcription were ignored, with the exception of laughter. In the continual grappling with the expression of conceptual thinking of unusual topics, frequent pauses were to be expected and noted. The transcription protocol is available at Appendix VI.

My approach to coding was determined by both the object of my study, namely the factors affecting the experience of creativity in Western kit drummers, and my own experience of creativity as a drummer. For data-driven inductive code development, I studied the experience in terms of its strength/weakness, frequency/infrequency; its individual/collaborative aspects, clarity of perception, the amount of time spent considering it and the multiple factors affecting it. The precise approach became the criterion reference and source of sub-samples for the units of coding and code development (Boyzatis 1998:42).

### ***An ‘a priori’ analytic approach***

The phenomenon of interest was thus creative music performance, the unit of analysis the expert drummer, and the unit of coding was the phrase or ‘meaning unit’ (Mace 1998:80). With but one unit of analysis and a single culture under study, it was impossible to compare and contrast across sub-samples. The approach adopted was essentially inductive, data-driven, and sought to identify interesting aspects in the data items that formed the basis of repeated patterns, or themes, across the data set.

An *a priori* analytic approach allowed for provisional codes or themes to be identified or developed before the data were examined, then subsequently developed by further

examination of the data. Such an approach accommodated my declared interpretative stance, and formed an appropriate blend of provisional coding and flexible thematic analysis. A fully-grounded theoretical approach, while considered, would have required that all codes be ‘grounded’ in, discovered in, or developed from the data, and was thus invalidated by not only the *a priori* approach but also my acknowledged complete-member status.

Research from music creativity and cultural psychology suggested that the following may be observed in the way expert western kit drummers achieve and experience creativity.

- The acquisition of appropriate tools.<sup>66</sup>
- The construction, communication and assessment of significant difference.
- Goal-orientated action.
- Functional and compositional performance on a continuum of control.
- The making and circulation of meaning within a community of practice.

### ***Preliminaries***

A provisional template (Appendix II) was informed by four sources: the study’s action-theoretical framework, the *a priori* higher level tentative themes that I wanted to address, my own experiential data, and pre-formulated hypotheses drawn from the literature. For example, my theoretical definition of creativity in performance included the observations that it:

- requires difference, selection, communication and assessment to be enacted.
- is to be found in significant action in context.
- inheres in the effective communication of lived experience.

Ideas and perceptions such as these were more prevalent than in a pure data driven approach and eventually coalesced into the ten topic areas from which the interview schedule was drawn. The data were gathered according to the precepts of thematic

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<sup>66</sup> For reasons of space and time, the data on this topic and their analyses have been omitted.

analysis and organised, categorised and stored by means of the qualitative data analysis software package NVivo. This allowed for the coding of appropriate data to nodes, a system that facilitates the gathering of related material in one place prior to searching for emergent patterns and ideas. Before coding began, all transcripts were read, re-read, imported into NVivo and initial ideas and comments annotated. These annotations reflected anything that seemed interesting or significant within and across interviews and also acknowledged personal awareness of the literature base.

### ***Cycles of coding***

The first step in the analysis involved identifying and dividing each interview transcript into separate ‘meaning units’, a discrete phrase, sentence or series of sentences which conveys one idea or one related set of perceptions (Mostyn cited in Burnard 1994). This process allowed the identification and development of particular descriptive categories which captured the meaning embedded in similar meaning units. Each meaning unit for every interview protocol was then assigned to the category to which it pertained and indexed within NVivo (see Appendix VIII for an initial list of the categories used to index meaning units).

The issue of coding to one or multiple nodes was immediately important. Where the data content suggested multiple meanings (descriptive or inferential), units of meaning were occasionally coded to two or more categories or sub-categories, a process characterised as ‘simultaneous coding’ (Saldaña 2013). For example:

people tend not to write for drums because they don’t know what ... (*really?*)  
They’re very happy for the drummer to veto what they’ve put on the paper because  
the drummer - not all the time, but sometimes - knows best (AA3 303).

This is coded to both ‘contributing to and determining outcomes’ and also to ‘the functional / compositional dyad’ because the drummer’s contributory action of ‘veto’ also evidences compositional performance. Elsewhere, whole passages may relate to one top level theme but also to several lower level sub-themes which may be linked to a different top level theme. This also permitted a later and more considered assignment to a



single sub-category as further meaning emerged to sharpen and clarify category definitions.

As a co-constructionist of meaning and positioned as a complete-member researcher, I decided that an interview question may be coded if it helped illuminate the topic for researcher or researched. The initial sub-topics expanded rapidly as the coding began to generate “the bones of my analysis”, then to be assembled into a “working skeleton”, to borrow Charmaz’ evocative language (Charmaz cited in Saldaña 2009:45).

Preliminary labels assigned to first cycle codes did not necessarily show conjunction with the higher level topic areas to which they were temporarily assigned. They were descriptive rather than interpretative, thus avoiding premature theorising until patterns emerged through the process of data categorisation. It was acknowledged that all codes would probably be later revised, modified, deleted or expanded in an exhaustive process of re-definition and re-categorisation. Within this iterative process of looking at the provisional template, looking at the transcript and finding new issues which might necessitate refining or redefining the template, nothing was sacrosanct. In this going between the narrow individual expression and the larger conceptual overview, the aim was to identify and code particular (and possibly limited) features of the data set rather than the content of the entire data set (Braun and Clarke 2006).

The second cycle of coding formed part of the interpretive process of moving “from the data to the idea, and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea” (Richards and Morse cited in Hedlund de Witt 2013). As the work progressed, its iterative nature became very evident. The broad issues of the provisional template fathered the topic areas and the interview schedule, which, reduced to the granular level of the initial coding, were then built back up through categorisation and pattern finding to a set of themes developed from within the data. One was aware of the tightening of focus, the sharpening of perspective, the reduction in possibilities and options as themes began to suggest themselves with some degree of self-evidence.

Eventually, the responses to the original ten topic areas of the interview schedule had become re-grouped into related but substantially different ‘pattern codes’, used as a

“stimulus to develop a statement that describes a major theme, a pattern of action, a network of interrelationships, or a theoretical construct from the data” (Saldaña 2009:154). Finally, the data were grouped to 22 themes within 6 Descriptive Categories housed within 3 high-level Analytic Categories identified as ‘Making it Work’, ‘Making Meaning’, and ‘Making it Matter’. In keeping with the action-theoretical approach to the work, gerunds were used to connote observable and conceptual practitioner action. The final list of categories and themes may be found in Table 6.1 (section 6.0). My use of Braun and Clarke’s 2006 Flexible Thematic Analysis protocol in the search for comparisons and patterns among emerging themes ensured always that first; described method and reported analysis were coherent and consistent (in other words, there was a good fit between what I claim to do and what I demonstrate has actually been done); and second, that the language and concepts used in the report were consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.

#### **5.4 Chapter summary**

Chapter 5 has highlighted and justified the central aspects of the exploratory nature of the research design, its methodological approach and the choice and use of the research tools needed to illuminate a single coherent picture of the experience of drummer creativity. In sum, I chose a qualitative interpretivist paradigm, using semi-structured interviews of expert practitioners to generate rich data. The most effective tool with which to effect this was thematic analysis, expanded here to encompass both autoethnographic and phenomenographical components.

## **CHAPTER 6: Findings and analysis**

### **6.0 Introduction: categories and themes**

Chapter 6 focuses on the various themes arising from the data and housed within the analysis' categories, interpreting each theme sequentially. Table 6.1 below lays out the levels of categorisation, describes the contents of each Descriptive Category and offers a complete list of themes. In Chapter 7, each theme is then discussed sequentially in relation to the six research sub-questions and within the context of the literature.

**Table 6.1** Final list of Categories and Themes

Analytic Category	<b>A Making Meaning</b>		<b>B Making It Work</b>	<b>C Making It Matter</b>		
Descriptive Category	<b>1 Creative Performance Is...</b>	<b>2 Creative Performance Means...</b>	<b>3 Performance Contexts</b>	<b>4 Constructing Difference</b>	<b>5 Communicating Difference</b>	<b>6 Assessing Significance</b>
<b>Themes</b>	<p>Theme 1 Missing nothing.</p> <p>Theme 2 ‘The experience that disappears’: conceptualising meaningful experience.</p>	<p>Theme 3: Allowing.</p> <p>Theme 4: Trusting.</p> <p>Theme 5: ‘Only connect!’ The social dimension of meaning.</p> <p>Theme 6: Surprising.</p>	<p>Theme 7: ‘Being seen’ versus ‘chipping away’: attitudes to the performance space.</p> <p>Theme 8: ‘Being part of the team’: collaborative interaction.</p> <p>Theme 9: ‘Doing a good job’: performing for a leader.</p> <p>Theme 10: ‘Allowing me to be me’: performing with a leader.</p> <p>Theme 11: ‘Special chemistry’: performing as a leader.</p> <p>Theme 12: “Sometimes it’s enough with yourself”: performing without a leader.</p>	<p>Theme 13: ‘Gluing the music together’: appropriate performance and core functions.</p> <p>Theme 14: ‘The creative part’: constraints, choice selection and decision-making.</p> <p>Theme 15: ‘I set some parameters’...: negotiating constraints.</p> <p>Theme 16: ‘Avoiding demons’: individual strategies and processes.</p> <p>Theme 17: ‘It’s all what we do with it’: change and transformation.</p> <p>Theme 18: ‘Going further’.</p>	<p>Theme 19: ‘Getting it’: attitudes to the receiver and reception.</p> <p>Theme 20: ‘Who counts?’ Identifying the important listener.</p>	<p>Theme 21: ‘Am I creative?’ Reflecting on personal creativity.</p> <p>Theme 22: ‘I never heard it before’: attributing creativity to others.</p>

## Analytic Category [A]: Making Meaning

Description: This category describes participant perceptions of the meaning of the creative experience.

### 6.1 Descriptive Category 1: Creative performance is ...

Description: Participant conceptualisations of creativity in drummer performance.

#### 6.1.1 Theme 1: 'Missing nothing': perceptions of creativity in music performance

This thesis has argued that creativity in music performance involves processes of selection, communication and assessment situated within a complex matrix of people, action and artefacts. The position adopted has been stated succinctly by Folkestad within the context of his meta-analysis of broad-ranging studies on composition:

The creative music-making takes place in a process of interaction between the participants' musical experience and competence, their cultural practice, the tools, the instruments and the instructions - altogether forming the *affordances* of the creative situation (Folkestad 2012:197; italics in the original).

Drawing on Gibson's work on visual perception and its central concept of affordances, Folkestad characterises creative action as "the ability to perceive new affordances, or old affordances anew, and to elaborate those affordances in each situation" (2012:196). The emphasis here is on situational context; creativity, in this view, involves reorganising the connection an individual has with a situation, rather than reorganising that which occurs within the person's mind (Greeno cited in Folkstad 2012:196). The discourse in this Descriptive Category 1 centres on participant

conceptualisations of creative music performance; first, what it is and how it is experienced (Theme 1); and second, what meanings they assign to that experience (Theme 2).

SI starts with what might be called an inclusive, holistic view of the phenomenon. Creativity is “something that everyone has” (SI 628).<sup>67</sup> It is unavoidable or non-optional because there are always challenges that make one think in another way “so you have to be creative”. Creativity “has no address [...], it is not dependent on time or place [...]. You can invite it, you can allow it, but I don’t think you can actually cultivate it, and accumulate it. It’s not a commodity” (SI 264). Ultimately, it is “the expression of human worthiness (SI 828), and “like oxygen” vital to human survival (SI 873). In the following extract, SI grapples with the nature of creative music performance:

When you play you don’t play what you practised anymore, when you are creative. You are putting it...you are taking your skill, taking it to the next level, basically. Where it’s not the actual thing what you do is important, but the music; you know, what you want to express is more important than the actual means of doing that (*mmm*) OK? It’s simply that for me. It’s when everything connects together. All what you have, all what you learn (*mmm*) is coming together and...and you’re using in that particular moment when you’re creative only the things that you really need for your creative process, and er ... (SI 348).

On this account, creativity is evidenced by the degree of departure from the prepared text. His assertion that ‘you don’t play what you practised anymore’ describes the typical approach of the expert jazz musician and contrasts with the detailed practice and close rendition of the prepared piece in classical performance. In SI’s depiction the *creative* performance requires the music to be reduced, focused and ‘taken to another level’. Anything superfluous to the expression is jettisoned; technical concerns evaporate as individual performance is seamlessly connected to the whole in the ‘interpretive moment’, a construct elaborated in Theme 2.

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<sup>67</sup> Throughout the thesis, this format indicates the participant identifier followed by the line number of his or her transcript in which the specific claim or quotation may be found and its context further examined (See Additional Media preface page). Occasionally, a participant’s broad, over-arching conception is indicated by the identifier alone in parentheses.

Other participant perspectives depict drummer creativity as contingent upon intra-human interaction predominantly, and human / machine interaction secondarily. It is something you do with somebody else (HT 553); an interaction with others, the process and products of which will inevitably surprise you or others (SI 385). It depends on interpretation and ‘taking it [the music] further’ in the moment (IL 199). ER, however, assigned no great importance to the phenomenon, likening it to a playground, a “marvellous three-dimensional spatial (*yes*) universe [...] filled with those possibilities” (ER 257). Asked to play recordings of some examples of his work which he considered to be creative, he had no clear explanation as to why he thought of them as such.

Differences surfaced in opinions as to whether creativity was optional or non-optional; that is, the extent to which one might choose to be creative or not as the environment might demand. On IL’s account, the *use* of her creative thinking is optional and subject to professional constraints, while nevertheless being permanently available to her. She hears possibilities but cannot always act upon them. Her creativity

is within me; it’s within my control as a professional to choose when to use it or not (*mmm*). It is always running through my head, you know; so I don’t know that I can turn it off, I can just choose to use it or not ... because even when I’m playing in a situation that is not creative, I still hear things going on in my head; I still hear things that could happen in the music... whether they are allowed to happen or not (IL 261).

Where IL may choose to withhold its expression, SI surrenders entirely to the creative impulse. Far from being optional, creativity is “just one of these things we always have. We always drink water, we always breathe and we always have to be creative, otherwise we cannot survive” (SI 873). He insists that he has “no other choice” but to play differently, because everyone is different (SI 374). Stay true to yourself, he advises, and your singularity will eventually appear in your music. The only way of “being unique or being special or developing your own sound” is by being “genuine and honest about where I come from and... being at peace with that, with where I come from and my influences” (SI 425).

Others adopt a more pragmatic approach. When he reflects that “Any kind of gig you’re doing, you have the option to be creative” (AA 964), AA joins IL in implying that there are certain gigs

on which one may choose, or be compelled, to *avoid* creativity. The idea that creativity is not always welcome in some traditional genres of popular music, examined more closely in Theme 9, has support in the literature (Nettl 1983, Clarke 2012).

Despite much modern thinking to the contrary, for some participants creativity continues to have a spiritual dimension. For SI it is “an expression of our human worthiness or divinity or whatever you call it” (SI 835) which “expresses our ‘beyondness’ as human beings” (SI 841). “I really think, and I’m not religious or anything, but I really think that creativity er... does not come from this life” (SI 835). IL has an equally powerful understanding of the origins of her creativity:

It’s like my hair ... my hair is the colour that God made it, my eyes are the colour that God made them, my skin is the colour and texture that God made it, my creativity is part of the way that God made me...[and thus it is] not something that I can turn off (IL 510).

While from her perspective creativity is something she possesses in perpetuity rather than co-constructs in moments of significant action, it remains for others largely a psychological construct:

Just the word creativity...maybe I feel it’s more a state of mind than what you actually do. And the case can even be that you are being creative even though the outcome isn’t very creative. (*Oh, that’s an interesting idea... creative thinking?*) It can be creative thinking, and it’s not always [that] you’re capable of bringing your ideas out in the right way (HT 946).

In this passage above HT draws a distinction between creative thinking processes and creative outcomes, which, on his account, are not mutually dependent. The ‘Eno-esque’ view that the intention is more important than the execution, that one has permission to fail or make mistakes



on account of insufficient technical capacity, and that the creative performer should honour his or her hidden intention<sup>68</sup> has played into much European Avant-rock in the last three decades.

### **6.1.2 Theme 2: 'The experience that disappears': conceptualising meaningful experience**

How do participants engage with the world of sound to create and communicate meaningful experience? Experience is a useful and valuable tool. The value of a deep well of knowledge is limited without experience of the outcome of its application in a variety of contexts; it is experience that provides the appropriate musical gesture. It is experience that says 'I've been here before' and provides "a seasoning, of knowing maybe the best option, a note-to-self 'don't try that one again'" (ER 88).

For SI, everyone has a different experience of creative expression. His experiences (the small instances that go to make up the single notion of 'experience') are predicated on being calm under tightly constrained non-musical circumstances; a lifting of those constraints enables a creative release, "a sudden release, sudden explosion of things that really wanted to come out for a long time (SI 300). Experience is, moreover, something that can be passed on through teaching. SI hopes to give to those "who might have problems with rhythm" so that they "might experience something that I've experienced before" (SI 927). His experience tells him that a highly motivated creator in the band can promote creativity in others in the band: "When you feel better about your playing you affect the people in the band that's playing with you so everybody's, you know, feeling better, playing better, being more creative (SI 310).

Others considered domain experience to be amplified, 'bettered' or made more meaningful if shared in collaboration with attentive co-performers and engaged listeners. It needs to be communicated not only for assessment of its significance (and hence creativity) but also, more pragmatically, because recognition tends to raise career profile. Recognition of his cumulative experience by others leads directly to AA2's opinions being sought at the functional level of performance

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<sup>68</sup> This view is embodied in Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt's 'Oblique Strategies' (see Amirkhanian 1980).

because I've got more experience, just like you would go into a gig and someone would say "Well, what do you think?" and I would say "Well, I think I'd like to play this", and that's welcomed" (AA2 390).

HT experiences music in a profound way, as "quite materialised. I feel there are still concerts and feelings, receptions of sound, that I can still feel the flavour or taste of that experience, of how the cymbal sounded or, you know ..." (HT 763). Articulating the creative power of another drummer in a performance from years earlier, he highlights the longevity of the experience: "it's still alive inside me" (HT 754). Here he describes the steps leading up to a surprisingly powerful experience of creativity and its consequent assessment:

I think what happened was, [...] I had an idea where I wanted to go ... and immediately entering the studio we came - not physically but mentally - we came into this room where everything was possible. And I remember being very unsecure [sic]. [...] So I was really concentrating to be able to ... you know, be in the music and deliver as good ... (*you survived?*) I survived (*you delivered and you were surprised at yourself?*) yeah, and I listened to it and I thought this is probably as good as it can get (HT 621).

AU locates his 'richest experiences' in heavily improvised music, close to the compositional pole of the FCC. While nevertheless acknowledging the creative potential in pre-meditated, part-based music, his creative goal is to find those "uber-creative and uber-open-minded moments" (AU 186) more frequently, and likens the pursuit of the creative experience to an addiction:

For me, tasting those moments, that's the drug, that's what keeps me coming back, tasting and experiencing those moments and, you know, being on the pursuit to live there as often as possible (*yeah*) and with the goal of finding those places more frequently. But still they may be - depending on how you define that moment - could be once a night, once a tour, once a year (AU 187).

He characterises his collective experience as crucial to decision-making:

And you know for example playing with [...] I felt like, erm ... of course, over time there was a strong rapport and we developed this relationship where a lot of decisions were based on intuition and experience (AU 242).

Echoing Peggy Phelan's ontology of performance, he offers the following passionate articulation of the uniqueness of live performance - the 'experience that disappears';

The beauty of live performance is that it is this unique experience that, even if it gets captured on YouTube or even if it gets recorded, it still is this experience that disappears ... that true personal experience ... you have to be there to experience it. I can't expect everyone to come to me, so I can stay home, so you do go out and there is a certain thing about, you know, just being expressive in front of a wide variety of people and that's (*yeah*) ... the music grows from that, yeah (AU 722).

What remains? What haunts? What lasts? One of the reasons that one has to be there to experience it is that others are there, be they musicians or listeners; the experience is in part brought into reality through sharing it with others. For AU, that is the sub-soil from which his music grows. The interviewer's summative assessment of the locus of AU's creative experiences as being on stage meets with a crisp, repeated affirmative: "Totally, totally" (AU 734).

Most participants strongly associate the practice of drumming with fun and pleasure for themselves and others:

I looked at the drummer and thought this looks fun (AA2 39).

The strong emphasis on the last three words of AA2's observation above indicates a bottom-line appraisal of how drumming should be for both practitioner and listener; an aspect of

performance that should be present as much of the time as possible. Fun is characterised here as an attraction to the art of drumming in the first place, as inherent in the action of drumming, both alone and in the company of others, and as attached to various dimensions of drumming, such as its unpredictability and capacity for surprise.

Participants frequently associated fun with the primary processes of acquiring the tools for creative performance; namely, drum lessons and practice sessions:

He used to sit down and play *Lady Be Good* (mmm) ... get me to jam along with him, which was fun (AA2 97)

It's not a chore to play my drums [...] I love to practise (IL 16).

Describing how he spends his time with a few precious hours in a quiet house, HT will “compose music just whenever I want to, as long as I want to, and I will play the drums. That's what I love to do. I might not talk to any people ... I would just do that” (HT 409). While he gets pleasure from working solo in concert, nevertheless “the biggest pleasure is playing with others, I think” (HT 569). In this view, the pleasure resides in performing with others (a group of peers) rather than for others (an audience).

Creative strategies often have an emergent quality manifest in unpredictable outcomes of the sort described by AU. His radical change of both instrument and approach to his practice sessions (AU 358) only made practising more fun. “It was the most fun I had in a long time, actually, at the drums [...] and it was bringing out new ideas, and I was able to play more fluently and more quietly (AU 366). A clear linkage is developing here between having fun and being creative. If ER's not having fun, there is little likelihood of a creative outcome. Referring to the preparation of some new music, he is “having as much fun or more playing it in the solitude of my studio than I anticipate I'll have ... [...] I mean it is just part of the gig, I have to do it. I'm having more fun just kind of working on it (*yeah*). So creativity is definitely possible in the solo environment” (ER 341). Ambivalence arises, however, in ER's account of making it fun for others:

It's fun when they like it, I enjoy playing for people, it's a part of the equation of playing music in public and it's gratifying when someone likes it, but actually a weird thing happens to me, Bill, when I play. A lot of times by the end of the concert the last thing I want to do is say hello to anybody. I want to hide away (*uh-huh*) and so if the audience liked it, or didn't even, doesn't affect my perception of what happened on the stage (*yeah, yeah*). I'm not that ... I don't really give a fuck about the audience. You can quote me on that (ER 600).

Here the warmth of ER's opening words is undermined by the derogatory outburst in closing, indicating a conflicted sense of obligation to the audience in his desire to protect his perception of events. Any pleasure the listener may or may not derive from his performance is irrelevant to his perception of the creativity it may or may not exhibit.

Much less discussed were the pain, disappointments and difficulties occasionally experienced in pursuit of the creative moment. That may have been, of course, because the effects of the few negatives encountered had long since been neutralised or recycled into fuel for further creativity. It is, after all, axiomatic that expert practitioners generally learn how to learn from mistakes, failures and errors. Some come to honour their mistakes as hidden intentions, as mentioned above. The few early disappointments that arose in part from poor or non-existent teaching appear to have had little permanent effect upon participants' creativity, as evidenced by the measure of success achieved in later life. The American cohort had little to offer in this area; all spoke of the consistently high quality of the teaching they received, frequently from nationally known teachers or older musicians.

### ***A 'slightly altered state': temporality and being in the moment***

Frequent references are made to the temporal immediacy of performance, as being 'in the moment'. Individual interpretations of this idea vary. With its connotation of a psychological state of complete immersion, 'being in the moment' shares some aspects of Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of Flow (see section 4.4.3) as elaborated by Hytönen-Ng (2013) in her study of jazz musicians and some equivalency to the 'genius moment' of the plastic and literary arts (Sawyer 2003).

In important ways, participants gravitate towards the ‘interpretive moment’ because it is there that they see fertile creative ground, a place where “everything connects together” (SI 352), a “sunlit place where at last the music is there, pouring out, easy, conversational, technical concerns now sublimated to the greater good of music-making, the hours of practice producing the phrases that you want, when you want them, now” (Bruford 2009:289), and “no moment is like any other moment and you’re a different person in every moment” (SI 365). On SI’s account, one inevitable consequence of improvising and playing in the moment is surprise: “you can only surprise yourself, nothing but surprise yourself” (SI 384). The surprise lies in the sudden brief glimpse of how it could be or sound, a pivot point around which “you’ve found another way of doing something in a moment where all the old ways of doing it do not work for you” (SI 866). This idea is developed further in Theme 6.

Across all interpretations, being ‘in the moment’ is valorised as something to be desired and achieved, but there may be obstructions to progress:

Jake Hanna didn’t give many clinics but gave this one and somebody asked him what perfect coordination was, and he said “it’s when you think it and you play it at the exact same moment” (*mmm*) and ever since then I’ve been trying to be exactly in the moment (*very good*) and not having these kind of demons that say I’m not playing creative, or I missed that one, or... (AA 470).

In this extract, AA’s demons block creative flow by separating and delaying thought and action, permitting untimely creative self-assessment (Csikszentmihalyi 1990, Custodero 2012).

Some identified the ability to be in the moment as a source of additional creative power, as extra wind in the sails that one might depend on to blow one through a rough sea. Acknowledging his unfamiliarity with a particular genre of music, AU “might not be able to deliver the exact sticking that would be the most appropriate for a certain pattern, but I’d like to believe that my being in the moment and my intuition and the way I’m listening to the guys, I could deliver an appropriate sound and feel” (AU 212). AU associates being in the moment with the demands of constant decision-making. Exactly what demands the music will make of him he cannot know in advance, so he must be prepared. “So I show up empty and therefore I have all this room for new

ideas, to take them in, and then it's what I do to them in that moment that becomes its own vocabulary" (AU 340).

Being prepared, for YO, means having constant access to options:

I suppose that's the point of practice, isn't it, really, is to have that multi-layered options [sic] at all times that feel like a natural thing and it isn't so intellectual (YO 135).

Being in the moment is characterised by YO as both an absence of self-consciousness and the achievement of a "slightly altered state" (YO 742), an elusive goal. The best approach, he suggests is to "not have any self-consciousness, so you're not kind of thinking how it sounds or what other people might be thinking it sounds like; you're just in the moment" (YO 137). "I like it when I feel slightly detached and I feel like I'm kind of...if it can get in any way into a slightly altered state of being not really there but completely there, then I know I'm enjoying it [laughs] (YO 741). If one can sustain the being-in-the-moment for even as little as a quarter of an hour on occasion, then "that's a result, I would think, because most of the time you're nowhere near that" (YO 142).

### **6.1.3 Summary of findings**

Descriptive Category 1 focused on participant conceptualisations of creativity in drummer performance. Multiple perceptions of the attributes and dimensions of creative performance coalesced around a handful of recurring subthemes. The data supported the following ideas:

- Creative performance is contingent upon an ability to control or affect outcomes, as mediated by the performance context.
- All performance contexts are construed as affording of more or less creativity.
- Although it may be fulfilled alone, the experience is amplified, heightened or made more powerful if shared in collaboration with attentive co-performers and engaged listeners.
- Playing with others rather than performing for others tends to be seen as affording both the greatest pleasure and the greatest exposure to creative possibility.

- Accumulated experience informs current and future performance.
- Even though a performance may be captured in repeatable form, the experience of its creation is unrepeatable.
- Being ‘in the moment’ is valorised as something to be desired and achieved.
- For a minority of participants, creativity continues to have a spiritual dimension.

## 6.2 Descriptive Category 2: Performance means ...

Description: The multiple meanings assigned to the lived experience of creative music performance are summarised in this category to four themes: allowing, trusting, connecting and surprising.

The meanings participants assigned to creative action initially seemed so diffuse that collating them coherently might prove impossible. Three extracts (framed in terms of action, interaction and discovering or finding something respectively) will suffice to give a flavour of the variety of participant approaches to the topic. First, SI adopts an action-theoretical perspective, one central plank of which asserts, broadly, that we are what we do. When we are creative it’s about “joyously being, you know, joyously being here and joyously er... creating, and joyously being what you’re supposed to do. I think that’s what we’re supposed to do” (SI 852). Second, AA2 takes creativity in this context to mean “the interaction of musicians together, creating something, for me is probably what the definition of what creativity as a drummer is to me, yeah. That is the crux of it really” (AA2 1065). Third, AA3 suggests that creative performance means being skilled enough to play exactly the right thing for the music (AA3 454). It means finding ‘little corners’ of creativity in everything (AA3 1034). Many re-readings of the data eventually suggested four central themes that encapsulated participant perceptions of the meaning of creative performance; allowing, trusting, connecting and surprising. Each is now addressed in turn.



### 6.2.1 Theme 3: Allowing

First, multiple references were made to the circumstances of allowing, or being allowed, which afford creative action. The idea was characterised in terms of allowing mistakes to be made and things to go wrong, allowing a creative process to come to fulfilment, allowing ‘me to be me’, and allowing as an act of will. For SI: “You have to allow [laughs], you can allow, you’re able to allow; when, when you’re relaxed in your mind you can allow creativity, musical creativity” (SI 257). “You can invite it, you can allow it, but I don’t think you can actually cultivate it, and accumulate it. It’s not a commodity” (SI 266). He considers it “very important” that others consider him creative, because “all these, er, things are really...again, they are just another thing that will invite, encourage, allow more creativity (*yeah*) to come” (SI 436). In keeping with his assumption that creativity is unavoidable, he is thus “forced to be creative, so you can either accept it or allow it, or you can be very bitter about it or you can be very angry about it or very frustrated about it” (SI 870).

For both AA and AA2, the concept of allowing is connected to the idea of ‘allowing me to be me’ (Theme 10). This reveals an interesting distinction between the implications of the ‘complete sideman’ rôle, seen as one in which no input is required other than as specifically directed, and the preferred ‘allowing me to be me’ situation in which personal input is encouraged. AA2 explains how producers are beginning to hire him for what he can bring to the session:

It’s very encouraging because ... it’s much more creative. I think the product that you get at the end, the musical product, is much better, er and I even do that ... I have been doing that for years but I only just realised it probably about 10 years ago, that people give me pieces of music...I just completely disregard them. I just don’t...*(and they don’t even know you’ve disregarded them!* [Both laugh]. *You play what’s appropriate*). You play what’s appropriate and that I think is one of the central tenets of what a drummer does creatively (AA2 299).

Lamenting the lack of interplay in some genres of popular music, characterised as the ‘lack of letting and allowing’, IL emphasises the benefits of both:

if you give in to the music and you allow the music to go where the energy is (*yeah*) the people creating it and what's coming in from the universe when you do create, if you allow those things, those energies, to fill up the music, and you let that happen, then music takes on shapes and forms before you've even said "okay I want it to turn left here or turn right here" or do whatever" (IL 165).

In IL's view, for music to work it must be 'allowed to go where the energy is' so it can take on 'shapes and forms' even before the imposition of IL's desires. Even when she's playing "in a situation that is not creative, I still hear things going on in my head; I still hear things that could happen in the music... whether they are allowed to happen or not" (IL 263). Her own music, in fact, depends on "everybody's input to some degree. It needs everybody's heart; it needs everybody's openness and willingness to allow" (IL 409). This idea is expanded a little later:

As my husband says: "Willingness to allow, and allow willingness". Because you're absolutely right ... everybody is creative in different ways. Everybody has creativity in different areas, different ways, different aspects. But do we have the willingness to allow that creativity? (*Yeah*)... Are we allowing our willingness to bring about that creativity?" (IL 522).

Reflecting on his decision-making process, AU assesses the extent to which "a given situation allow(s) me to essentially truly make my own decisions", concluding that "the more open the environment, the more creative I feel" (AU 281).

The idea of 'letting' or 'allowing' is essentially a matter of choice. For ER, "Everyone is creative every day of their lives if they choose to be open to receiving the other" (ER 361). The interesting question as to whether creative performance may be achieved and experienced if there is no 'other' to receive it is addressed more comprehensively in Theme 12. Participants were asked to imagine a scenario in which they were no longer allowed to perform in public. Many thought this prospect catastrophic, a position at odds with their low estimates of the

importance of an audience to the effective communication of creative performance, as will be elicited in Theme 19 below.

### 6.2.2 Theme 4: Trusting

In a second strand of thinking about the meaning of creative performance, participants variously saw a need to trust themselves, others, the band-leader and the music in different times and places. From a broad perspective, both AA2 and ER ultimately situate AA's 'allowing me to be me' in terms of trust and permission. As mature experts there is every possibility that they might provide elements to make the music work, or work better, that may have been overlooked:

I think it's about trust and it's about permission, and you know, like, a lot of the great musicians, probably [...] being the number one in my opinion, is a guy who booked musicians and he didn't tell them what to do, in general [...] He booked guys for the way they played and then he let them do that, and it was a bit like...get all these guys in a room, now what comes out? Mmm, that's interesting (AA2 520).

I enjoy the leader who trusts my choices and lets me do my thing (*of course*); they concentrate on the bigger picture, but don't provide too much direction (*sure, sure*). [...] I think when you get to a certain age it's just like...a lot of times they'll go "oh, I've never thought of that, that's a good idea" (ER 393).

In this way, creative performance means trusting and being trusted by co-performers. Developing an instinct for whom or what is trustworthy is seen as an important skill, one that is central to effective creative action and underpins, for example, SI's entire approach to performance. He is "able to trust my hands to do the right thing" (SI 177) so long as "I know the music first" (SI 181). His desire to 'know the music first', in order that the knowledge will inform his 'part' which will be 'improvised on the spot', assumes a compositional approach, i.e. that the music from which he's deriving this knowledge is stable enough to do so. How he

chooses what to play in the event that the music is *unstable*; i.e. is being improvised in the moment, remained unresolved.

A satisfactory outcome in the context of high compositional performance ‘with no nets’ depended, for AA, on the ability of colleagues: “You had to trust that this is going to be really good. And we all have enough ability here where we can all make this really good, whatever he throws at us” (AA 1006). Interjection, interaction or ‘interference’ in the performance are all permissible, according to participants, so long as the level of trust among collaborators is and remains sufficiently high. IL emphasises the responsibility that comes with interference and the attributes necessary to interfere effectively without causing disruption:

I love to create, and I love to be able to interject my opinion (*mmm*) and I think that ... when you have people you can trust to be able to interject, and interjection is a responsibility because it takes taste, it takes intellect, it takes heart to, erm ... to do that and keep the music swingin’. I don’t mean the swing rhythm, I just mean the feel (*sure*) to keep it swingin’, to keep it happening (IL131).

In the following vignette, her understanding of the different interpretive requirements as between the recording of a song in a studio in front of a handful of people and the live performance of the same song in front of tens of thousands did not accord with that of the group’s rock-star leader:

We were playing parts (*oh, yeah*). You were playing the part that was on the record, and for me, as we went along I would add little things here and there and improvise some stuff there because what’s on a record, to me, doesn’t always translate, firstly to what’s appropriate for a live situation. You might need to really fire something up at a certain point, much more than it is on the record, or you might need a different feel here or there, so for me I would temper that to what I thought was necessary at the moment (IL 112).

In this stadium-rock example, the leader has decided that the live rendition has drifted too far from the recorded artefact, irrespective of the drummer’s perception that what is on the record ‘doesn’t always translate’ without adjustment. The drummer is being ‘too creative’. The tension

between the demand of ‘live’ and ‘studio’ is resolved in the interest of ‘making it work’: “he might say to me or to all of us ‘hey, let’s get back to what worked on the record’” (IL 123). From the leader’s perspective, IL’s inappropriate interference caused sufficient disruption as to jeopardise the trust that was between them. From IL’s perspective, her accommodation of the leader’s instructions underlines her professionalism, re-establishes trust and avoids further confrontation. The incident further demonstrates the subtle and unspoken shifts of trust, power and emphasis to be negotiated in different performance contexts. The notion of appropriate performance is examined in depth in Theme 13 (section 6.4.1).

In a surprising response to the seemingly unrelated question “*How important is it to you that other people think you’re creative?*” AA2 frames his answer in terms of being trusted, or being trusted to interfere correctly in the professional context of the recording studio. The ‘number one guy’ in his opinion is the producer or client who books people for the way they play and then allows them to do just that (AA2 521). The producers and clients who employ him are more likely to grant him permission to act creatively if they associate him with that phenomenon and the skills surrounding it.

Recognising the need for trust with non-performing others, such as employers, employees, collaborators and clients, ER points out that “part of the creative equation often has to do with the other side; if people are willing to trust the practitioner” (ER 130). In support of this he cites a movie director with the admirable quality that he was able “to trust those whom he had brought into the larger creative whole, and he was able to let go” (ER 129). When he works with graphic artists in the rôle of client or producer, ER’s ‘general instinct’ “is to choose an artist based on the trust that I’m going to like what they come up with, and I very really send them back to the drawing board” (ER 122).

### **6.2.3 Theme 5: “Only connect!” the social dimension of meaning**

“Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer. Only connect, and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die” (E.M Forster: ‘Howard’s End’ Chapter 22).

A third action that gives meaning derives from participant reports of the intra-human connections between and among performers and listeners, seen as not only crucial to successful performance but that also make it meaningful. Distinctions between the notions of sharing and connecting are not germane to the analysis and need no further expansion here; I highlight only that the two activities are both sequential and consequential; one must connect *to* share, and yet one connects *through* sharing. Most see creative music performance as contingent upon connecting with others and then sharing something with them through effective communication, although it has been noted that some feel they can perform creatively entirely on their own (HT, IL, AU).

Drummers connect and share ideas with co-performers in a negotiated joint enterprise (Wenger 1998, Burnard 2012). As Burnard has shown, these ideas are built on, elaborated and reworked such as they emerge as shared understandings for and across the group, rather than belonging to any one individual. Burnard neatly parallels the distribution of melodies, harmonies and rhythms with the distribution of ideas (Burnard 2012:68). Such an enterprise requires a high quality of sharing across the collective, the ‘willingness to allow’ that IL speaks of above. YO describes the best connections between co-creators in terms of a rare ‘special chemistry’ (YO 503). SI, too, emphasises the centrality of the quality of the connection with his co-performers and links it to creativity. Referencing the practice of another drummer named Jack, SI sees the connection between Jack’s actions and the listener as afforded by his genuineness: “because Jack is so natural and so genuine about everything he does, it just connects everything he’s doing, you know” (SI 637).

At domain level, drummers are connected to the dominant drum culture. The attraction of the community elder is that his or her playing is connected to and resonates with the history of the culture, manifest in the countless small decisions that define musical personality, in the same way as the walls of an ancient building ooze history. Distinguishing such drummers from the hyper-technical young modernists, AA problematises the lack of cultural connectedness of the younger group:

... some people don’t go very far back. Like a friend of mine said if you want be a funk drummer and you entered music at ‘Tower of Power’, you haven’t heard James Brown (*yeah yeah*) and you haven’t gone back to R&B or even Robert Johnson blues; you just start at ... or today if you start at ‘Dream Theatre’ or you start at ‘Rush’ you have ... (*you’ve got a way to*

go). Well you're kind of starting at a funny point I think... Steve Smith says if you start at that point there is no swing in anything (*right*) [*laughs*], there's no jazz (*no jazz*), there's no lope (*no*). It's all very strict (*very interesting*) and mechanical (*how interesting*) and accurate (AA 449).

Participant perceptions of creative music performance thus imply an effective connection to the listener, in respect of which AA3 sees 'honesty' and SI 'genuineness' as key ingredients. "I think in a way the honesty with which you do something is really important. People are quite open-minded like that; it doesn't matter what it is (*I totally agree*), if it's good and they get it, and it's coming from the right place, it doesn't matter what it is, they'll connect with it" (AA3 928). This concurs with authorial and experiential evidence; it always appears to me that audiences are remarkably adept at distinguishing the bogus, fraudulent and faked, the purporting to be someone you're not, from the genuine, honest and sincere.

#### **6.2.4 Theme 6: Surprising**

The fourth and final theme addressing the meaning of creative performance encompasses references to the notion of surprise. A majority of participants express being surprised by, or surprising another with, the results of their own or others' musical actions. HT, for example, sees it as an obligation or responsibility to surprise his co-creators: "I feel that my responsibility in a band is, if we've been playing together [...] I have to surprise you. You can't take everything I do for granted. I can't just do what you've heard before and what you expect; I have to lift you out somewhere so that you do something you wouldn't have done" (HT 378). In answer to the question "*So do you see surprise as connected to creativity?*" his response is an unequivocal "I do; I think it's important" (HT 387).

Hidden capabilities within an unfamiliar musical terrain can be surprising in their outcomes: "...sometimes I did get surprised (*you surprised yourself?*) Yeah, because I think I don't know if I can do that. I don't really do that much drum'n'bass so that was something I'm not familiar with, so sometimes if I'm out of my comfort zone" (AA2 1010). Describing a "classic moment for me personally where I thought I could actually be a little bit nervous here", AA3 "went the other way and I think I managed to pull it off to my own surprise" (AA3 918). In a discussion of

his compositional approach AA3 explains that “I did surprise myself and I was glad I did it and it was something that I achieved and got together” (AA3 585). The lesson that YO took away from his encounters with composition is that “You only know everything you need to know about building a house after you’ve already built it [laughs] [...] (*Were you surprised at the type of house you’d built after you’d built it?*) Yeah” (YO 514).

With the discussion focused primarily on surprising and being surprised by co-performers’ products and processes, it fell to HT to raise the prospect of surprising the listener. He assesses that the audience is less easy to surprise these days (2015), with the happy outcome that the drummer has a ‘freer rôle’. “People don’t get surprised if the drummer is a leader ... if he’s playing out of time while the band’s playing time or vice-versa” (HT 807).

### 6.2.5 Summary of findings

Descriptive Category 2 distilled the multiple meanings assigned to the lived experience of creative music performance into four themes: allowing, trusting, connecting and surprising. The data revealed the following ideas:

- Some genres of popular music discourage musical interplay or interaction. These genres tend to lack ‘letting’ and ‘allowing’ and thus inhibit decision-making, a central component of creative action.
- Being forgiving, supportive, permissive, connected to and open to others are all personal attributes perceived as enhancing the possibility of creative interaction. Being closed, distracted, judgemental, self-conscious or lacking in interplay are attributes that diminish the likelihood of creative interaction.
- Creative performance is contingent upon trusting and being trusted by co-performers.
- Many participants characterised creative music performance as a form of communication involving connecting and sharing with others.
- A lack of cultural connectedness is one aspect that makes it harder for younger drummers to be creative.
- The element of surprise arises so frequently in the discourse that it may be considered an indicator of significant action.



In sum, participants broadly understood creative music performance to mean connecting with and trusting others in a negotiated interaction that allows something to happen that cannot be fully pre-meditated.

### **Analytic Category [B]: Making it Work**

Description: This category addresses the contexts and dimensions of performance whose goal is the achievement of significant difference.

#### **6.3 Descriptive Category 3: Performance contexts**

Description: This category indexes the principal contexts in which participants perform, and situates references to creativity in both functional and compositional modes of performance within the relevant context. Six themes are identified:

- 1) 'Being seen' versus 'chipping away': attitudes to 'live' and 'studio' performance.
- 2) 'Being part of the team': collaborative interaction
- 3) 'Doing a good job': performing for a leader
- 4) 'Allowing me to be me': performing with a leader
- 5) 'Special chemistry': performing as a leader
- 6) 'Sometimes it's enough with yourself': performing without a leader

##### **6.3.1 Theme 7: 'Being seen' versus 'chipping away': attitudes to studio and live performance**

Participants' attitudes to performance varied greatly depending on whether they were performing publicly for a paying audience or privately, for example in rehearsals. For the sake of brevity,

the two performance types are identified henceforth as ‘studio’ and ‘live’. The former affords repetition in a process that may be reductive or additive, with minimal immediate assessment by arbiters of significance. Invoking the image of the sculptor, AA2 refers to the reductive process as ‘chipping away’: “He sort of ... worked on it and chipped away at it until he got a version he was happy with” (AA2 831). He associates the live/studio dichotomy of performance with extrovert/introvert, fluid/plastic, fun/serious. He ascribes equal creative potential to both domains, but the studio is

much more introverted [...]. Making a recording is like making a sculpture or a painting (*mmm*). You have to chip away at things, you have to improve, you’re making something of lasting value that’s going to be listened to more than once and I think that’s a heavy responsibility. In the live performance it can be more fun, flippant, off-the-cuff, spontaneous [...]

*Do you ascribe any more or less creativity to either of those two domains?*

No, not more or less. I think it’s just, there’s more freedom ... there’s more freedom because you’re not having to make necessarily such an artistic statement but, being footloose and fancy free on a stage can make creativity (AA2 720).

There is something of an irony here. Prioritising studio performance as longer ‘lasting’, AA2 feels it to be the locus of creative assessment. Live performance, however, while more ephemeral, is also freer, more fun, and presented as more conducive to creativity. That which is most frequently assessed then, is not necessarily the most creative.

An illuminating description of the more typical additive process is provided by YO, who identifies this studio track as the one that most embodies his creativity:

That was the first track I’d built on my own at home with the synth and a bass part and then I did like a guide drums and then I took the track over to [...]’s house for him to overdub the piano on and then I re-did the drums to his piano and then added all these extra kind of sound effects and other sounds ... (*and other horn players?*) On that track it’s just [...] and I and a bass player. [...]. I did the keyboards, the synths and the sound effects and everything, [...] is doing the live acoustic piano, and then there’s an upright bass player [...]. So that in a way

was the most creative for me, because I had to kind of create the track and then I was doing lots of overdubbing and then redoing stuff and re-editing, so that had the most input from me ... it wasn't just about what we played on that (*sure*) take (YO 525).

In so far as the piece thus required no real-time performance from others, it may be characterised as a solo performance. Other performances were captured, but sequentially and with opportunity for continual review. YO's process exemplifies the post-modern blurring of composer/performer, composition/performance, product/process; the crucial importance to the 'music inventor', in this case YO, resides in the 'adding something else', the going further: "it wasn't just about what we played on that take" (YO 534).

Live performance, however, is "a different beast" (AA2 720) to the studio, with a life of its own and potentially harder to control than studio performance. AA3 likes performing live "sometimes, sometimes not [laughs]. Sometimes it doesn't feel quite right" (AA3 937). He takes succour in the anonymity of his position in the pit of a London West End show because "everybody would know if you made a mistake, particularly for the drums because you're having to come in really loudly (*sure*) [...] But also nobody knows who you are" (AA3 952). He also emphasises the emotional intensity of the studio experience:

I mean you'll know what it's like when you record with people and you have a sort of rapport and a kind of ... It's quite an intense process for everybody (AA3 619).

By contrast, visible authorship in live performance, the "being seen", is most important to SI and serves as a source of additional energy: "There's more energy when you are creative and being seen as creative" (SI 597). HT highlights the pleasures of live performance and his ease in its realisation. "I like it a lot, and er ... I'm never uncomfortable. I've had times when I've been nervous walking across the stage, but when I'm behind the drum sticks everything is fine [...] I love it" (HT 913). If for any reason he were unable or not permitted to perform in public again "that would be a disaster" (HT 919).

Generally those who prefer the studio environment see touring as a distraction, with the additional nervousness that client relationships built over many years may be jeopardised if the

drummer is out of town for too long. Conversely, those who perform most easily in front of the public tend to find the studio environment less free, less fun and *as a consequence*, less conducive to creativity.

### 6.3.2 Theme 8: 'Being part of the team': attitudes to collaborative performance

The most frequently used metaphor for collaboration was that of the team player:

I want to be part of the team that can change the musical direction; I want my playing to influence the other players (HT 461).

I think I respond more if someone inspires me than if I have the inspiration myself (*uh-huh*).  
[...] So if I walk into a band and everything is very creative then I could probably be very creative. But if ... I guess it's like a team player isn't it? (AA3 485).

Being a team-player in an interactive ensemble is seen as conducive to creativity. Referencing opera, film and 'larger art forms', ER considers that "collaboration allows for bigger things to happen" (ER 366), an observation that might serve in the metaphorical sense in which the 'bigger things' are greater than the sum of the parts, offering a creative experience greater than one practitioner may achieve or experience on his or her own. This view is shared by IL who confirms that, although creativity can be enacted by individuals, there is greater creative power in collaboration:

when its collaborative I think it's even more powerful because you have more impetus than just your own (IL 355).

AU relies on interaction at the performance level, this "back and forth, to a) either confirm a thought, or to amend it later as it's coming out [...] or if you do get stuck, you get into a little rut, relying on your collaborator to maybe inject and [indecipherable] something new and then

“oh, right, okay” and you return to that path” (AU 449). He parallels the conversational style of the interview, the ‘back and forth’, with the conversational ‘back and forth’ within collaborative music performance.

### ***Inequality of experience among co-performers***

Successful collaboration is seen by some as predicated upon equality of experience among and between co-performers. YO, for example, appears to be losing confidence in the value of collaboration:

I think when you're younger and maybe everybody's on bit more of an equal experience thing, or everyone is a bit more open, then creativity is a bit more of an exchange. But the older I've got the more I've found...you're on your own! [Both laugh] (*Yes, there is that, isn't there...*). It's quite sad in a way because musicians generally are untogether, selfish, egotistical, out-for-themselves kind of thing, so to find some sympatico individuals that still (*yes*) can...it's difficult (YO 472).

The latent meaning here is that having accumulated greater experience than his co-performers and elevated himself to the position of band-leader who can perform anything he wants, his colleagues, retaining a respectful distance, are no longer ‘sympatico’. As the leader, he is on his own. In a discussion of his self-selected tracks, I suggest to YO the Deweyan perspective that creative performance might be

*an expression of experience (yeah) and everything you have done, lived, thought, played up until that minute of playing constitutes your experience, every way you've related to those inputs constitutes your experience, and that is what you express during the creative moment, which you've selected in these particular three tracks (YO 597).*

With that analysis he readily concurs:

That's so true, that's exactly it really. [...] [...] Anyone is a sum of everything they've experienced at all times aren't they, and it's just another avenue of expression of that, isn't it (YO 603).

His insistence that “you've got to play with people who like how you play, and you like how they play, and that only comes from how you feel amongst each other” (YO 723) reflects the importance YO assigns to his opinion of others and others' opinions of him within a collaborative context of aligned feelings and shared purpose. Broadly a consensus emerged to confirm HT's view that, for mature participants of this age group, the greatest pleasure lay in collaborative interaction (HT 569).

### ***Diminution of collaborative performance***

That pleasure, however, was seen as increasingly hard to come by. Against a backdrop of the rapid expansion of music technology facilitating the creation and global dissemination of the digital music output of a single performer, some participants, for example AA, tended to lament the diminution of collaborative interaction in performance. In a scenario which plays into the idea of the stay-home drummer, AA, AA2, and ER have all recently acquired home studios and spend time working alone in them “so there's less collaboration than there used to be for sure” (AA 667). Given that the age of the youngest interviewee is 34, AA's observation might not hold good for a younger cadre of drummers that has grown up with the computer, having known little of the benefits of a collaborative music process that the participants appear to hold dear. When ER, for example, is recording he knows

there's going to be no fixing ... I love that. I love the commitment that is required by everyone in the room (*I like that too*); the attention level is just a little bit sharper (ER 568).

On the other hand, collaboration may act as a disincentive to creativity. Authorial evidence supported the view that the *modus operandi* of some mid-1970s English progressive rock groups was a labour-intensive exercise in democratic music-making that had a tendency to deliver the lowest common denominator; the first thing that all parties in the room could agree on as appropriate for the endeavour in hand (Bruford 2009:267-270). With that agreement, however, comes a level of emotional investment which finds approval with IL: “What I like about that process is that it gets everybody involved” (IL 401).

### ***Leadership and the leader***

Then question arises as to the manner in which leadership is determined in collaborative performance. Understandings of leadership and a ‘leader’ were not specifically interrogated within the data. However, structures of power within a given performance space tend to be fluid, contested, less straightforward than might be imagined and arising in unexpected ways that require negotiation:

We’re playing with an orchestra; the drum set is right in front of the conductor, you know, the first violins are to my right, seconds and violas are behind me, I’m playing really quiet (*yeah, with sticks?*) Some; a lot of brushes. But [...] the keyboard player was saying “You know, basically you have to realise...I know you’ve just started, but we’re all following you, you’ve got to be the leader. Even though there’s a conductor” he said “Look, actually [...] hired the conductor to follow the rhythm section, so that’s how it’s working (*how interesting*) because he wanted it to feel the way he’s used to having it feel (AA 235).

The telling anecdote above reveals not only how such negotiations were moved forward by a third party (the keyboard player) but how conventional understandings (in this case the rôle of the conductor) needed to be entirely inverted to accommodate the ‘feeling’ of the nominal leader.

Experiential evidence suggests that the leader with whom, for whom, or as which the participant acts will have engagement with multiple communities of practice. This brings the leader into

contact with a “multi-membership nexus of perspectives” (Wenger 1998:105) in the execution of his or her primary duty - the creation of a performance space. Wenger suggests the notion of ‘brokering’ to describe the way in which leaders can introduce elements of one practice into another: “What brokers press into service to connect practices is their experience of multi-membership and the possibilities for negotiation inherent in participation” (Wenger 1998:10).

The next set of Themes 9-12 were coded according to four contexts of performance arising from the data and related to leadership. They are arranged from the functional pole towards the compositional pole on the FCC:

- Theme 9: Performing for a leader (receiving direction).
- Theme 10: Performing with a leader or equals in situations where the power is negotiated (sharing direction).
- Theme 11: Performing as a leader (giving direction).
- Theme 12: Performing without a leader (neither receiving, sharing nor giving direction).

### **6.3.3 Theme 9: ‘Doing a good job’: performing for a leader**

This performance context denotes minimal global control over the music, although much control over the individual’s contribution may be retained. Here, quintessentially functional performance is governed by a large degree of direction from others, and a successful outcome typically seen as ‘doing a good job’. One might be hired as an anonymous sideman (‘just give me a [generic] bossa-nova’), as someone else (‘play it like John Bonham would’), or as yourself (‘what would you do on this?’). Identifying which one of these is in play early on in the relationship with the leader/producer is paramount for a successful outcome to the performance event.

There was little agreement as to how and to what extent creativity might subsist in the functional performances required of what AA2 calls the “lesser gigs” (AA2 393). Participants adopt contrasting approaches to the topic, which tends to be seen as somehow less supportive of creativity than compositional performance. With his pejorative use of the term ‘pattern players’,



AA identifies the salient characteristics of functional practitioners while seeking to distance himself from their practice:

I know people who are pattern players and they like to play what they know, and they sound good and they're comfortable, but that's not me at all (AA 907).

In hard functional performance, all overt choice and control and 'a level of responsibility' for the success of the project are ceded to the producer/leader and "I'm told exactly what to do" (AA2 317). Asked how he feels about this, his reply is ambivalent "I like it, I like it. Erm ..." (AA2 323). In the next extract, he revisits the earlier theme of trust; in this case, trust that the leader is competent to lead:

It does remove a level of responsibility from me, erm, and I don't mind it so long as the person telling me what to do knows what they're doing (*yeah*) you know. Now there have been many producers I've done sessions for; they put something on a demo then they get me in and they just get me... You know what it's like, you just – (*awful*) - chase the demo, and it never works (*and in the end they end up throwing the demo away anyway*)... They do! [...] Whereas if you're working with people erm who are... in full possession of what they need to know to make the music work, then it's a different thing (AA2 329).

More moderately, "if something requires me to play ... in a certain style, as most of my gigs do, then I'm happy to do that and I don't feel it's stepping on my creativity" (AA2 439). AU has a straightforward conception of functional performance as embodying a "much more traditional rôle or model of drummer-sideman playing someone else's music (*finding the best thing for it, to make it work...*) Yeah, exactly" (AU 592). Having the freedom to interfere in order to make the music work evidences a potentially creative performance space.

Perhaps unwilling to be seen as a 'pattern-player', AA2 appears inconsistent and defensive about performing functionally. His repeated yet hesitant assertion that he likes "being told exactly what to do" (AA2 323), belies the fact that, a little later on in the interview, he refers to the "lesser gigs (*mmm*)...they didn't warrant creativity" (AA2 393). He ascribes his eventual creative

burnout to “just doing so much music that required regurgitation of parts (*uh-huh*) and it wasn’t feeding my soul and it wasn’t feeding my creativity” (AA2 422). His remedy for this was to decline the ‘lesser gigs’ and move further towards compositional practice: “*you started to decline [...] less creative (yes) areas (entirely) to accept and encourage more creative areas? 100%; that’s exactly right*” (AA2 400). Despite his confirmation of my summary of his career path (AA2 471), there seems to be a sensitivity, as if he has taken it as mildly critical; he searches for reasons and excuses. He contrasts what he does with “creative” projects... “where the music is central...it’s got no commercial desire” and “I can do anything” (AA2 479).

### ***Creativity unwelcome***

Much popular music at the hard functional polarity on the continuum of control is performed without creativity as a goal. As has been noted (section 2.2.1), the creativity manifest in departure from the norm may not always be welcome. Several participants confirmed this observation:

...he was not comfortable because he felt that...I was “improvising” too much quote unquote (*mmm*) and it was not exactly like the album and he wanted things to be like the album (SI 216).

I played in a lot of West End shows, played in a lot of bands that played very (*right*) simple ... well, parts that needed repeating; like if you were in a pop gig you’ve just got to repeat the part (*absolutely*). If you go off that part then people complain sort of thing (AA2 393).

Welcome or not, some saw the availability of choice and the exercise of control, and thus creative potential, in any genre or at any position on the FCC. AA3’s conception of creativity as being “sympathetic to any situation you might walk into [...]; to be musically creative enough to be able to walk into a situation and play exactly the right thing for the music” (AA3 453), allows him to perceive of creativity as potentially available at any point on the spectrum. ER perceives of “every piece of music we play [...] however big or small that might be, or dramatic, or non-dramatic, it’s filled with those possibilities. So even ... I mean, a 28.5 second breakfast cereal commercial doesn’t give you a whole lot of elbow room (*right!*) but still there are some choices, albeit far less than a larger-form piece” (ER 257).

AA3 confirms that elbow room is available even within the functional confines of doing a good job in musical theatre or studio work. Creativity trickles down or “dribbles through” from the composer or musical director, the very looseness or vagueness of the musical direction itself being conducive to creative thinking:

If you're working with a composer or a musical director, the creativity, if you'll pardon the expression, sort of dribbles through. He's got more of a creative idea that he then gives to you to create, so it's not like ... because of the rôle of the instrument it's not like it's terribly defined, anyway (*yeah, yeah*). So even if you do a regular session for somebody, they might say something like “this is like a 60s soul thing like so-and-so and so-and-so; can you ... maybe sixteens on the hi-hat or something?” (*yeah*) there's still a lot of creativity, I find, in that (AA3 340).

Performance limitations may, of course, be imposed by a leader who *doesn't want* creativity. IL's distinction between “creative music...that's my favourite music”, and non-creative or uncreative pop music is characterised by the intentional or unintentional prohibition on interaction that she associates with the genre; “the oftentimes lack of letting and allowing” (IL 164) [Theme 3]. A related question asks how much creativity might be involved in fulfilling a tradition. HT put a generous spin on his critical assessment of the unchallenging functional performances of some modern stadium rock drummers as they ‘fit just into that tradition’ and ‘fulfil that piece of musicianship’, while acknowledging that he

couldn't physically have played the whole concert like that, because I'm not like that, and I [would have] fucked it up, and at the end I would end up getting fired not because I'm not skilled enough to play it, but I haven't got the force to do (*yeah, yeah*) that music (HT 840).

AU, AA, and ER adopt a more positive approach to functional performance. AU ‘exploits’ it; he ‘enjoys the challenge’ (AU 202). His statement that “I really like the discipline that is required to execute that kind of precision” (AU 202) speaks to the close relationship between creativity, discipline and learning, and underpins the thread of developmental thinking that suggests that we learn by creating (Burnard 2012, Barrett 2012).

These experts tend to see creativity as inherent in any music performance outside their comfort zone in part because of the potential for learning. For example, a potential employer has asked AA2 to play on his recording having heard him play some drum'n'bass: "I said, well, I'm not a drum'n'bass drummer. He said "I don't care" (AA2 983). AA2's eventual acceptance of the job, it may be inferred, is based on the possibility for learning and improved skill use in that genre. Referring to the functional demands of a different leader, AA2 reports that: "[...] in general tells me what to play [...]. But I'm being creative and I'm learning from it" (AA2 971).

ER characterises functional practice as 'enabling' others to do something or 'accompanying' them while they do it. He finds both activities entirely creative because

in the rôle of accompaniment where it applies specifically to the drum set, the drummer is faced with an infinite number of choices that he or she can make. Ringo playing on a floor tom as opposed to playing on a hi-hat; Harvey Mason on '*Chameleon*' anticipating the snare backbeat with that 16<sup>th</sup> note syncopation as opposed to just playing on two and four (*mmm*); two examples that come to mind (ER 62).

Using studio drummer John Robinson as an exemplar of creativity in this type of performance, he observes that Robinson

didn't fall prey to the jazz drummer's thing of "I'm going to, or I must, play it differently every time". He would hone that part, perfect it, and craft what was not only a creative drum part but a very reliable drum part for the song (*right, right*) and so that's a form of creativity that to my mind is very highly developed, yet at first glance may not fit our expectation of "oh, that's a creative part" (ER 72).

### ***Antipathy towards functional performance***

HT and SI, however, as occupants of terrain close to the pole of high compositional performance, exhibit a pronounced antipathy towards some of the key dimensions of functional performance:

whenever people insist on really giving me...like, very very strict directions about where the bass drum should be, how the hi-hat should be, you know, how I should tune my snare and so on and, and, all that kind of thing, I, I don't really feel comfortable and usually I would not stay in that situation for very long, you know, I would always respect my commitments if it's a gig, if it's a recording, but I would maybe discontinue that situation (SI 225).

For SI the notion of 'functional' summons images of servitude, compliance and loss of power that induce discomfort and are at odds with his existing self-identity. Although Robinson was not a participant to the research, it might not be too far a step to deduce that, for him, the notion of 'compositional' summons images of performance excess, unreliability and self-indulgence (and hence of ensuing unemployment) that induce an equally uncomfortable clash with *his* self-identity.

### ***Comfort / discomfort***

The degree of creativity in functional performance is construed by many in terms of the production of comfort or discomfort for the leader or co-performers. AA shares another drummer's perception of the goal of the functional performer: "I really want to give them whatever it is that they need and what's important; to make them feel comfortable" (AA 224). Bringing something fresh to the music, by which is meant offering suggestions as to how the music might be improved rhythmically or texturally by the removal or addition of elements, in a process that the leader has not (yet) conceived or realised, may be acceptable so long as he is 'comfortable'. Some like further input; some don't: "And [...] likes that. He likes that (*exactly*)... another personality type would not like that at all" (AA 274). For example:

[The leader] is very structured in his thinking, but the drums ... most of the guys in the band are playing parts (*yeah*) and I have to play certain beats and parts that he wants to hear; he wrote them and ... he's not comfortable with anything else, so (*uh-hum*) I'm fine with that; he wrote it, he's the composer (AA 282).

The functional relationship between leader and sideman is frequently interpreted in terms of the locus of power. The salient musical aspects of the relationship *always* remain the prerogative of the drummer: “You’re right, we’re hired by the leader, they have the final say on things (*yeah*) but it’s our band. It’s the drummer’s band, always” (AA 527). AA3 agrees that somehow the power to ‘make it work’ ultimately devolves to the drummer: “I don’t mind being told what to play. I’m quite happy...(*sure*). We’ve got a lot of power playing the drums, haven’t we?” (AA3 347). “Even if you book me for something and you say “play that” (*yeah*), then I’m still the drummer controlling a certain amount, not that I’m a control freak or anything ... it is very important that we get it right, put it that way” (AA3 349). These observations not only reflect the multiple evocations of the adage about a band being only as good as its drummer, but also evoke a conspiratorial view of the covert nature of the power structure. From the practitioner’s point of view, the ball always remains in his or her court, even though the client or leader may not know it.

In the historical context of the advent of proto-music-technology in the 1980s, early drum programming frequently rendered the music stiff, awkward or otherwise uncomfortable, and the functionality of the performance lay in the drummer’s ability to make it “feel like music” in contrast to “mechanical patterns”:

In the 80s sometimes it was...[.../ just uncomfortable. If you were dealing with a producer who was a programmer, who came from a programming mind, and he thought of drumming as just levels (*yeah*), he thought of a bass drum part, a snare drum part (*yeah, yeah*), a hi hat part, and he didn’t see the thing (*the big picture*) as a whole. That would be sometimes odd. (*Yeah*). I could usually kind of figure it out but the whole goal for me was always to make it feel like music and not like mechanical patterns (AA 308).

In this context ‘doing a good job’ means ‘making it feel like music’. In the broader thematic context, ‘doing a good job’ tends to mean ‘making the leader sound good’ and by extension ‘making it [the performance] work’, an action imbued by participants with greater creative potential than might be expected.

#### 6.3.4 Theme 10: 'Allowing me to be me': performing with a leader

The fourth performance context is the next closest to the compositional pole but remains on the functional side of the continuum mid-point. Here the constraints on selection and control are loosened; those dimensions become available for negotiation between nominal equals, thus allowing 'me to be me'.

There are degrees of functionality in any performance *with* a leader; varying degrees of input are required and expected. In time, the expert sideman becomes known for a plethora of skills, preferences and techniques for which s/he may be specifically hired because they will, it is hoped, suit the musical context:

People I guess after that ... they'd like to hire me allowing me to be me (*sure*) which is lucky, very lucky. Not all the time; I mean sometimes I'm a complete sideman, I'm paying the rent (*yeah*) you know ... and happy to do so (AA 625).

Most find this aspect of any employment 'very encouraging', because "it's much more creative (AA2 299). Asked if one leader would accept creative input, AA2 replied: "He would if he liked it, which is a really nice way of working because if I've got something...he's the songwriter and he's got a good idea, but always obviously you don't go and see a doctor and then tell them what's wrong with you (*sure, sure*)...that's the other thing with a drummer (*yeah*)...if you let the drummer contribute to the music, if their ideas are good, and hopefully our ideas are good, (*yeah*) then, erm, it's worth having" (AA2 357).

#### ***Benefits accruing to the functional performer***

As skills and efficiencies develop, benefits may accrue from close working relationships with talented and experienced leaders:

To be honest, he gave me so much confidence (AA 924).

By working with [...], again, I think it made me prepared kind of for anything, because we never knew what he was going to do on stage (*yeah*); you just had to realise... you had to trust that this is going to be really good. And we all have enough ability here where we can all make this really good, whatever he throws at us (AA 1004).

I just learnt a lot from him as a musician, and it taught me a lot about creativity... Some of the things he said about... not playing what's on the album, I want your stuff on this (AA2 805).

AA3 offers insight into performance at this subtle, relatively under-represented position on the continuum, where working *for* someone becomes working *with* someone. Here, verbal instruction is minimal, although there may be some use of written music. The assumption is that the individual knows what to play, that his or her experience will guide the provision of an appropriate performance at the blurred mid-point between the functional and the compositional. There may be an emotional connection:

I felt very proud to be (*mmm*) not only in his company but in the company of the band, and to be able to present that music and play that music [...] [The leader] is getting older, the music's becoming more refined, but yet more emotionally charged at the same time. So it's almost like it's becoming - not simpler - more refined, but more emotional (AA3 606).

Almost all participants speak at length of the importance of one or more fruitful and sometimes intense musical relationships with internationally-known leaders. To some extent, participant perceptions of rhythmic creativity are refracted through the leader's harmonic or song based creativity. For example, AA3 enjoys a high level of musical communication with a leader whose goal is the removal of 'barriers, borders and bar lines':

What kind of frustrates me sometimes is when I hear jazz musicians go "As a jazz player, my goal is that I need to know where I am all the time, and I'll never lose the time, and I'll know where I am in the structure, and I'm going nail it da da da ..." Well, he's the opposite. That's not what it's about for somebody like him because he's trying to remove all those barriers and those borders and those bar lines. Not in a superficial or obvious way; it's not like he sets out to do that, it's just how he feels the music (AA3 738).



Referencing the strategy of an influential band-leader whose work embodies AA2's performances, AA2 highlights the value of what he calls the 'first take syndrome'. This approach prioritises a sense of immediacy with minimal repetition, and says 'a lot about creativity in my opinion':

When you play a first take or you play a piece of music for the first time [...] you are going through a fresh creative process. When you play that piece of music a second time, back to back, that creative process has changed completely. (*It's changed into a re-creative process*). Correct, and that is radically different, and [names the leader] doesn't like a second iteration of the tune in the studio or live even on the same day. So he doesn't like to play any of his songs even in a sound check. He likes to go on, or walk in the studio, and play them...once. (*That's called Jazz*) It is! It is! And that's basically sort of the crux of what I got from [...], more than anything...is to allow that creative process to happen (AA2 854).

The reference here is to permitting or 'allowing' something to happen, an idea strongly emphasised by IL in Theme 3. Such an approach requires trust in the co-performers (Theme 4) which, in this case, led to successful outcomes. Additionally, working with people on a high level of functional performance can be transformative:

Some musicians you play with, you know, they make you a better musician. Some musicians do something to you that takes you to a different level (HT 563).

In short, working for and with knowledgeable leaders was perceived as beneficial in multiple areas of performance practice: recording, rehearsing, composition, band-leading and business skills. In practice, such relationships provide the skill-set and knowledge-base upon which participants build parallel 'solo' careers as leaders, a topic to which the analysis now turns.

### 6.3.5 Theme 11: 'Special chemistry': performing as a leader

In Theme 10 (Performing with a leader), the musical and conceptual direction of the performance is more freely shared than in the context of Theme 9 (Performing for a leader). In Theme 11 (Performing as a leader) the power now tilts further in favour of the individual actor, in this case the compositional drummer. Primary action here is the creation of a 'space' in which potentially creative music may occur, validating the participant's position as band-leader at the top of a notional hierarchy. Having created a space and possibly, but not necessarily, a text, the leader may or may not cede further direction or control to others, such as a musical director.

In this process, many participants look for an empathetic relationship; a 'special chemistry' with co-performers upon which to construct a situation that will support the compositional project. One difficulty is that "you only get those kind of combinations of that special chemistry like you [the researcher] had very rarely, don't you?" (YO 502). Emphasising the importance of the connection he has with the other musicians, SI describes the early stages of this empathy: "It's when you feel firstly that you like the people who are playing...you like their playing, you like their sense of musicality and their musical sensitivity, and they like yours" (SI 532). This 'like-mindedness' is discernible within the several modes of leadership identified by participants, ranging from the loose assembly of musically compatible individuals to 'see what happens', through to the hiring of specific key individuals to realise the leader's more closely defined personal vision. Exemplifying the former, IL instructs people to:

Bring in ideas; don't bring any songs...unless you have a song that you're completely confident in, don't bring in songs...just bring in ideas and open minds and open hearts and let's just play. We put a tape recorder on, and we just started playing different ideas and things and it was incredible because everybody put some ideas in (IL 386).

At the other extreme, another participant and his colleague "organised the whole thing, knew what we were going to do pretty much without necessarily talking about it, but knew the musical framework that we were going to shift in, and then built everything on top, and then we edited and organised afterwards" (AA3 386).

The leader tends to act principally as a catalyst for action; someone who puts a situation together and stands back, but may assume other functions. Some principal components of the project might be only dimly imagined at the outset. On AA3's account one doesn't have to have a full idea in mind before you begin to construct the circumstances from which a special chemistry might emerge: "I kind of felt I knew roughly what kind of feeling of sound I wanted to have..." (AA3 543).

In the extract below, AU's perception of leadership requires "much more of the 'producer' mentality in the moment; thinking about the big picture and the ensemble sound and just trying to accommodate that" (AU 508):

The only direction I gave was, again, this idea of exploring all the different combinations of the four of us. So the only thing I went into the session with was a checklist of what are all the possible duos, and make sure we do a three or four minute improvisation with each duo. And then what are the different trios? And then, of course, let's do something with no time... and of course the main chunk of it was the four of us playing together. I wanted to make sure we had all the combinations (*yeah*). Other than that it was truly improvised (AU 482).

Participants adopt different strategic approaches within and between different projects that they lead. Having constructed a potentially creative space or situation, AA3's approach echoes that of IL. His generous inclusion of others in the ownership of the performance also allows him to delegate some responsibility for the outcome: "The music almost asks people to come in and bring their music with them, is really what's important. So it's not really my vision and my entire thing" (AA3 381).

Some find the process of shifting from functional practice to a more compositional practice difficult: "The whole idea of you being the 'presenter', it being your thing, I struggled with" (AA3 565). YO similarly describes a hesitancy as he moves from the directed functional 'sideman' to the directing compositional 'leader' (YO 245). AA and AA2 both highlight change in their approaches to music performance over time that may be characterised broadly as a move from the functional to the compositional; interpreted by AA2 as the distinction between execution and creation:

I mostly invent my own parts I would say now. (*Even though it's in somebody else's context?*) Yeah. This is something that I've come into (*that's interesting*) later on in my life ... whereas before I would think about executing a part, now I think about creating a part (AA2 287).

Typically undertaken only after sufficient status within the music scene afforded record company attention, assuming leadership is thus seen in part as a way of a) controlling the audio environment in which one's drumming would be presented; b) decreasing the chances of dilution of the creative intent c) designing a vehicle for personal creative expression.

### **6.3.6 Theme 12: "Sometimes it's enough with yourself": performing without a leader**

A final group of participant perspectives focus upon a sixth performance context which eschews external direction, in which the selection, choice and control of all aspects of the performance lie with the performer alone. This leaderless, 'hard' compositional action was exhibited in either solo performance or performance with one other. Performance with three or more seemed to incubate, *de facto*, some form of implicit or explicit leadership.

Participants tend to perform alone-in-public (drum clinics, solo performance, installations) or alone-with-technology (the 'stay-home' drummer). Generally, the best-known context in which drummers perform alone-in-public is that of the drum soloist. With its Vaudevillian connotations of entertainment, juggling and showmanship, few participants relish the idea of a drum solo outside of some framing musical context, either in concert or for demonstration purposes. As expert practitioners, however, they are frequently called upon to supply just that at Drum Festivals and workshops. Most dislike the process and do so only with a sense of commercial obligation. AA2 expresses the general view: "Put me on that drum set now and say "play a solo"; I will do something just like you would or anyone else would (*sure*), but that's not what I'd call the centre of my working creativity in my musical life" (AA2 562).

As a nationally known exponent of solo performance in art spaces and galleries as much as clubs and concert halls, HT emphasises the potential for creativity in a context in which the direct relationship between performer and listener is unmediated by the actions of co-performers:

“sometimes it’s enough with yourself - you can do a solo concert and it really works” (HT 568). Reflecting upon the resilience and longevity of an effectively communicated creative solo performance by another drummer, he describes the beautiful way in which it is ‘still alive inside me’:

It was a solo concert, and after 20 minutes I left because it was still good. But I knew that he started repeating, looping, and this is what I want to take with me ... it’s still great, and I went. (*How interesting*). And now it’s still alive inside me, because it was only good, what I heard... (HT 752).

Recently he is of the opinion, however, that the transition from the controlled performance space of the studio to the less controllable milieu of the solo concert might have an unfavourable impact on his music-making: “I released the record with solo electronics and percussion and I didn’t really want to do solo concerts” (HT 592).

### ***Music technology and performing alone***

Almost all participants have had some sort of engagement with a technology that affords the facility to compose and capture their performances in private, with no further need, necessarily, to seek the input of others. There is insufficient space here to fully afford the topic the attention it deserves, but three observations in particular reveal something of the meaning they make of it.

The first outlines some of the complexities of “pretending” to perform for an unknown and unseen virtual customer:

Because you’re working alone and in that situation you do start to question things “Well, if this sounds good to me...” and of course as soon as you put the drums on any track that’s had a drum machine or a loop or something, it makes it completely different... The dynamics of the band sound different, because the way we play makes them sound like they’re playing quieter or louder or more intense or more laid back, and of course there are so many ways to shape this tune I wonder if the guy’s going to like it? I wonder if he has any idea (*what he wants ?[...]*). So I’m playing and I’m kind of in essence producing it by the way I’m

approaching the tune, because it's very cold sounding when I get it. And often they'll put their solos on later (*yeah*) so you're playing 'pretend there's a solo going on' (*'pretend solo' gig*) so you just hear the chords or ... (*oh God, I hate that*) but it's being an actor (AA 678).

The super-imposition of the qualities of human performance on the unbending non-negotiable aural space of the automated track alters perceptions. What is quiet, what is loud? What rushes, what drags? As an 'actor' AA has also to play the part of 'producer-by-default' because the nature of any contribution by the agency of a human drummer in the electronic domain will have such a powerful effect upon all aspects of the finished product.

A second description is also in the context of over-dubbing on to automated tracks, typical of the performance of the stay-home drummer who adopts and adapts the skills of both recording engineer and producer in doing so. But here it is worth remembering that 'solo' performance is not synonymous with undirected performance. Work on previously recorded tracks might take place in a commercial studio under tight direction. In this example, other musicians were previously involved

... but not at the same time. I did drums on their own. (*So it's sequentially recorded?*) Yeah. So he had like a demo track, I put the drums on and then he built a lot on that (*yeah, yeah*). He had a pretty specific idea of what he wanted [...]. Drum'n'bass in three (AA2 990).

A final vignette illustrating technological mediation within the context of an improvising electronic keyboard-and-drums duo exhibits an unusual set of constraints and opportunities. AU describes how his duo's methodology is to a large extent governed by 'the world of pre-sets' and creativity inheres in 'in the moment' selections between available sound combinations:

So our first set lists were just those sonic combinations (*mmm*) and it's like "okay, we just kind of completed an idea ... maybe we stopped and people clapped, okay now let's start a new idea, so okay I'll go to this bass sound and this accompanying sound and now we're in a new place. So the world of pre-sets and being able to recall sounds helped shape where we would go at each moment. And actually I like that for chunks of time throughout the set

we're in a box of these sounds (...) and in a healthy way, because if he was just spinning that knob every 30 seconds and going to new sounds ... "Whoa, where are we, where are we going?" It's kind of nice that even if we're improvising it's kind of a song right now with this template, you know (AU 574).

Once the contents of the 'box of sounds' have been selected and the box opened, the direction and quality of the music emanate from what comes out of the box. The sonic selections determine both the new starting point for each fresh piece and "where we would go at each moment" (AU 578).

The DSCA conceptual framework (section 2.3) posits the *communication* of a performance that exhibits qualitative difference as an essential prerequisite for creative assessment. The question then arises as to the extent to which participants feel they need others around them to perform creatively. IL, for example, conceptualises creativity as within her and in need only of expression: "You know, we can create in a room by ourselves; I can create in a room by myself. So do I actually need anybody else, even another band member to do something creative? No, I don't ... it's in me" (IL 617). An older romantic view of creativity that posits the phenomenon as a divine or mysterious process in the gift of the Gods and bestowed upon the lone individual, and which some thought long since debunked (Weisberg 1993), continues to have traction. It is SI's perception that creativity is an "expression of our human worthiness or divinity or whatever you call it" (SI 835). For IL: "my creativity is part of the way that God made me" (IL 512). Further explanation reveals a metaphysical slant on energy distribution:

Even if there was some decree that stated what you just stated God forbid, and I were only able to play in my garage or in my bedroom, I would still indirectly be affecting people (*ah, okay*) because I believe that when you put energy out ... (*it doesn't go anywhere, it's there*) oh, it's definitely there and it affects people ... we don't even know why certain energies affect us but they do and sometimes they're negative because not everybody is positive. But for me, I love putting out good energies and positive energies, so I would still do that and I know that I would still be affecting people, it would just be more indirect (IL 671).

SI finds it possible to be creative in any situation:

whether you are playing as you said in the middle of the woods, where nobody is listening or you're playing to an audience, erm, you will have an experience of creativity, yes, definitely (SI 592).

The experience of creativity when performing alone appears, however, to be diminished. According to both SI and IL, the presence of others tends to 'amplify' the experience. SI states that there is also

an amplification when you are seen, when you express yourself (*mmm*) and you are creative and you are seen by other people. So there's a high amplitude, so to speak! (SI 595).

A solo performance heard in the moment by no-one other than the performer and thus, according to some, not creative, may of course *post-hoc become* creative if captured and embodied in an artefact for later dissemination:

If I'm creating something, and let's say I create something and I record it, then I have proof that I've created it. Whether I'm with somebody or not, I created it and it's there. Does it become more alive, does it become ... bigger in terms of touching people where I share it? Yes it does. But it doesn't mean I can't create it without people (IL 636).

Performance combining a high level of autonomy with the benefits of leaderless collaboration was available in duo, a format seen as highly satisfactory by AA, AU, YO and the researcher (Bruford 2009). AA has toured extensively in a drum duo with highly satisfactory outcomes for himself and listeners; AU, YO and the researcher have spent time in duos with keyboard players. Describing his work with his co-performer, a pianist, YO states that "there's something easy working with him ... it doesn't really feel like work, we just mess around with ideas and stuff" (YO 484); an account which chimes nicely with descriptions of creative work in other domains



(Peacock 2008, Sawyer 2003). AU's current (2015) duo with an internationally-known expert keyboard-player is "about as satisfying a musical situation that I've been a part of. As you said, because the template itself allows for lots of freedom and creativity, but also in my opinion he's one of the best musicians in the world" (AU 691).

Some shied away from leaderless performance, seeing it as both obscure in process and prone to excess and self-indulgence. If a participant's "job description" is one that "collaborates to build, you know, something that the sum of which is greater than the sum of the parts" and is "completely about collaboration" (AA2 550), s/he is unlikely to dwell long in the wilderness of the alone. If you "feed off the collaboration with fellow musicians" (AA2 546) and are currently doing a project "where we are composing together - three of us - and, erm, it's a different thing (*mmm*) ... it's also lovely" (AA2 614), you inhabit the collaborative compositional space inscribed in Theme 8. With no guiding voice overseeing the development of the creative action, it might be difficult to discern direction and guide a hard compositional project to a satisfactory completion. AA3 accedes to an outside colleague who is "very good at shaping" but crucially "he's also very good at being able to work out when we've said what we needed to say" (AA3 690).

### **6.3.7 Summary of findings**

Descriptive Category 3 categorised the data relevant to six performance contexts in which action takes place:

- Studio and live performance.
- Collaborative performance.
- Performance for a leader.
- Performance with a leader.
- Performance as a leader.
- Performance without a leader.

Theme 7 revealed that live performance is seen as freer, less constrained and with potentially less controllable outcomes than the studio equivalent. Nevertheless, an imperfect connection with a live audience is marginally more conducive to creativity than a potentially more controllable connection through studio performance.

Theme 8 suggested that a collaborative context of aligned feelings and shared purpose affords not only the greatest performance pleasure but a secure, favourable environment in which to incubate difference.

Theme 9 and Theme 10 highlighted drummer narratives of ‘functional’ performance *for* a leader and *with* a leader respectively. While there was little agreement as to how and to what extent creativity might subsist in functional performance, contrasting approaches nevertheless generated several commonalities. Participant perceptions gathered in these two themes suggested that:

- functional performance (commonly identified as that which makes the leader comfortable) is less directly supportive of creativity than compositional performance. Nevertheless, creative expression is available in even the most tightly constrained of functional situations.
- the creativity manifest in departure from the norm is not always welcome in music performance.
- creativity doesn’t necessarily draw attention to itself.
- creative collaboration is frequently embedded in a close, symbiotic relationship with an experienced leader that enables, nurtures and sustains participant creativity.
- benefits tend to accrue from such relationships with leaders.

Theme 11 and Theme 12 focused on ‘compositional’ narratives of performance *as* a leader and *without* a leader, respectively. Accounts suggested that:

- the music must work functionally before it can be said to work compositionally. Compositional performance thus has an element of functional performance already embedded.
- both types of performance are meaningful.
- as performance moves increasingly to the compositional, the assumption appears to be that individual co-performers will need less direction of any kind, verbal or otherwise.
- when performing alone, the experience of creativity is diminished. The presence of listeners and/or co-performers tends to facilitate, amplify and heighten the experience.
- participants give equal weight to reports of their creativity in functional performance under the direction of others as the creativity within self-directed compositional performance within their own ensembles. In short, they achieved and experienced similar

dimensions of creativity, albeit in different ways and to different degrees, in the propulsion of their own musical vehicles as in the propulsion of someone else's.

When AA2 states that "...whereas before I would think about executing a part, now I think about creating a part" (AA2 289), he identifies a key distinction between the functional and compositional modes of performance. The former, associated with carrying out the directions of another, backgrounds creativity and focuses on 'doing a good job' (Theme 9) by 'allowing me to be me' (Theme 10). The latter mode suggests 'playing with no nets', searching for that elusive 'special chemistry' between co-performers (Theme 11), and the bringing of something extra in the search for AU's 'unclaimed territory'. Participants tend to occupy a given position on the continuum between the two until changing circumstances, ideologies or self-conceptions (for example, AA2's creative burnout (AA2 422)) precipitate a move. Broadly, participants characterise compositional performance as functional performance *plus* something, rather than as an 'either/or' binary. That 'plus something' is now examined more closely in the context of the construction of difference (Descriptive Category 4) to which the analysis turns.

## **Analytic Category [C]: Making it Matter**

Description: This category collates talk about the construction, communication and assessment of difference.

### **6.4 Descriptive Category 4: Constructing difference**

Description: Dimensions of action and influences on action whose goal is the construction of significant difference.

#### **6.4.1 Theme 13: 'Gluing the music together': appropriate performance**

What is 'difference' to an expert drummer? The notion tended to be interpreted as 'not sounding like anybody else'. Construction of difference is governed to a large extent by reference to what the 'other guys' do (by which is meant 'other drummers'): "that's not something I've heard other guys do" (ER 426). Citing one of his self-selected works, AA feels able to attribute it as creative because "it does sound really different and it doesn't sound like anybody else and I thought I'm proud that it doesn't sound like anybody else" (AA 411). As already noted, many understandings of creative difference suggest that it may be achieved by injecting some novelty or originality by extension, transformation or reinterpretation of pre-existing artefacts in the domain. Within popular music, difference may be constructed from re-interpretation, in a form of recombinational creativity: "His interpretation made that song be a whole different thing" (IL 384). Such action, participants report, is predicated upon the establishment of some sort of stability in the music. First, the music must be made to work. This stability is built upon the solid foundations of 'appropriate performance', the provision of which these expert drummers tend to take as their primary function.

Appropriate performance is interpreted as providing the “right thing” (ER 98); “what’s best for the music” (ER 99). One participant is “just trying to serve the music as much as possible” (AU 217). Participants generally understand themselves to be there to serve and shape the music: “We’ve got a job as much as anything. It’s not just being in charge of the time; everyone’s responsible for the time” (AA2 1085). “[We provide] that alchemy to try and make a musical ensemble work” (AA2 887). Referencing the work of a colleague, ER describes the drummer’s choices as “almost never outrageous but they were always perfect” (ER 516). Although not explicitly stated, the sense here is of choices that are ‘perfectly appropriate’ to the musical situation.

Not everything everyone does is what they want to do; AA3 distinguishes between the two: “I kind of have a loose idea of what I want to do and what I do” (AA3 379). YO interprets his rôle and that of drummers in general as being “support and foundation and then occasional prodding or reacting ... But it’s very much a supportive rôle to the lead actors” (YO 173). That supportiveness recurs in the previously identified sub-theme of making the lead actors comfortable enough to perform creatively; such action, in turn, being interpreted by some as creative. ‘Providing the right thing’ tends to be informed first, by listening, and second, in an illuminating metaphor, by ‘working out the glue that will glue the music together’:

You play what’s appropriate, and that I think is one of the central tenets of what a drummer does creatively, is to understand, listen to the music and then...almost create some alchemy whereby you work out the glue that will glue the music together, by creating parts that work. So if, for instance, a band is maybe in danger of falling apart, the first thing a drummer will do is pull it together (*yeah*) because it needs to be done (*yeah*). [...] It can be on as simple a level as that (AA2 303).

The glue needed here is to prevent the band ‘falling apart’. A further description of other aspects of core function includes “building it” and “making it go”:

Usually as drummers - as leaders - we’re always shaping the dynamics of the band and the transition points to the second verse, the chorus, the bridge. We are the ones who are building it or making it go dynamically. There is a certain [indecipherable] weight or density you get by

playing sparse to dense, making it more exciting, obviously, or do the reverse, bring the band down (*yeah*) with the nano notes with the transitions ... (AA 291).

Even in compositional performance, the sphere in which drummer creativity is understood to be most ‘available’ or ‘accessible’, the construction of significant difference is seldom pursued remorselessly, rather only after core functions of performance have been attended to, ‘earning’ the drummer ‘the right’ to interfere (AU 249). AU has a list:

my subconscious checklist of my responsibilities at every moment (*right, right*)...you know, time, or groove, dynamics (*form has got to be big*) yeah, form, dynamics, sound... So long as I’m accommodating these responsibilities, then not only do I feel like I’ve earned the right to either inject my own personality (*mmm*) or inject new musical ideas into the moment, but I feel like I’ve also built my confidence to a place that will even allow me to make those kind of statements. If I’m in a situation where I feel like the time’s a little funny, I feel incapable of really making creative decisions [*laughs*] until that settles (AU 247).

The developing theme here is that creativity tends to be seen not as a foundational concern, but a secondary issue to be attended to after foundational concerns have been addressed.

#### **6.4.2 Theme 14: ‘The creative part’: constraints, choice selection and decision-making**

The second theme in this Descriptive Category arises from talk about selection and decision-making. Both actions tend to be under varying degrees of autonomous control, assigned varying degrees of importance, and seen as constrained from multiple perspectives. Reflecting on his position as the ‘decision-maker’ in respect of his compositional big-band performances, for example, AA2 considers that in that context the big problem is deciding upon the appropriate musical choice on the drum set for the music and the ensemble (AA2 927). Given that he more generally inhabits the functional sphere of practice, where he is on occasion told “exactly what

to play”, possession of a full range of choices in *every* musical situation is, however, “not important” (AA2 316).

SI explains how environmental variables (room acoustics, physical and emotional health of the performer and co-performers, audience disposition, lighting, instrument quality, sound monitoring and so forth) mediate not only the performance itself, but its effective communication: “Everything changes how I play. The room, the audience, the musicians, the musicians’ mood that same day, you know...” (SI 603). Participant views highlight stylistic, genre-based, technical, and environmental constraints. Asked how he decides what he plays, AA responds: “Well, that’s the creative part isn’t it? [Both laugh]” (AA 212).

### ***Genre and style constraints***

Creativity is understood as both constrained by and achievable within any genre or style. IL, for example, selects from differing perceptions of stylistic appropriateness: “You’re going to play with Jay McShann differently than you’re going to play with Mick Jagger (*right*). You’re going to play with Mick Jagger differently than you are going to play with Wayne Shorter” (IL 281). Even though she loves “freedom of choice” (IL 317), her choice selection is constrained by the desired outcome. “Playing whatever I choose at any moment and making any situation into a creative situation is a fantastic choice, but it depends on what you want out of the situation” (IL 295). HT points out (and ‘finds it quite funny’) that contrary to their much-vaunted ‘freedom’, jazz musicians are more constrained than might be imagined: “so many jazz musicians feel they cannot repeat themselves” (HT 8). In an effort to transcend style and genre, musicians joining *King Crimson* were asked to develop a fresh instrumental vocabulary or ‘way of doing things’ specifically for that ensemble, which, it was to be expected, would be of little use outside it (Bruford 2009).

Conflating notions of style and genre, AA reports that he does not think “style matters. I think you can have a creative head space and it can fit into any genre; I really do” (AA 557). As an example, he cites the highly imaginative work of an internationally-known colleague who is temporarily replacing him on tour. AA is shocked: “I can’t believe he’s doing that! (*mmm, terrific*). It’s odd; it’s so odd! I would never think of that. I wouldn’t have the bravery! But you

listen to it and it's ... poised. [...]. So you can do that in reggae, you can do that in country music, you can do it in ...” (AA 562).

### ***Weapons of control: the constraint of conformity***

Different genres may be more or less conducive to allowing the communication of creative difference. In her discussion of the capacity of certain genres to allow creativity, IL interprets the ‘goal of pop music’ as being “for people to keep within a certain box in terms of their thinking (*yeah*) you know they are thinking inside of a box and it's a control weapon and it's a conformity weapon, where creative music is not that” (IL 172). Her analysis, however, goes on to exhibit a degree of inconsistency. On the one hand, she is clear that there is something called ‘creative music’ which she loves to play and is not, unlike pop music, a ‘conformity weapon’. In pop music, however,

the impetus is on conformity; it's not on individuality, and that's a problem for me. It's an issue for me because I love individual thinkers [...]. You know, I love innovation (*mmm*) and I think that pop music doesn't make room for that, because that's not the goal of pop music” (IL 169).

On the other hand, she asserts that “rock music is not a music that is uncreative; it's the interpretation of the music that is sometimes uncreative. It's all what we do with it” (IL 144). In the context of this thesis, the verb ‘to interpret’ encompasses the idea of assigning meaning and the subsequent making sense of that meaning. Musical interpretation of the sort that IL is addressing here, however, has a more specific usage implying the reframing of the composer's intention, or the adding of value to the material at hand. That idea is embodied in the following two extracts:

If you have a rhythm that goes [sings to demonstrate] that's a cool rhythm you know, and you can put it somewhere, and it can feel great and whatever ... it's the interpretation or the



usage of that rhythm that could be bad or good (yeah) or better used or less better used (IL 145).

So to me the definition of rock music in pop is typically not creative, but to me rock music can be creative and it depends on interpretation and taking it further” (IL148).

By this reckoning, the two central agentive actions (interpreting and ‘taking it further’) which might ignite a creative spark are the very actions least likely to be found in (generally functional) rock performance. From this view, IL sees the locus of creativity as largely within the *interpretation* of the music and independent of genre.

Jazz performance, by contrast, tends to be seen as an ongoing interaction between person, product, and environment, one which an audience is invited to observe. It tends to be expected that the product (the performed outcomes of these interactions) will change frequently and in response to multiple environmental conditions. The emphasis in that genre is on the process, not the product. Conversely, the pop or rock process is de-emphasised in favour of the highly-polished product, which is offered for admiration, enjoyment and purchase. The product requires consistency and is generally expected to be identical when exhibited in different locations.

To what extent might the constant repetition of well-prepared material on, for example, a stadium-rock tour, encourage or constrain creativity? ER’s response to this question reveals that one reason he seeks performative difference in the ‘minor aspects’ of his nightly rendition is to ‘amuse himself’.

When I was doing it there would always be something just slightly different in the contour leading up to maybe an ensemble thing, something like that, so I can get ... I’m one of those guys that easily amuses himself [*laughs*], so I can get pretty interested in some minor aspect (ER 143).

This is not, however entirely convincing. The functional nature of performance in ‘heritage’ rock acts is perilously close to that required in tribute bands. As a revered and well-known jazz musician who recommends that ‘we compose every time we play’, ER may well feel expectation

to ‘interfere’ with those aspects of the music over which he has control and re-present them in a fresh light.

In AU’s case, the issues surrounding what to play and when to play it are sufficiently substantial as to intimidate him. “Sometimes even just that way of looking at it scares me, you know” (AU 228). His solution is bi-partite and sophisticated:

I selected the ensemble (*right*), and have a hand in the way it sounds mostly by selecting that personnel [sic] but also (*selecting the music through editing...*) selecting the music through editing and very casually Tim would say “Hey, what should I bring?”... “Make sure you have this pedal, that pedal...” (*Yeah, that’s the producer function right there*) yeah ... I guess producing and creating the environment (AU 554).

By virtue of having created the performance situation, AU has the right to “make any decision I want at any moment and it’s right because it’s mine, which sounds very ignorant [laughs]” (AU 553). Personnel and instrumentation thus selected, and retaining editorial control, he interprets the creative action here as residing, in part, in his “producing and creating the environment” (AU 558) conducive to creative performance. His final decision is to relinquish all further decision-making to the improvised moment, for which preparation is crucial:

The music is making all the decisions for me, and am I connected enough to the moment and am I prepared with the proper tools to be able ...? I’m not making any decisions, I’m just trying to accommodate (*mmm*) the decisions the music is making (*nice*) and am I prepared to do so? Can I play with the appropriate dynamics, can I play in time, can I produce the proper sound for that situation and so on and so forth” (AU 231).

In a similar process of delegating responsibility (and echoing Sudnow’s (1978) phenomenological account of learning how to play jazz piano), SI describes how he internalises the melody “and then I just let my hands decide what they want to do” (SI 165). How long the internalisation process takes before action is required of his hands is a question that went

unanswered, but these extracts evidence imaginative ways in which participants delegate responsibility as a way of circumventing constraints.

### ***Technical constraints***

Generally, the idea that greater technical control in music invention affords a greater number of options from which to select was buttressed by participant evidence. Responses to the question “how important to you is it to have choice and control over what you play?” were framed by SI, HT, IL, ER and YO within the context of control of the sticks, the principal skill which permits fine control of performance level micro-parameters (metre, dynamics, tempo, timbre, touch, feel). For IL and ER, greater stick control affords greater choice in respect of phrasing options, or rather generates phrasing options from which a choice becomes available to be made. “To me, to have choice is the most important thing...and to have control...is the right-hand or left hand of your choice. Because if you are able to control what you do then you are able to make choices” (IL 92). Achieving a high level of instrumental control is, on YO’s account, not only the focus of practice but also a tool to render ‘multi-layered options at all times’, so his performance feels “like a natural thing and it isn’t so intellectual” (YO 136).

SI’s case is instructive. Rare among drummers, his highly developed finger technique is a key determinant in the way he plays, affording him the ability to play softly with great articulation. It has ‘conditioned’ the way that he plays so that “I can play softer maybe better than I can play louder” (SI 797). However, SI sees the internal balance of the ensemble as important; it being crucial that “the energy of the soloist is backed up by the drums”. Even though the power of the drum set has been noted by many participants, in this instance, SI’s saxophonist co-performer - “a bomb of energy” (SI 808) - outguns the drummer to the point where he assesses his control at the higher dynamic level to be insufficient, and different instruments are required. “It was always important for me to create in my playing and especially in my music a big dynamic range, a big dynamic range, so I would play as soft as...really soft with brushes, even without the hi-hat, just the swishing, and to really heavy metal kind of double bass drum and cymbals” (SI 786). SI’s two mediational means - his instruments and his technique - both needed adaptation to sustain creative action in the saxophonist’s group.

A further technical constraint lies in the different conceptual and physical approaches to the ‘natural’ acoustic kit and its electronic counterpart, paralleled for example in the different approaches necessary for transitions to and from the Steinway Grand and Rhodes electric pianos. In the early days (1980s) of electronic percussion, that transition could cause havoc with wrists, fingers and touch (Bruford 2009). AU has spoken of his difficulties in using ‘prepared’ or ‘treated’ drum set (that is, one that has been tuned beyond the respective components’ natural ranges, for special effect): “I need to hit them mezzo-forte and up to achieve a certain sound ... you know, the floor tom is wrinkly and it just won’t speak at a quiet volume” (AU 361).

### ***‘Everything changes how I play’: environmental constraints***

Drummer action is mediated further by the sonic environment. AU explains how environment affects content:

The music I’ve been making lately is heavily reliant on gear... Ideally for the [...] set to come across well, we’re reliant on a nice room, maybe a dead room, with a big P.A. (*yeah*) with ‘subs’ and the whole thing, so, it’s amazing how in that context the environment can really affect the content (AU 387).

In the excellent vignette below, he elaborates this idea in the context of performances at two London venues:

We played at the Village Underground [...], it’s maybe 800 standing, is kind of like rock... DJs play there...it was loud...loud, and people standing the whole time (*right*) and it was really inspiring, it really felt good (*great*). And then last November we were at the Barbican for the jazz festival (*yeah, concert hall... different thing*) beautiful room and it’s an honour, but man... (*cold*) yeah... (*cold*)...The sound is just everywhere, flying around...the snare drum is at the back of the room. It was cool; we did it, but a very different experience. So this acoustic repertoire and ensemble...you know, saxophone, piano, bass, drums, that was the template I was using...and I feel like we can set up in a park outdoors and just play (*yeah, of course you can*); we can be in the corner of a library and play; we can be in the Barbican, we

can be at Ronnie Scott's, we can be in a subway station and deliver this and express ourselves (AU 391).

Here, one set of environmental constraints promotes the successful communication of the intended performance and its potential assessment as creative; the other militates against it. One solution might be to offer content appropriate to each room, but the artist might reasonably argue that while the environment necessarily affects the content of the performance, it should not dictate it. AU's solution is exemplary creative problem solving. For him, the remedy is to be found in the creation of a parallel situation based on the traditional jazz quartet line-up, which not only side-steps the 'room acoustics' problem, but opened up fresh compositional horizons.

The numbers of people involved in any situation are a crucial determinant of drummer action. Generally, participants felt that the greater the number of co-performers, the tighter the performance constraints upon the drummer; in other words, the more functional his or her performance must become, or remain, in order to provide that alchemy that glues the music together. An orchestral or big band situation is like

marching a legion somewhere, you've got a lot of people; you've got to deal with it. [...] If there's an M.D. or a conductor we are like the outrider for the conductor (*uh-huh*)... we have to flag up that there is a bend coming up, or there are Indians over that hill. We're them; because other people are looking at the music or doing other things. We are the guy who keeps it all together (AA2 888).

Dynamic and other performance considerations constrain ER in his performances in a large orchestral setting: "it's a very large boat and I've just got to paddle (*mmm*). I can't do the usual [snaps fingers and sings to demonstrate] kind of ensemble things that I might enjoy with a big band or a very fleet-footed small group" (ER 150). However, when performing alone or in duet with another drummer or when the performance is embodied in original compositions, creativity is increasingly prioritised. The greater the number of performers the greater attention the drummer will need to pay to AU's 'checklist' of foundational concerns (AU 247); the fewer the players, the sooner one can proceed to those compositional areas in which creativity may appear.

Having recently gravitated to larger venues as a co-headline star of a small group, AU expresses both irritation at and acceptance of the more predictable constraints associated with the daily logistics of touring (AU 714). This should be seen in the context of his enjoyment and the effectiveness of his studio performances against which he frames touring as mostly “a blessing and a curse” (AU 721). The ability to surmount or incorporate such variables is a key skill of the performing artist who aspires to creativity. Ultimately, certain hardships appear to be unavoidable in the patient search for special combinations of people and places that, given helpful environmental conditions, might deliver a situation supportive of creative performance.

Only one participant acknowledged no constraints whatsoever upon his selection from possible options: “I literally do what I want to do, you know” (AA3 535). Asked about the importance to him and to his creativity to have choice and control over what he plays, ER chose to interpret the question rather as one of control over others in determining outcomes:

In my case there is a definite want of some measure of control (*yeah*). When I play very open, just as you played by not playing, by being *tacit*, the general obvious response would be “how selfless that is; why, you’re so generous to the music”, but in reality I see that as we’re being completely manipulative or we’re the string-pullers because we’re determining the outcome with far greater results (*yes*) than if we just play in parallel (ER 234).

The paradox of choice in performance is that it both enables creative achievement and complicates it. For YO, the creative waters are thus muddied: “it’s complicated because you’re in a situation where you can kind of do anything, so then therefore what do you do?” (YO 757) Options demand choices, to which attach notions of responsibility, obligation, constraint and appropriate behaviour, examined more closely shortly in Theme 17.

#### **6.4.3 Theme 15: ‘I set some parameters...’: negotiating constraints**

Theme 15 addresses the ways in which participants construct difference through the avoidance, transformation or circumnavigation of constraints. Constraints tend to be seen as self-imposed internally or imposed externally by or upon others, in some way inherent to the genre or

situation, and potentially as having either positive or negative effects on the creative process. Internal negative constraints arise most commonly, and with greatest affect, from a surprisingly rich vein of perceived limitations; for example, ER's shortage of 'mechanical skills' (ER 292), or YO's self-consciousness (YO 157), or HT's decision to stop writing music because he "didn't know the rules well enough" (HT 507).

Constraints are also self-imposed, voluntarily and deliberately, as creative strategies in several ways and with more positive outcomes. For example, in respect of composition, AU "set some parameters for myself and said "okay, I want to write lead-sheet songs. They have to fit on one page and it has to be a melody with chord symbols" (AU 372). In respect of recording protocol YO "gave myself complete freedom but also only allowed myself to do two takes. So that one [song] called [...] is just essentially me completely improvising over me improvising" (YO 217). In respect of the use of music technology, HT is governed by a strict protocol: "it has to be organic" (HT 698). AU traces some of 'the creativity' back to the extraction of as many sound combinations as possible within an orchestrationally 'limited world':

Even with the sound of the drums, you know, I kind of limit myself orchestrationally to maybe more of a "okay, now I'm here, and I'm playing this character, and he's ...", trying to really extract or pull out as many different possibilities as we can within this seemingly limited world as you know (*yeah, yeah*) and I feel like that's where some of the creativity lies" (AU 297).

In as much as addition or extension ('going further') are identified as transformative strategies that promote the construction of difference (Theme 18), so equally might be removal, restriction or omission: "He played much more open and loose, but you could tell he could play everything. He just...didn't; he held back instead" (HT 273). Similar strategies are echoed in HT's report of the performances of another, provocative drummer who delighted in the unexpected (HT 731). In my experience, a radical restructuring of the mediational means (the re-ordering or removal of some of the drum kit's constituent parts, most notably the hi-hat and ride cymbal) was another way to disrupt habitual practice and encourage fresh thinking.

Constraints may be imposed externally with negative effect. If, when working for a leader, instructions are couched only in the negative, they tend to trigger an oppositional response:

So if you say to someone “look, I don’t want you to play any fills on this track” or “I don’t want you to hit a crash cymbal” or ... it’s going to make your brain operate in a way to try and find a way to be creative inside it (YO 201).

Some, such as IL, construe whole genres as so constrained as to be essentially inimical to rhythmic creativity. Others see performance within constraints as a challenge, allowing them to both demonstrate their creativity and gain useful experience. In the context of his orchestral and studio work, ER, for example, is ‘energised’ by the constraints of the arrangement:

So my most creative expression, just by these two examples at least (*mmm*), are completely in the context of an arrangement or, in a more academic sense, a constrained structure. So I think my most creative work is within a framework (ER 427).

The context of a big-band can, for AA2, be “bit of a millstone round one’s neck but I like it. It’s got certain boundaries, but it does allow you a lot of freedom. (*Are those stylistic boundaries?*) They are stylistic boundaries mainly, and the most creative I’ve felt in a band apart from just swinging a straight big band like the Count Basie band, have been playing in this band [...] which is a very creative orchestra” (AA2 873).

In the context of a rare drum kit performance in the more traditional domain of orchestral music, ER changes his process to accommodate the constraints of a cadenza he has been asked to perform. He develops a strategy that operates between a pre-determined ‘mapping out’ associated with composition and the going off on a ‘whatever’ which he associates with jazz performance. He tends to hear creativity in small things rather than the brash gestures afforded by HT’s or AU’s abrupt changes in conceptual direction. ER’s conception of the process embodies an element of stealth, the art being to conceal the art:

...it may be so creative that people don’t even ... the listener’s not even aware it’s going on. Which is I think a very creative way to do things” (ER 178).



Experiential evidence within the literature supports formal structural constraints like these as conducive to ingenuity. Observing his research participant's choice of engagement with the rules of a particular poetic form, Peacock notes: "These rules are arbitrary but also self-chosen. Her statement that "the appeal of poetry is that it's not just words...it's words in a framework" implies that the presence of the framework adds something to the poem because it necessitates ingenuity on the poet's part. Essentially, it forces him [sic] to be more creative". The evidence here supports Peacock's conclusion that "contrary to common assumptions, restriction and creativity are not inversely related" (Peacock 2008:180).

#### **6.4.4 Theme 16: 'Avoiding demons': individual strategies and processes**

Participant reports of their own processes and strategies reveal the exotic, the unlikely, the functional and the imaginative. A brief sample conveys some idea of the breadth of thinking. SI, for example, constructs a situation in which he hopes creativity will beget creativity: "I try to surround myself with people I like, their playing, and they like my playing as well and er hope that you know this thing will attract more of itself to it, you know" (SI 440). He puts his long car journeys to good use internalising the principal components of the music - chord sequences, rhythmic arpeggios, riffs and melodies - by learning them by heart. He needs nothing external to the music.

Ever since he attended a particularly influential drum clinic, AA has been avoiding 'demons' "I've been trying to be exactly in the moment (*very good*) and not having these kind of demons that say I'm not playing creative, or I missed that one, or ..." (AA 472). As a 'spontaneous composer' his creative strategy is to focus on immediate selection between options, fully aware of the implications his decisions will have for affecting the course and sound of the music:

So what I'm thinking about is, I guess, the choices I have at that moment. So if the guitar player plays something, do I want to reinforce that or do I want to give him a bed of something so he stands out, or do I want to play some flurry when he stops (*mmm, mmm*) or stop? (*mmm*)... All the tons and tons of choices you have as a spontaneous composer (*yeah, of course*) and try to be in that head space (AA 506).

Both AU and HT report using a fluid, aleatoric creative process, expressed in terms of making something out of nothing, or not much, with predictably unpredictable outcomes:

Sometimes I've found just saying "hey, let's play this" and that could be eighteen minutes of music (*yeah*), and it could end up in a completely new place, but having allowed it to become that, maybe just kind of having a bit of ignorance and saying "this is the bass line"... even though I'm handing it to a virtuosic bass player who of course would come up with something better or cooler or whatever ... Just say "here, this is it" knowing that in a moment it will become something different (AU 461).

This transformative process allows for early motifs to be abandoned as the music gets rolling, to be replaced with 'something better or cooler' such that the music might end up in the 'completely new place'. A related process leads HT to a profound moment of awareness. He describes a rehearsal bogged down with over-written scores. A co-performer mentions to the leader that he also had something prepared:

And he took out a piece of paper with three bars [*laughs*], and that was it. And we started playing, and that piece ended on the record, the first [...] record, and it lasted for 10 minutes! [.../] And then I thought; I can do that...(HT 513).

Echoing AA's strategy of avoidance, HT adopts a degree of naïveté as a protective wall "in order to keep my perception of music alive" (HT 832). He strives to avoid what he interprets as the most offensive popular music of the day: "I try not to think of all the shit music that comes out and how it's being made" (HT 833).

AU has much to say with regard to his use of multiple interlinked creative strategies. His psychological toolbox and checklist of responsibilities allowing him to defer responsibilities to the music; his artificial limitation of sonic options; his 'arranger-type' view of performance which aims to extract "as many different possibilities as we can within this seemingly limited world" (AU 299); his efforts to try to show up to the gig 'empty', without pre-planning:

“therefore I have all this room for new ideas, to take them in, and then it’s what I do to them in that moment that becomes its own vocabulary” (AU 340); all these reveal a creative mind at work.

AU tends to think in sizeable conceptual blocks which may then be conjoined and transformed into fresh tintinnabulations. He takes some ‘Jim influence’ or ‘some of that programmed stuff’, steals “some influences from the underground or less highlighted places” (AU 629) and manipulates the whole into something unlikely or unusual. As a band-leader, he finds creativity in the imaginative exploitation of all the possibilities of his ensemble: “for me I’m investing more in those other ways of thinking to try to exploit all of our possibilities...and I think it takes a creative mind to a) find them, and b) to try to pull them off” (AU 301). Constructing the completely new appears to be not so much impossible as irrelevant: “I can’t make something totally new, it doesn’t work like that. But I can make a different mixture...” (HT 484) and the music could end up in “a completely new place” (AU 462).

Reflecting upon the effect of a dramatic stylistic *volte-face*, AU strongly mirrors HT’s violent destruction of months of work and his subsequent decision to learn to write for strings. In both processes, an abrupt schism from existing thought patterns unlocks fresh pathways. AU is pleased with the reaction because it confirms the validity of the strategy:

For the first time in a while I didn’t feel those expectations because I was just doing a 180, and the reaction was “Whoa, I’ve never heard you play the ride cymbal before”, so ... cool! Okay! (AU 375).

Left to their own devices in, for example, fully compositional performance with freedom of selection, what precepts govern individuals’ action choices? HT sees it as his responsibility both to get a reaction from his co-performer (HT 381) and to look for solutions through divergent thinking: “I force myself to think outside the box. I like thinking outside the box” (HT 373). For example, he might “play things on the hi-hat that you would never play on the hi-hat, but still force yourself to do it just because you never do it” (HT 395). Again, “if I learn to place beats where I normally don’t place beats, then I’m sort of walking up a new road, you know, and making possibilities” (HT 397). Rarely among drummers, he seeks to do less:

And then with this music which is very melodic, very colourful, I'm thinking all the texture can lie in the strings and in the piano...some pieces with tempered piano ... and they can do that, and I can do less (HT 545).

ER similarly wants to avoid the 'typical' by composing when he plays, and suggests that the drummer should simply "play what you would like to hear next" (ER 458) without fear or favour:

You can't play what I would like to hear, or you think I might want to hear next, you don't know that, and I can't presuppose or waste my time worrying about what Steve Gadd might want to hear next when he walks into the club that I'm playing. I don't know (ER 459).

Such is the diversity of this plethora of strategies and processes it is difficult to extract cogent thematic material. Some participants focus on getting a reaction, on unusual beat placement, on making sonic or textural possibilities, on conscious decision-making in the moment. Others favour the avoidance of the typical, the avoidance of conscious decision-making, the making something out of nothing, and the restriction of sonic or textural options. Two sub-themes were helpful in teasing out structure from this multi-variance. The first collates a set of issues around problem recognition and solution, and the second addresses the circumstances enabling or disabling creativity.

### ***Recognising and solving problems***

The finding, avoiding, solving or resolving of problems associated with the mediational means (drum hardware and software), the social context (producers, co-performers, listeners), the performance contexts (for, with, as, or without a leader) and the performance modes (functional or compositional) underlies many of the strategies and processes that participants adopt to achieve creative experience. All participants problematise selection and decision-taking. Mature

experts tend to have an encyclopaedic knowledge and wealth of experience of performance across all genres and styles, and ‘the biggest challenge’ is making the right choice from multiple options:

And I suppose the creative process, relative to what you’re asking me, in a big band is interesting because you have to...you have to be the decision maker about what you’re going to play, and I think the biggest challenge is finding the right musical choice on the drum set for the music and the ensemble. And that’s a big thing in a big band; that’s why a lot of people (*absolutely*) struggle with it (AA2 925).

Technical problems arise frequently. The problem for AU (below) arises from and is exacerbated by his association with electronics. For a series of reasons he began to miss a touch that he remembered once having:

My musical path has been taking me down a more electronic music inspired path (*yeah, sure*) ... the sound of my drums has been going that way and my vocabulary has been leaning that way, and I felt like my touch was suffering a little bit due to the way the drums are tuned ... they are very low, so I need to hit them mezzo-forte and up to achieve a certain sound ... you know, the floor tom is wrinkly and it just won’t speak at a quiet volume (*right*) so I kind of was remembering when I was younger - I was probably practising more - but I was missing a touch that I used to ... that I remembered (AU 358).

While his solution to the problem (below) has technical and aesthetic benefits, it also has two further dimensions commonly associated with creativity; it is ‘fun’ and it is ‘bringing out new ideas’:

I got my hands on a bebop kit and cranked it way up, and left them wide open and I would go to my rehearsal space and just play along to Art Blakey records. It was the most fun I had in a long time, actually, at the drums [...] and it was bringing out new ideas, and I was able to play more fluently and more quietly... (AU 364).

A related problem lies in how best to remain emotionally connected to ‘that earthy thing’ in the visceral power of the instrument, especially in an age of heavy product marketing of ‘nice new heads’ and ‘shiny hardware’:

I think it’s difficult sometimes to find that earthy thing, and it sounds ironic - it’s the drums, you know – (*you’d imagine so, wouldn’t you?*) but you know you put those nice new heads on and you get your shiny hardware (*yeah*) and even just sometimes emotionally you’re already in a very distant place from that (AU 647).

As mine in *King Crimson*, ER’s perennial problem is how to avoid the obvious. He offers an example of one solution at the micro performance level “...so I played everything but the downbeat (*right*); the three 16ths after the downbeat. That always seemed...that’s kind of cool (*yeah*), like my one contribution to the drum beat lexicon! [laughs] (ER 434). At the macro performance level, YO seeks change from the problems of maintaining a working ensemble, which he sees as impeding his delivery of creative performance:

So what I’ve learned is that in the future I’m not going to do things in the ways that I did, I suppose... I’m going to make it easier on myself in some ways. Maybe it was to do with a little bit of understanding the kind of practicalities of how to make everything a little easier so creativity is more immediate (YO 547).

Having learned from his previous creative endeavour, his intention is to make a ‘thing’ (a situation) which, by focusing on the ‘better or best’ rather than the different or new, will offer more immediate access to the creativity afforded by “a constant evolution of yourself” (YO 288).

### ***Circumstances enabling or disabling creativity***

An action-theoretical perspective sees action as goal-orientated. Those dimensions of music performance subject to some degree of control may be manipulated towards the goal of creative

achievement; effectively as creative strategies that seek to allow, invite or encourage creative performance, as enablers of action that may be creative. Conversely, participants cite hectic schedules, mental pressure and multiple vexatious issues surrounding everything from health, family and personal relationships to visas, transport and equipment as inhibitors or disablers of creative action. IL insists that the prospective creator must ignore those elements and allow life to happen

because creative music or jazz, as a friend once told me, is part 'street'...and 'street' means what's happening in life...what's happening in your life...what's happening in the life that you look out of your window and you see, you see on the street (IL 484).

For SI, creativity can be invited but only when “when you're relaxed and when you're ready for it, you know, when everything...when you are at peace” (SI 243). When domestic relationship stresses lift, he experiences a “a sudden release, sudden explosion of things that really wanted to come out for a long time, and everything just 'BAM'; in one year I made two albums you know” (SI 300):

Tunes started to come in and I started to feel better about my playing, and when you feel better about your playing you affect the people in the band that's playing with you so everybody's, you know, feeling better, playing better, being more creative (SI 309).

From his perspective the experience of creative performance appears fluid, connected to mood, changeable and subject to personal 'conditioning'. The only reason “we're not creative all the time, 100% of the time, is because our conditioning, the way we conditioned ourselves” (SI 379).

AA2, the studio musician, finds functional performance more likely to be enhanced if producers hire him for his personal approach. He likes “a track that contains a lot of different things and that keeps me stimulated compositionally, musically. It's fun, lots to do” (AA2 940). Creativity may be encouraged by a participant being 'offered' the musical space in which to be creative, to play, to experiment in a forgiving environment. In such a “good situation”, AA3 finds that

personality and the ego are minimised or removed, “so it’s about the music; it’s not about me or anyone else that is playing it” (AA3 628).

This supportive or forgiving environment may be built in to the foundations of the practitioner’s own ‘situation’ or group. AU’s group, for example, offers maximum creative space

because it’s my conception and therefore I feel I have the most confidence in the decisions I’m making (*uh-huh*) because I can do no wrong, basically ... there are no consequences (AU 560).

This approach allows him varying degrees of latitude in making his own decisions, a perspective that supports the construct of the continuum of control: “the more open the environment, the more creative I feel” (AU 282).

#### **6.4.5 Theme 17: ‘It’s all what we do with it’: change and transformation**

If choice and selection are precursors to creative action, change and transformation have long been generally understood as indicators and consequences of it (Csikszentmihalyi 1988, Starko 2001). Most participants understand their practice to take place in the context of perpetual change in the ecological, technological, sociological and psychological dimensions of drum performance within the greater domain of music invention. This theme collates discussion of the ways in which drummers change or transform that which has been selected by adapting their performance practice, absorbing new impetuses, acknowledging and reviewing their obligations and responsibilities to co-creators and adding value through creative expression.

The cohort’s status as expert suggests that individuals generally have been good adaptors, deriving benefit from change. “And all those things - street, heart and intellect - if you’re a living, breathing person, they are always changing ... those things change all the time. There’s always some new impetus” (IL 489). What participants also see as crucial is not the origin of the idea but its transformation; it doesn’t matter where you take it from, it’s where you take it to that counts:



If I steal this Tony Williams phrase, you know, and it inspires me to...if I'm technically taking someone else's source material or creative seed, and it inspires me to do X, Y or Z then it's more about where it goes than where it comes from (AU 763).

He was one of the first guys I saw in the flesh truly blurring the lines of...he gave me the confidence to start thinking like...everything is fair game (*great*), really breaking down the walls of genres and... You know I heard some Dave Grohl in his playing and I heard some Elvin Jones and I heard some Jeff 'Tain' Watts and so on and so forth, so that was really encouraging (AU 612).

This powerful example (above) of the way this drummer had creative meaning for AU is constructed less in terms of novelty and more in the way in which it *mattered* to him as, in this case, the arbiter of creativity.

### ***Motivations, obligations and responsibilities***

Change or transformation might be involuntary and enforced from without, in reaction, for example, to a surprising or unpredictable situation. Even seasoned performers occasionally have "to come up with something" to avoid potential musical disaster (AA 486). It might also be involuntary and enforced from within by personal perception of circumstances and conditions or by personal dissatisfaction with the *status quo*. For example, having dwelt and observed others in the functional sphere of practice, YO feels he might be able to do thing better or differently by moving more to the compositional sphere:

You want to get out of the thing you have to do to make a living, maybe...and you want to make a thing which is your own thing because you've done so many things with other people and you've seen how they do it and generally...unfortunately I suppose I felt quite dissatisfied in those settings or have thought "if I was doing it I wouldn't do it like that" or that kind of thing (*yeah*). And so you want to make a change (YO 268).

Participants reported a wide range of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations that enabled change at various times in their careers. As beginners, participants were motivated by a need to escape from expectations (SI, AU) and some by the fear of embarrassment or humiliation (SI). Seasoned performers were frequently motivated by a desire for personal change to be effected from within (Bruford 2009).

Almost all were motivated to develop an individual sonic identity or ‘voice’, to contribute and determine outcomes, and to communicate significant difference in their performances; in other words, to inhabit the compositional sphere of practice. ‘Artistic hunger’ (AA2 1039) and ‘a definite want of some measure of control’ (ER 234) were given as drivers towards a compositional approach to creativity. HT did not require any motivating (“it’s what I do” HT 407), and AU’s creativity was contingent upon a strong social component. Frustration, discontent, and a desire to ‘prove’ something surfaced in YO’s report, while SI is always compelled to take the road less travelled: “when I see a lot of people going in one direction I have to go the other way” (SI 411).

Two participants spoke of the motivating strength of the need to solve problems. SI referenced my experience:

I remember in one of your interviews you said about your particular snare stroke, yeah, that everybody kind of yeah said oh this is Bill’s stroke (*mmm*) and you spoke about the necessity of having to be heard while the other guys were so loud (*no mics!*), exactly, so you know all these things are er...very important, you know, necessity will give you a lot of opportunity (SI 876).

ER, too, highlighted his tenacity in the context of creative problem solving “I feel like a person who is compelled to find the solution to any given challenge or problem. I don’t like to give up” (ER 205).

None reported being motivated toward the *exclusively* functional or the *exclusively* compositional; approaches to those constructs continued to be pragmatic and flexible. Interestingly, the subject of remuneration was seldom raised as a dimension of achieving the

experience of creativity, although it was generally and implicitly understood that functional performance tends to bring greater pecuniary reward than compositional performance.

Individuals revealed a keen sense of responsibility and obligation, not only to those with whom they shared performance, but also, variously, to themselves, to commissioning bodies, to the wider music community or simply to ‘the music’. With the creative urge comes an attendant obligation to express and communicate it: “You do have to allow things to come out [...] I do support my own creative urges and I try to be as creative as I can” (AA2 511). Viewing composition as a chore, AA3 seeks excuses to avoid having to live up to these perceived responsibilities: “I don’t have a band...” (AA3 792); “I don’t have any tunes...” (AA3 793). On another occasion he “had to make sure [the music] was very good, but not from a personal perspective, but for the sake of the music and the ensemble as a whole” (AA3 622). Here, ‘the music’ is characterised as having a personal benefit or interest: “we had to...live up to the music. *(To reach the standard that it deserved?) Yeah*” (AA3 626).

Responsibilities to co-performers include taking a great deal of care before one ‘interjects’ or otherwise imposes oneself on a collaborative performance “because it takes taste, it takes intellect, it takes heart to, erm ... to do that and keep the music swingin’” (IL 133). As previously noted in the context of performing as a leader (Theme 11), AU’s view is that the ‘right’ to interject is earned only after his checklist of moment-by-moment drummer obligations has been attended to. Some participants, such as ER, feel a responsibility to produce some ‘written’ ideas (i.e. pre-determined ideas transmitted by any means, not only graphic) for an initial rehearsal at the outset of a project (ER 315, Bruford 2009). The thoughts of many are expressed by AA2 for whom “making something of lasting value that’s going to be listened to more than once” is a “heavy responsibility” (AA2 722).

### ***‘Adding value’: creative expression***

Another dimension of change and transformation was revealed through discussion of creative expression. Expressiveness tends to be interpreted by participants less in terms of the timing, dynamic and timbral variations that form the *microstructure* of a drummer’s performance (e.g. Palmer cited in Juslin 2005:87; original italics), more in reference to a broader set of “perceptual

qualities (e.g. structural, emotional, motional) that reflect psycho-physical relationships between ‘objective’ properties of the music, and ‘subjective’ [...] impressions of the listener” (Juslin 2005:88). Here, these might include touching and sharing (IL), connecting (SI), and, for IL, being able to take the music to “unbridled heights” (IL 199). Seen as a communicative moment, it is “the moment where everything that’s about you comes out” (AA3 1077). IL repeatedly refers to her love of ‘touching people’ and how much she wants to ‘touch their hearts’.

For SI it was, and remains, easier to express himself in music than in words: “I felt that music had some er...er...held something for me that I could express myself, er...in a way I couldn’t express myself in words (*uh-hum*). That was a big, big thing for me. It still is, yeah” (SI 71). Expression is tied up with “developing your own sound, your own style of playing, your own way of expressing yourself” (SI 415). On his account, an audience is an essential component of successful expression:

When I started music because [sic] I wanted to express something but you cannot just express it for yourself. You really do need an audience [laughs] (*sure*) you really need to be, I would say, to be seen. To be seen is a very important thing (*mmm*). You want to be yourself and you want other people to say “Yes, I see you. I can see you. I hear you (SI 574).

Here the expressive intention is recognition and acknowledgment; both important goals of the compositional drummer. SI communicates in order ‘to be seen’, in sharp contrast to the musical chameleon of functional practice, for whom a crucial performance aim (unless directed otherwise) is to avoid ‘being seen’.

The ability to be expressive may be constrained by the performance context. In a discussion of creative expression in his own recorded performances, AA2 quantifies the degree of creativity in terms of the FCC:

If somebody says “go and play this really simple part on a pop track”, I’m being creative, but much less so (*yeah*). If somebody gives me one of these pieces of music or these musical situations, I’m being very creative in what I do (AA2 968).

Elsewhere, IL reflects on the meaning of expression:

...you can express at any level. I'm talking about a certain degree of expressability; I'm talking about a level of expressability. If you can play one note and you can play it convincingly, you can express with that one note (*mmm*). But I'm talking about a level of innovation ... I'm talking about being able to take the music to, erm ... unbridled heights. [...]. That means that anything coming into you, any energies that you're thinking, anything you're feeling you're able to express through actually playing it (IL 196).

Interpreting the notion of 'expressability' as the ability to be expressive, she interprets the 'unbridled heights' as the highest level of performance capability, as the ability to express 'anything coming in to you' (through a process of letting and allowing) by rendering it audible. She expresses melody and harmony through her composition: "I love to write [...] I love harmony and I love melody (*yeah!*), and as a drummer it's so beautiful to be able to express those things through composition" (IL 367).

For most, creative expression is seen as one way to add value through change or transformation. Expression of experience is the 'something else' that both adds value to the functional performance and embodies the significant difference between the functional and the compositional; the alchemical component to be communicated prior to creative assessment. That component was typically found by 'going further'.

#### **6.4.6 Theme 18: Going further**

A final theme to emerge from the notion of the construction of difference is that of boundary testing. The data tended to show the creative drummer as possessing a suite of music abilities. S/he is able to "hit the right thing at the right point" (HT 728), to "come up with something...that always works musically" (AA 343), to "explore all corners of the music at the drop of a hat" (AA3 434), to "get inside the sound that's being created with what they're involved in right at that specific moment...being able to change and create with sympathetic sounds" (AA3 437). These abilities and others enable the fulfilment of another criterion of creative action, namely to

“go further” or “take it farther” (IL 650) by means of the deployment of a series of creative strategies (Theme 16). Whence does one go when one goes further? One goes close to the edge and looks over, risking the possibility of going too far. As T.S. Eliot noted “of course one can ‘go too far’, and except in directions in which we can go too far there is no interest in going at all; and only those who will risk going ‘too far’ can possibly find out just how far one can go”.<sup>69</sup>

While the traditional function of the drummer as the “timekeeper supportive guy” (AU 642) who provides the glue remains, a significant corpus seeks to expand that understanding and characterises drumming as having become freer, looser, broader, less constrained:

I think it’s opening up in a way [...].Whereas it was time-keeper in the beginning, even with Gene Krupa in an advanced way, still it was a lot of time-keeping into the late 60s as far as I know and history tells us...I think one thing is that the drummer has a freer rôle today; people don’t get surprised if the drummer is a leader, if he’s playing out of time while the band’s playing time or vice-versa (HT 803).

It is in the ‘job description’ of many to exploit this reorientation, to go further, to see where it leads. None of the participants appears to doubt that s/he has the power or authority to do so. The essential nature of the instrument and its high visibility combine to not only engage attention but also to establish it as dominant force within the ensemble: “The power we have as drummers is that people will listen” (AA 727). ER attributes the drum kit’s uniqueness to several key dimensions of its essential nature, and explains how those aspects shape performance:

A drummer does not have the means at his or her disposal of melodic expression, excepting of course we have implied melodic...we don’t have harmonic functionality in the traditional sense. Therefore, we are the one member of a collaborative that’s [indecipherable] improvising group. [...]. Therefore we function in a very different manner of shaping harmonic movement, of implying melodic content, of inferring (*very good*) things which we do not expressly play on our

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<sup>69</sup> T.S. Eliot. Preface to *Transit of Venus: Poems by Harry Crosby* (1931).

instrument because it's not in the traditional sense a tonal instrument, you know (*right*). [...] So I think the drums are unique and it gives the drummer an interesting form of power or influence with the other instruments in that regard, because we don't meddle in those areas (ER 646).

“Going further” was interpreted by SI as “creating more intensely”, enabled by the quality of the musical relationships he has with his co-performers: “the connection you have with the musician you're playing with is also extremely important; again it's coming back to another thing that will allow you to create more...er to create more intensely” (SI 530). In his experience, playing with strong co-performers pushes him to bring something equally strong to the table, to raise his game: “(So they are creative drivers...) Absolutely, yeah. (And they make you dig deeper, work harder...) Exactly, exactly, (*sure*) exactly” (SI 908).

Many of IL's approaches are founded on and conditioned by the cultural legacy of her African-American rhythmic forebears. She frames her own creativity within the preservation and continuation of the legacy: “Tony was the continuation of that force of nature, that propulsion and that drive that those gentlemen and others before him had, so for me he took that torch and just took it even further (*mmm*) ... and completely creative” (IL 725). She interprets ‘going further’ as a personal desire to know and do more than she already knows and does: “I love pushing myself beyond what I've learned, and beyond what I've previously done” (IL 14). From her perspective, the ideal relationship with the audience is built around a shared energy and a feedback loop that encourages and supports exploration:

You know, I really love, as I was saying before, energy and feedback from people. So when we get that, it's inspiring and encouraging to go further, to do more, and to take things farther than I or we imagined we could do (IL 649).

Pushing boundaries may require the deliberate placing of oneself in a situation where something might occur in a particular way in order to have an unusual experience. In a lengthy anecdote summarised here (HT 581-593), HT reveals his violent destruction of a body of recorded work, creating a *tabula rasa* that invites a fresh approach. An abrupt change of milieu, namely a tour of Japan, informs a new, effortless process: “the pieces fell together” (HT 587). This sequence of

events itself provokes or necessitates a further lurch into an unfamiliar area of music invention, that of writing for string quartet (HT 588). Such extreme behaviour exemplifies a trope commonly associated with creative process (Mace 1998, Peacock 2008, Pinheiro 2010).

The motivation to ‘go further’ (with implications of going too far and thus into savagery or madness) in the search for difference has long been a part of the artistic personality (Abuhamdeh and Csikszentmihalyi 2004). One aim of this research was to tease out commonalities as to what the alchemical component that transforms functional into compositional, mechanical into magical, uncreative into creative might or could be. Most participants thirst to go further than others in the search for it. One of HT’s self-selected practitioners, for example, is “provoking; he’s not playing what you expect all the time, he’s adding a different colour, he’s not being just behind” (HT 731). That characteristic re-surfaces in the compositional quality of HT’s own practice: “I’m not just a timekeeper. I want to add something else” (HT 460):

I started adding some things to my drum set, some different colours and textures, and also the fact that I didn’t normally want to play short notes [...] I wanted to make longer...(*long sounds; something with decay?*)...yeah, and that’s also one of the reasons I started with some electronics. That enabled me to do different textural (*sure*) things (HT 462).

The hunt for the alchemical component is the ‘drug’ that keeps AU ‘coming back’, like a moth to the flame:

For me my most exciting experiences have been in a heavily improvised situation (*yes*) and those are the moments that you know...uber-creative and uber-open-minded moments have led to some of those pinnacle moments...for me, tasting those moments, that’s the drug, that’s what keeps me coming back, tasting and experiencing those moments and, you know, being on the pursuit to live there as often as possible (*yeah*) and with the goal of finding those places more frequently. But still they may be - depending on how you define that moment - could be once a night, once a tour, once a year (AU 184).



The action of “going further” thus has powerful implications on two levels. It not only challenges boundaries and alter borders, but it also is identified by many participants as required to make a difference. It may have one source or many. In a youthful and evolving discipline like kit drumming, not yet old enough to have decided upon the most effective way to hold a pair of drumsticks, everything is “fair game” (AU 613).

#### **6.4.7 Summary of findings**

This category collated dimensions of action and influences on action whose goal is the construction of significant difference. The data supported the following findings:

##### Theme 13

- Most participants take their primary function to be the provision of appropriate performance.
- Creativity tends to be seen not as a foundational concern, but rather something that may be attended to after such concerns have been addressed.
- The degree of attention paid to foundational concerns is contingent upon the number of performers in the space.
- Among popular music instrumentalists, the drummer is perceived as having the greatest power to affect outcomes.

##### Themes 14 and 15

- Creativity is understood as both constrained by and achievable within any genre or style, although different genres and styles may be more or less conducive to the communication of creative difference.
- Goal-orientated action is mediated as much by the socio-cultural as the sonic environment.
- The paradox of choice in performance is that it both enables creative action and complicates it.
- Most locate creativity in the recombination of existing elements rather than the pursuit of newness for its own sake.

- Participants' categorise notions of constraint as a) negative and internally imposed, b) positive and internally imposed, c) negative and externally imposed, d) positive and externally imposed.
- Multiple interlinked creative strategies were deployed to navigate these constraints, the constructions of which in itself represents creative action.

#### Theme 16

- All participants problematise selection, choice and decision-taking. The first action-goal is to decide what to play and how to play it.

#### Theme 17

- Participants are concerned less with the origin of an idea than its transformation.
- Most are motivated to develop an individual sonic identity or voice, to contribute to and determine outcomes, and to communicate significant difference in their performances; that is, to inhabit the compositional sphere of practice.
- Recognition and acknowledgment are valued as indicators of successfully communicated action.
- Expression of experience is the 'something else' that both adds value to the functional performance and embodies the significant difference between the functional and the compositional.

#### Theme 18

- Most participants thirsted to go further than others in the search for the 'something else', challenging boundaries and altering borders in the process of constructing difference.

## 6.5 Descriptive Category 5: Communicating difference

Description: This category assembles participant understandings of the purpose or value of communication, and the ways in which communication is achieved.

### 6.5.1 Theme 19: 'Getting it': attitudes to the receiver and reception

Participants universally exhibit a conflicted approach to non-performing listeners. On the one hand they are welcome suppliers of energy and feedback (IL 622), reassurance (YO 248) and transformative power:

If you've got a great audience and they're on board with you, as we all know it can transform a good performance into a great performance (AA2 694)

On the other, they are fickle in matters of judgement and taste. They 'never get it' or, at best, are unreliable at 'getting it':

If you've got an audience who are not getting it [...] you still have to put out a performance that is...great (*yeah*) to the best of your ability (AA2 690).

'Getting it' appears to have a different quality to 'liking it':

Whether they liked it or not or how high they liked it against other da da da in a way is irrelevant, the fact that they got it [...] that's enough. Whether they liked it or not, that's up to them (AA3 905).

It is ‘very important’ to IL that non-performing listeners identify her as creative “because that is a large part of my make-up” (IL 306). During a long period of stadium level work with an international rock-star, she was bemused (‘I thought it was actually kind of funny’) to receive a different reaction from that to which she had hitherto been accustomed, because

people didn’t realise that I am a jazz drummer. And I thought okay...and you know what that means is that I’m playing this gig really well, because I’m satisfying what this gig wants and what this gig needs, you know. I just thought it was funny and I thought, yeah, I’m doing my job well (IL 307).

From her perspective it was a matter of professional pride to ensure that her functional performance (‘satisfying what this gig wants and what this gig needs’) was hermetically sealed from any trace of compositional contamination. Personifying the gig allows her to satisfy its demands; here, the gig wants her to execute the part, not create it.

On the topic of whether the listener is seen as a help or a hindrance in public performance and whether it matters either way, opinions were widely divergent. Generally, those who habitually occupy the compositional end of the spectrum of performance (HT, ER) profess a greater indifference to audience reception than those who reside closer to the functional end (IL, AA2). Opinions seem to be contingent upon individual perceptions as to the audience’s function. SI, it has been noted, wants and needs “to be seen”, i.e. his performance to be validated. His identity as a musician and a person is embodied in his performance, which must be verified as proof of existence. As a younger musician, YO used to look to the audience and others for reassurance, but “now as I’m a bit older I feel less inclined to look for anyone to reassure me on what I’m doing, because it doesn’t really matter now ... because it’s what I’m doing, and so I don’t need so many people to say it’s good” (YO 248).

Some cultivate a dispassion in the face of audience indifference: “I’ve gotten better about trying not to freak myself out if there isn’t any reciprocation from the crowd in the moment” (AU 674). AU takes more positive feedback, however, as a signal for further interaction:

But, on the flipside, if there is stuff coming back then I just use it to my advantage and to either push to get more, you know, the back and forth...or just as a little “okay, this is cool” and not get too high with the highs, you know, the classic thing (*mmm*) and not say “oh, they love it, now I’m going to play it faster! [laughs] (AU 678).

The level of reaction is carefully calibrated here, lest the listener tail wag the performing dog: “I don’t want the good to really take me off course the same way as I don’t want the bad to take me off course, just kind of “okay, wow, they’re very reserved. I’m going to keep emoting ...” or “oh, they love it. Okay, I’m going to keep emoting...” (AU 681).

ER initially expresses a high level of hostility to the listener: “I don’t really give a fuck about the audience. You can quote me on that” (ER 605), but reflection upon this analysis produced an apology: “Sorry, I do care about the audience” (ER 621). He acknowledges that:

If you’re playing music that has a fair amount of kinetic or actual energy ... if the audience responds in kind, sure, then there’s something bigger than the sum of the parts going on (*right*); there is an excitement level, and with a good band, the band will focus (*yeah*) a bit more” (ER 613).

In another context, audience response of a different kind has an equal but different impact: “But for a lot of the music I play - the stuff that’s at the softer dynamic level - if the audience is very quiet and you sense that they’re listening (*that’s another pleasure*) ... that’s helpful” (ER 616). Finally, he softens completely: “It’s fun when they like it, I enjoy playing for people, it’s a part of the equation of playing music in public and it’s gratifying when someone likes it” (ER 600).

Asked if the audience is capable of changing the way a performance unfolds, participants again evidenced a wide range of strongly-held opinions strongly expressed. From one point of view: “Everything changes how I play. The room, the audience, the musicians, the musicians’ mood that same day, you know” (SI 603). AA refuses to allow the listener to dictate any aspect of the performance. For the performer to deviate from his or her perception of the meaning of the event would be ethically unsound: “you and I both know what would get them on their feet (*yeah*,

*pretty much*) quickly, you know, and I often don't want to do that (*right*) because that's being cheap" (AA 852). Most concurred with AA2's sense of the transformative power of a thoroughly engaged audience, noted earlier.

In this way, a certain level of audience participation may affirm and assist the performer: "[The audience is] a help, especially in an improvising context if...it's almost like they are as involved as you, depending on how participatory they choose to be" (AU 669). The degree of participation, however, is highly contingent upon the venue: "How dare you participate as an audience member at [London concert hall] the Barbican? But at [London club] Village Underground they're resting their beers on the stage, yelling and moving and... "oh, we must be onto something, they're moving!" you know" (AU 671).

On long tours, differing audience reactions to repetition of the same material has the potential to lift and colour the nightly event. The audience is "a definite help, and especially we've just done a six-week tour, we've played similar songs every night (*yeah, yeah*), and we get a different reaction from the audience each night. It's fascinating to see the effect that has on the musicians. It's enormous (*how interesting*). It's absolutely enormous" (AA2 687). This sentiment is echoed in HT's perception that the sense of security afforded by an appreciative crowd relaxes the performers and can 'open up doors': "it can make you feel very secure (*yes*) which can open up doors (*I've known that; yes*); you relax, lower your shoulders and just do things (*everything sounds good*) yeah" (HT 881).

These observations illustrate not only the transformative power of the audience but its complicity in the co-construction of meaning. One of the reasons that you have to 'be there' to experience the event in its fullness is that others are there. Be they musicians or listeners, the experience is in part brought into reality through sharing it with others. SI suggests that "When you're playing a piece of music even if you play a classical piece of music, erm live, where all the notes are written like in classical music, you will always play it differently every night, and er that is down to a lot of factors. One of the main ones I think is the audience who's come to listen to you" (SI 612).

On balance, the prevailing sentiment concurred with AA's assessment of the audience: "I think they're a help, yeah, sure" (AA 838). Live listeners supply energy and feedback, the twin engines which motivate, inspire and encourage IL, for example, "to take things farther than I or we imagined we could do" (IL 650). In short; "we need people to play for" (IL 622). For IL,

creativity is perfectly possible without external verification because the locus of creativity is within her. However, the *experience* of creative performance is ‘bettered’ by having people around because:

I like touching people, and I like taking people on a journey. I can do that in my own bedroom by myself from now until the sky turns pink and purple, and chequerboard (*right*) ... I’m not taking it as far as I can take it because it’s only me who’s getting the benefit of it. I love touching people as I said and the more people who I can touch with love and beauty, with creativity, the better (IL 623).

I love knowing that somebody came to our concert and left feeling better ... left feeling that they went on a beautiful journey, left feeling inspired to go home and play or write or create or sing a song or just be nice to their wives or their husbands or their babies (*yeah, sure*). For me that’s really the ultimate; I love that (IL 653).

On her account, the playing in front of people is really playing with and for them. “I don’t want to play at them I want to play with them and for them; I want to touch their hearts, and when I feel that that’s done ... man (*uh-huh*), there’s no better feeling” (IL 656).

Assessing the complexities of notoriety and its potential to block or slow the achievement of creativity in performance, AU acknowledges and agrees that his rising stature brings with it audience demands which may be difficult to fulfil: “*Next thing you know you are performing to expectations and then you’re getting pissed with yourself [...]. It’s difficult that, isn’t it?*” “It is; it is” (AU 353). Non-performer and co-performer expectations of what a successful performance should be tend to constrain the performer as much as her or his own expectations. As internationally-known experts, most performers in this study intuitively seek to maintain a respectful distance from listener expectations in the preservation of autonomy:

I think you do have to have a point where you say “You know what; I’m putting this out to the world, if you don’t like it that’s okay”. I might not get many gigs, but I genuinely believe this is my best offering (*I absolutely think that’s the only way*)...the only way. Exactly. I think that. [...] You’ve got to do it for artistic reasons (*yeah*). If the audience get on board with it, it’s fantastic as well (AA2 709).

In this regard, ER agrees with a third party analysis to the effect that were he “playing in a closet by himself or playing on a stage, for him the performance would be the same” (ER 339).

This and similar extracts tend to emphasise the cautious ‘arm’s-length’ nature of the performer-listener relationship mentioned earlier; viewed as on the one hand supportive and helpful, on the other fickle and unreliable.

In so far as they were identified at all, conceptions of supplying some sort of service, product or function to live listeners were framed in terms of taking them on ‘a journey’ (AA3, IL) or inspiring them by ‘touching their hearts’ (IL). The success of the journey is predicated on the absence of humbug and fakery:

You’re trying to make them come, without sounding cheesy, on a journey with you, an emotional sort of journey. I think if you just do what you do honestly, and how you feel honestly, to put that through music that somehow the audience will ... (*smell it?*) yeah, smell it and they’ll get on board and become part of it (AA3 900).

Opinions again divide on whether the audience could or should be persuaded that the performance embodies creativity. AA believes he cannot control the way the audience receives the performance or any meaning they may attach to it (‘it’s not up to me’) and avoids dwelling on it for the preservation of mental health:

When [...] and I, we did I think four tours together, double-drum show (*right, I remember* [...]) he used to say “Look, we’re were just doing this improvising for, you know, 45 minutes, taking a break, and doing another 45 minute improvisation, duet, and we’re throwing it out there; after that it’s up to them. We’ve done our bit. You know, you can’t dwell on it (*yeah*) I think if you did, it’d drive you crazy (AA 635).

On the other hand, while enjoying public acknowledgement of his creativity (AU 311), AU reveals that he has to guard against manipulating the listener:



If I'm thinking about the reception of something (*uh-huh*) and I premeditate the reception, for example, I want to be seen as creative... sometimes that could damage the art, and I could make decisions based on like "oh, okay, I want to be perceived as creative. I'm going to write this fucked up odd-metre song and I'm going to orchestrate it for saxophone quartet and tabla"... and now here I am, I've just, you know, premeditated this creativity, like broad stroke of "hey I'm creative", and it's not really from my gut and all of a sudden I'm not really being myself, and these things, so ... (AU 316).

This account suggests that the production of something deliberately provocative in the hope that listeners will confuse oddness with genuine creativity is a perennial temptation for the artistically bereft. The perceived possibility of pre-meditating the reception speaks to both AU's sense of power as a performer and his awareness of ethical concerns. The idea of genuineness and 'being myself' as a more direct pathway to creativity than that of posturing and fakery is prevalent throughout the data (SI 741, YO 158, ER 209).

#### **6.5.2 Theme 20: 'Who counts?' The appropriate observer**

The observations above reflect participant attitudes to, and expectations of, the non-performing listener. What of the opinions of the co-performing listener? YO asks himself the pertinent question that might have been asked of all participants: "Who are you playing for: the audience, the group or yourself?" (YO 708). Unsurprisingly, in view of the fickleness they attribute to the non-performing listener, a clear majority of participants reference the co-performer as the primary agent to whom difference must be communicated. According to YO;

Things always go well, or better, if you feel there is a good feeling in the house and there are enough people, and they are enjoying it, and they are with you, but generally that only happens if you completely ignore that they're there [laughs] and you play to the other guys on the stand" (YO 709).

YO's creative process hinges on communicating the appropriate feeling within and among his co-performers first: "that's the only way round to do it. I think the moment that you try and second-guess what you think the audience would like you're on a hiding to nothing then" (YO 712; see also Bruford 2009:242-243). The co-performer tends to be seen as the most appropriate judge of difference, whose acknowledgement is crucial to the creative attribution. For SI, what co-performers think of him is "very important because all these [...] thoughts, all these er things are really...again, they are just another thing that will invite, encourage, allow more creativity (*yeah*) to come" (SI 436).

The importance to ER of other people considering him creative is only "to the extent that they're listening, if 'other people' would mean the other musicians I'm working with. If they are listening, then they are tacitly acknowledging the creativity and we get a better result" (ER 267). He instinctively prioritises the considerations of his co-performers who acknowledge his creativity by paying attention. If they're not listening, one might infer that they have nothing much to listen too, and at that time ER is exhibiting insufficient creativity. He situates music creativity in close relationship with listening, "which I'm not good at" (ER 363). Listening - 'truly listening' - is again referenced by ER in the context of 'being open to receiving the other', commonly cited within the data as a prerequisite of creative performance.

Others approach from a different angle. AA2 characterises creativity as being "about trust and [...] about permission" (AA2 520), permission being withheld if 'others' (such as prospective employers) do not consider him creative. "Erm ... it is important because otherwise they're not going to let me be creative..." (AA2 519). AA3 takes creative attribution as certification that a drummer can perform to a certain standard, that he or she is 'creative enough' to be able to assess the musical situation and, frequently at short notice, provide an entirely appropriate performance. The perspective of both musicians is thus partially framed in terms of potential employment.

Most, then, prefer to frame the communication of significant difference in terms of intra-performer communication rather than anything to do with non-performing listeners. The creative work, they report, takes place *entre-nous* and if the audience 'gets it' that is all well and good. Referring to his co-performers, SI describes the process below, and the communication is intra-performer:

You like their playing, you like their sense of musicality, and their musical sensitivity and they like yours, and erm...also... erm...when you're playing you're communicating rather than just doing your own thing (SI 533).

In reference to the recent (2014) recording sessions of his improvising quartet, AU finds the music 'fulfilling' even with no audience other than that of his co-performers:

I feel those situations are satisfying, more than enough fulfilling on they're own. (*Okay; without an audience ... that's interesting*) The audience is ... I wouldn't choose that option if it was one or the other, but it would still be a fulfilling experience without an audience (AU 705).

Only one participant states unequivocally that he makes music for himself. Self-motivated and critically self-contained, HT creates from a position of confidence and thus strength: "If I'm happy with the gig then it's a good gig, and if I get one out of five stars the day after it doesn't really bother me (*sure*) at all. So I think I make music for myself" (HT 446).

Two interesting sub-themes developed around the degree of intra-performer communication necessary prior to and/or during effective music co-operation. As performance moves increasingly to the compositional, the assumption appears to be that individual co-performers need less direction of any kind, verbal or otherwise. Much of the negotiation surrounding performance in jazz groups is unspoken: "you fathom out the people that seem to have the same [...] concept as yourself, you know, but not necessarily ever talking about it (AA3 401).

Minimal verbal communication is again highlighted by AA (below), to whom the speed of the catalytic reaction ('it all happened and then it was over') comes as a surprise:

[...] just came up with this little riff (*great*) and I said great let's do that, let's count it off - roll tape, count it off - and it turned into something I've never heard anybody do before (*terrific*) because we're all...It's on the latest record [...]. It all happened and then it was over and it was like...oh...no one else would... (AA 814).

Creativity here is seen as residing in both the surprising combustibility of the music and its uniqueness; music that AA's never heard anyone else produce.

If verbal and visual modes of communication between performers are generally kept to a minimum, they are nevertheless seen as vital indicators of respect, recognition and awareness. The smile is interpreted as a powerful communicative device in performance because it confers recognition. ER is 'always watching', but "I'll instinctively look up and I'll see him [a co-performer] smile [*laughs*] and I enjoy that because he's done all the writing and he's conducting and I'm pleased that he enjoys that thing" (ER 399). From this, he concludes that "the important part of the creative process, I think, is acknowledgement or recognition (*that's interesting*) by one of the collaborators" (ER 401). The question as to why a collaborator's acknowledgement appears to be intrinsically more valued by participants than that of the lay listener was left open.

Monson's observation that, within the jazz community, to say that a player "doesn't listen... is a grave insult" (Monson 1996:186) may be applied "with equal force to classical musicians" (Cook 2012:457) and arguably to all musicians. My experience within stadium rock was one of a strange disconnectedness within and between performers and audience, the predominant feeling being that, in the absence of sharing, everything might just keep going even if I, or perhaps all the musicians, departed. This contrasts sharply with the intimacy afforded others in small-room jazz performance. In that context, SI describes the extensive implications of his gestural communication with 'one of the guys' in his band:

I find that sometimes when we all play and it's like heads down and it's complicated and everybody's trying to do his best, and trying [*laughs*] to play well and all this kind of thing, and then you know I just lift my head, and look at one of the guys and smile at him, just because he did something I like; that's just enough...that little moment to, er...millions of different ideas to come out and the wonderful, joyous (*yeah*) creative thing you know (*sure*) so, you know, it's really important...I think that a connection is really important whether you're playing your music or another music, it can be a change from one to ten, it can turn over a whole gig from being just an intense 'muso' kind of a thing, where everybody tries to impress other people and hope that, you know, it doesn't lose a beat, and then...just a really joyous process with, you know, people just communicating and playing together (SI 536).

### 6.5.3 Summary of findings

Descriptive Category 5 assembles participant perceptions of the purpose or value of communication, and the ways in which communication is achieved.

#### Theme 19

- Participants profess a greater indifference to audience reception of their compositional performance than their functional performance.
- The presence of listeners is deemed, on balance, to be of greater help than hindrance in the construction of creative performance.

#### Theme 20

- Most privilege the co-performing listener over the non-performing listener as the appropriate observer who might assess significant difference.
- Despite verbal and visual intra-performer communication being kept to a minimum, it is nevertheless valued as an important indicator of respect, recognition and awareness.
- Irrespective of the stance individual participants adopt to the listeners, all acknowledge their collective centrality as a powerful co-constructors of meaning in the reciprocal experience of creative music performance.

## 6.6 Descriptive Category 6: Assessing significant difference

Description: This category encompasses descriptions of the ways in which drummers distinguish between significant and insignificant action in their own and others' performances.

### 6.6.1 Theme 21: 'Am I creative?' Reflecting on personal creativity

Assessment of significant action tended to be confused by participant reluctance to separate the person from the process/product (i.e. the performance). "Am I creative?" was frequently conflated with "Is my performance creative?" Given that the focus remained on what meanings the notion of creativity may be made to carry, a clear distinction between the two appeared to be both impractical and unnecessary to establish.

There was little convergence in the degrees of importance participants attached to considerations of their own creativity. A wide range of responses branched out into a general assessment of creative strategies, actions and processes. A large minority of participants downplayed the whole idea of assessing their performances as creative. In AA's case, there was no necessity to think about it consciously because "the gigs I'm doing, it feels like they have room to be creative. (*So it comes with the water?*) Yeah" (AA 616). AA3 is 'offered a lot more creativity' than others, (by which is meant that the musical situation affords him the space to enable creative action), but he declines these offers because he doesn't consider himself creative: "I've never really been that sort of player" (AA3 417). He finds himself lacking in comparison to others: "He was playing after me, and just seeing that guy play, I was just gobsmacked how creative he actually was. It made me look like I was sort of just...you know" (AA3 427).

Even though well respected internationally as a jazz drummer, AA3 firmly rejects the idea that he is possessed of a creative direction. For him, creativity is simply a matter of providing the right thing at any point on the FCC. The provision of this in a tightly constrained musical theatre gig may involve searching for those 'little corners of creativity':

Even though I've played it 100 times, I might try and look for a little (*aah*) ...I'm not feeling completely straitjacketed. There might be little corners where I can have a bit of freedom, even if it's just playing rolls on a cymbal and then, changing it slightly, the dynamic or something or...just being able to find it...little corners of creativity in everything. Whether it's playing with [...] or something like that, or doing something like this (*mmm*) or playing and interpreting a piece of music where someone's only written half a drum pattern and you come up with the rest, or... (AA3 1033).

The hunt for the 'little corners' is associated here with 'a bit of freedom', and echoes the "putting something of yourself into the music" which Cottrell suggests is "for most musicians" synonymous with creative performance (Cottrell 2004:113).

HT finds it hard to feel creative in part because he finds it difficult to surprise himself: "The thing is, as I said, I don't feel creative as a person because I am the one...and I know all my skills, good and bad, and I know what I'm capable of and so it's very hard for me to surprise myself [...] I don't think about it being 'outside the box' or 'different' or not within the 'normal parameters' (HT 557). While collaboration with an audience alone in solo performance may be fruitful ("Sometimes it's enough with yourself - you can do a solo concert and it really works" (HT 568), collaboration with other musicians affords the possibility of being led into doing something he otherwise would not have done:

So what happens is that when I'm playing with others they might in a way lead me into something that I wouldn't have done, and I think ... and some musicians you play with, you know, they make you a better musician. Some musicians do something to you that takes you to a different level, and it can make you focus, like...if I play with [...] I'll be very aware of the beat and time because he's got such a good beat and he's so distinguished and it does something to me. While if I play with [...], for example, on the piano, I feel like I can be very loose and open and wide; I feel I can stretch time; I can really work around his playing (HT 561).

Some, such as HT and ER, frame their creativity within a 'stylistic bricolage' (Shuker 2002), "really an emulation of what I like most about the drummers I've enjoyed listening to" (ER 456).

ER's modest evaluation of his most creative moments amounts to no more than being "pretty cool" which is "as far as I'm willing to go with it" (ER 453). He tends to see his most creative work as within a constraining framework, of preference one which he characterises as "anti-drumming", by which he means "not meeting the expectations of the drum dolts or geeks (*right*) but also finding another path by means of the drum" (ER 173). His chosen audio environment as the leader of a trio exhibits a stripped down drum style in which "every single cymbal pulse starts to carry a lot of meaning" (ER 420).

One much-trodden pathway to difference lies within the avoidance of what others are doing. To illustrate, ER assesses some of his own work as creative because "that's not something I've heard other guys do" (ER 426). From a different perspective, if one intention of the functional practitioner is to do things because other drummers do them (or do the same things better), then one intention of the compositional practitioner is do things because other drummers do not do them (or do them differently).

In contrast to the hesitations and prevarications of AA, HT, ER and AA3, IL has a singular perception of the locus of creativity. Her affirmative response to the question "Do you consider yourself creative?" resonates through several passages of her interview. Creativity is within her as "part of the way that God made me" (IL 512), and always running in her head. She is "blessed to be designed" (IL 251) with creative ability and the desire to be creative. She cannot turn it on and off like a tap, but she can choose when to express it, a choice she sees as mediated by her taste and professional judgement. She does not need anybody else to be creative with, although the experience is certainly heightened in the company of others.

AU similarly has no doubts: asked if he feels creative, he responds with a simple "Yes" (AU 273). For him, creativity is made manifest principally within his own band where the quality of the decision making can be in no doubt: "I can make any decision I want at any moment and it's right because it's mine, which sounds very ignorant" (AU 553). SI and AA agree it is important to think of themselves as creative, but offer no specific explanation as to why this might be. It is important for AA2 to allow his "creative side to come out", and

it has to be given credence (*yeah*) even if you come up with an idea and it's wrong and it doesn't work [...]. You think "I fancy playing that" and if it doesn't work, that's okay



(mmm). But I do support my own creative urges and I try to be as creative as I can (AA2 507).

From the above it can be seen that participants express a desire to be close to or express the phenomenon of creativity and accordingly make efforts to seek it out. While a small majority place creativity squarely at the centre of their music consciousness, a surprisingly substantial minority downplay the centrality of the phenomenon in performance and assign it less meaning than might have been expected. To answer why that might be so, it might be instructive to survey the ways in which participants ascribe significance to their own, and others', strategies, processes and performance outcomes.

#### **6.6.2 Theme 22: 'I never heard it before': attributing significance to self and others**

While Theme 10 considered participant's accounts of creative performance refracted through the prism of a leader's creativity, Theme 22 looks at their individual assessments of creativity, first in their own performance and secondly in those of others. Participant judgements reflect multiple ways in which their perceptions of creativity were brought into reality and given meaning. In this extract, YO describes why his self-selected performances are creative:

They just kind of illustrate when you're not feeling self-conscious, when you're not feeling you have to subscribe to anything particularly, externally. You are yourself, in the best version of yourself, so that's what you want. Yeah, I suppose those examples...they say that when I was doing that recording I was just as completely free as I can be, erm (*yeah*) and in the moment, so that's something that rare, really...(YO 157).

YO attributes creativity on four grounds; that his cited performances are unselfconscious, that they are intrinsically motivated, that they exhibit the 'best version' of himself, and that they communicate an expressive freedom. His construct of the 'best version' of himself converges with SI's 'genuine self', but differs in that he can conjure only infrequently ('it's something rare,

really'). Nevertheless his creativity is framed within a rising self-esteem, a diminishing need for reassurance, and a feeling that he's "not just bluffing it out" (YO 232).

AA assesses one of his recordings, in current use for instructional purposes at college level, as unique because "it does sound really different and it doesn't sound like anybody else" (AA 411). Interestingly, he didn't attribute those qualities to it at the time of performance (AA 404), suggesting his fluid appraisal of the outcomes of action over time. Other attributions of creativity within the data emerge from memories of process; of "allowing the creative process to happen" (AA2 861), of entering a (mental) space "where everything was possible" (HT 623), of really concentrating to get a result that was "probably as good as it can get" (HT 627). AA3 found creativity in extending his work from the audio to the video domain: "If you introduce that other element of the video then it...the music takes on a different form. It takes on a different purpose or" (AA3 655). Asked to describe, in his self-selected samples of creativity, why he assesses some as more creative than others he might have selected, AA2 supposes simply that: "it's the creative process involved in putting the right parts [by which is meant drum parts] to the music" (AA2 437).

Participants were more effusive in the detailed discussion of the work of a small number of former and current members of their community of practice who had successfully communicated significant difference. For example, AA2 references the drummers of the big band era of the 1930s who "sort of changed the landscape in a way, and sort of rewrote the book" (AA2 755). Drummer Jack DeJohnette "created another language...took the need to even keep time out of it, necessarily; that's a concept, that's a big, big concept, that not many other people have ever succeeded in achieving but, he's done it, people can do it...he was massive" (AA2 760). "Probably (John) Bonham may have had more of an effect than many in the sense that he...I don't know what he had, he had something; he had some jazz (*he also had some enormous exposure through record sales*)...yes, that's true" (AA2 780).

One frequently used yardstick for creative assessment of the performances of others was whether the participant had ever heard it before; the same yardstick that AA uses to assess his own performance (AA 815). The assumption within the culture that any active member will be aware of all and any significant developments that might change the way s/he does things may be unrealistic but has considerable traction. For example, ER reports that Bernard Purdie took "whatever was happening with R&B [and] he codified it and did a thing in the delivery of it (*yeah, yeah*) that I never heard before or since" (ER 529).

Beyond that heuristic, participant reports of the creative strategies and processes of influential performers and co-performers are thick with references to many of the emblematic dimensions of creative performance already mentioned, such as playing games, exploring, allowing, omitting, limiting, avoiding the obvious and rapidly shifting expressive emphasis:

He seemed to be able to explore the music - all corners of the music - at the drop of a hat...be able to move quickly and have more of a and being able to get inside the sound that's being created with what they're involved in right at that specific moment...being able to change and create with sympathetic sounds (AA3 434).

He'll never play the same thing twice. He always wants something different. He'll always play something different. He'll move it around; he won't want to play the obvious (AA3 710).

The ideological compulsion to be 'different', sometimes even at the expense of the music, is also noted. HT expresses exasperation with the jazz musician's aesthetic of perpetual renewal:

If they play something and it really worked out and it's because of the circumstances and all that you know...but still, if you find a way to solve something, and it works, and then so many people feel that the next time they have to do something completely different, because it's 'improvised' (HT 9).

ER finds a 'very highly developed' creativity in the crafted functional performances of John Robinson, a man who "knew how to come up with a part" (ER 70). He interprets this skill as a mastery, "the uppermost expression of habitual practice, at which action has been so well exercised and internalised that it often becomes associated with advanced forms of creative expression" (Glăveanu 2012:4). In ER's terms, mastery is both 'craft' and a 'form of creativity'. "The master knows that "the most important part of a pencil is the eraser [*laughs*] [...] so a lot of the creativity comes from, let's say, a seasoning, of knowing maybe the best option, a note-to-self, don't try that one again" (ER 87).

In respect of domain-level innovation, ER appreciates but doesn't like the most recent developments, finding much contemporary performance simultaneously 'mind-blowing' and unlistenable, and possibly inappropriate:

All the pioneering work that drummers have done in terms of metric modulation, superimposition, and then you know like the mind-blowing stuff which Weckl and Vinnie did which then led to...when I hear what Chris Dave is doing now I'm fascinated by it, I appreciate it intellectually. Do I want to hear it again? No, I can barely make it through a whole performance (ER 580).

Appropriate performance was characterised in Theme 13 as 'gluing the music together'; 'a central tenet of what a drummer does creatively'. To violate that appropriateness tends to be generally seen as a major transgression of the rules of drum performance.

Like AA, the attributes that ER points to as creative in other people's performances are the same that he points to in his own. He finds the pursuit of creativity less noble than the pertinence of action, the making it work. Mel Lewis' choices were "almost never outrageous but they were always perfect" (ER 516). Together with Carlos Vega, "it just seemed like everything they played was just kind of perfect (*interesting*) and there's a wonderful creativity in that" (ER 517). When he watches Levon Helm, it strikes him as "a perfectly played drum part. There is nothing outstanding drumming-wise except for the mere fact that it feels so damn good. It's just the right thing" (ER 97). For ER creativity is embedded and experienced in an appropriate performance that evokes qualities of subtlety, understatement, 'perfection' and concealed virtuosity. It may not need 10,000 hours, but it demands a high level of musicality which may in turn be "so creative that people don't even ... the listener's not even aware it's going on. Which is I think a very creative way to do things" (ER 178).

When asked to assess creativity in other drummers' processes and outcomes, participants most frequently discussed the work of Elvin Jones. According to IL, Elvin 'was a very creative musician' because he was able to resolve the central paradox of drum kit performance; how to keep the music moving forward while making it feel laid back:

his triplet style - there was a propulsion in that that just kept the music moving forward, even though he played so laid back that it sounded like he was in last week sometimes [laughs] ... moving forward forward forward because of the triplet propulsion (IL 715).

In HT's opinion "[Elvin] was adding another energy to the drum playing (*loud...*) it was loud, and it was a lot. [...] It was just floating, but still he also did something with the way he was going round the set. He was changing sort of the perception of the drummer being (*stretching the bar line*) stretching the bars and also making the sound so big, you know" (HT 772). HT describes the powerful emotional effect of experiencing Jones' creativity under the most adverse of conditions. The performance

... was incredible. The band was really shit, it was really bad (*oh, bad?*) yeah, the band, and his playing was very limited, he was not in good shape, but when he touched his old 'K' cymbal, it made my tears come" (HT 779).

From another perspective, Jones was both a "whirlwind of [...] creativity, a whirlwind of polyrhythmic expression" (ER 491), but also an enigma, because "you can't find a lineage that you might find with most other drummers" (ER 492). He considers current thinking on the topic, citing the man himself: "Elvin talks about Shadow Wilson (*uh-huh*)...probably Jo Jones and then even Philly Joe, undoubtedly some Max" (ER 500). His creativity lay "not only [in] the triplets but the dynamic shape of the way he played on the kit (*in between the cracks, as they sometimes say*) well, not even that, but something a little more...just the soft to loud and the loud to soft, and I sometimes wonder if it was just the way the drums were recorded, that some drums seemed to leap out a little more than others" (ER 502). Elsewhere, Jones' original contribution to the domain was characterised as no more than 'a slight alteration'; "...you can hear how Elvin took everything that Roy was doing and then slightly altered it" (YO 304), but Roy "informed and inspired all of the drummers, I think" (YO 626).

In sum, most participants see the creative process in music as inherent in real-time interaction with others and as essentially strategic (i.e. finding ways to make things better or different). It also involves, to some degree, making and taking decisions and finding, solving, avoiding or

resolving problems. In the absence of some or all of these activities, one might argue, it might be difficult to assess outcomes as significantly different.

### 6.6.3 Summary of findings

Descriptive Category 6 collated descriptions of the ways in which drummers distinguish between significant and insignificant action into two themes. The first addressed perceptions of personal creativity and the second sought meaning in the creative actions of self and others. The data indicated that:

#### Theme 21

- A small majority prioritise the pursuit of creativity. A surprisingly substantial minority downplay the centrality of the phenomenon in performance and assign it less meaning than one might expect.
- A clear majority consider a positive assessment of their creativity by others in the domain to be important.
- The two most common pathways to individuation are a) the avoidance of what others are doing and b) the development of an individual voice.

#### Theme 22

- The most common strategy for the realisation of creative performance on the drum set was to address its reception; to control the social, musical and audio environment (the ‘situation’) in which it might be heard (i.e. to form your own band).

## **CHAPTER 7: Discussion: resituating the creative experience of drumming**

### **7.0 Introduction**

Chapter 7 discusses the themes from the previous chapter within the context of the literature reviewed in Chapters 2-4, looking particularly at the range of responses offered by participants and how they varied between individual and researcher-participant experiences. Further literature is introduced as necessary to contextualise previously unanticipated findings. Chapter 8 offers conclusions about the research question and sub-questions, highlights the main findings and contributions to knowledge, examines the strengths, weaknesses and limitations of the work, and outlines the implications for theory, practice and future research.

At this point, the central question and six sub-questions of the research may be usefully restated. The thesis set out to illuminate the ways in which Western kit drummers achieve and interpret creativity and meaning in music performance. A set of narrower questions sought to understand how drummers' constructions of creativity inform their practice and what an examination of the creative practice of experts might teach us about how this creativity may be encouraged or compromised. They were:

- 1) How do expert drummers conceptualise creativity?
- 2) In what ways might the meanings they derive from it inform practice?
- 3) How do different performance contexts mediate and govern drummer action?
- 4) How do expert drummers construct difference?
- 5) How do they communicate difference?
- 6) How do they assess the significance of difference in performance?

Following the DSCA model, six Descriptive Categories were used to organise the data into themes addressing each of the sub-questions (Table 6.1). Within the vast topic of generating creative performance and deriving meaning from the experience there is a good deal of overlap

between motivation, strategy, process and outcome. Approaches to all are multi-variant and none are clearly delineated. The occasional re-appearance of a perception, an attitude or a concept within different analytic ‘pots’ is to some degree unavoidable but not necessarily unhelpful if it sheds light from a different angle.

## **7.1 How do expert drummers conceptualise creativity? (Themes 1-6)**

### **7.1.1 Creative music performance is...**

*Descriptive Category 1* gathered conceptualisations of creativity in drummer performance.

Theme 1 and Theme 2 suggested that expert drummers positioned creativity somewhere between the individual domain-changing variety evidenced by Max Roach and espoused by Csikszentmihalyi (1988) and Arieti (1976), and the inclusive variety attendant upon practically all musical performance as proposed by Barrett (2012) and Burnard (2012). In the latter view, creative performance is characterised less as a discrete expression of individual will and more as an activity constrained by and mediated between multiple actors in different contexts. It has collaborative or interactive elements, enhanced by an ability to control or affect outcomes. The idea that the musical creator is restricted in how much difference s/he can make at any given moment (Toynbee 2000:35) was cautiously supported by participants, who nevertheless saw creative action as available to some degree at any moment in any context.

Creative performance was characterised as not only recombinational, exploratory, and/or transformational (Boden 2004), but also as a set of social actions (for example, making others ‘comfortable’) and music actions (for example, the provision of ‘good groove’) whose goal was to enable or assist others to be creative. Creativity was situated within and mediated by the performance context in the moment; such contexts were characterised in terms of receiving, sharing or giving direction. While all music situations were construed as more or less supportive of creativity, performing *with* others rather than performing *for* others tended to be seen as affording both the greatest pleasure and the greatest exposure to creative possibility. Successful performance acknowledged that creativity is not always welcome nor necessary, with the unsurprising consequence that its pursuit was not always prioritised. Successful performance



was constructed at both the micro-level of the small personal triumph and the macro-level of creative domain change.

Participants generally viewed the consistent execution of the core function of making the music work as necessary and sufficient for a low-level attribution of creativity. For a higher-level attribution, ‘something else’ was required to make the action *matter*: an alchemical component that transforms the mechanical into the musical and the functional into the compositional, frequently encountered by ‘going further’ than others. These conceptions are somewhat at variance with the current discourse on creativity within classical music performance which tends to focus on the perfect rendition of the highly prepared performance rather than the testing of its boundaries (Gabrielsson 2003, Chaffin *et al* 2006).

### **Meaningful experience**

Even though a performance may be captured in repeatable form, the experience of its creation is unrepeatable. This ephemerality is captured in AU’s phrase, borrowed for the title of Theme 2: ‘The experience that disappears’. Creative performance is not merely the collaborative or interactive experience (although it may embody both), it is the outcome of music action which is communicated and judged to be significant. Recognition of that experience within the broader music community was considered to be crucial before a participant’s opinion was sought and he or she granted permission to determine outcomes.

Mature peak-career participants were selected for this study not least for the depth of their accumulated experience over many years of practice; experience gained from countless functional and compositional performances under multiple variations of environment, constraint and complexity. Accumulated experience informs current practice. The data indicated that some of these component (everyday) experiences were significant and judged to be creative by self or others; some were insignificant and adjudged uncreative; and some went unjudged. The quality of these assessments was seen as beyond practitioner control although s/he tended to prefer assessment (and thus acknowledgment) to indifference. Theme 2 comprised three dimensions of experience encompassing: first, notions of a ‘learning experience’; second, ideas surrounding the taking of pleasure in the experience; and third, the temporal aspects of the experience.

The data underpinning the first sub-theme were unable to be presented due to limitations of space, but repeated references to learning as a by-product of creative action were sufficiently robust as to warrant inclusion. Participant reports showed expert drummers as tending to learn through creating. This is consistent with Lori Custodero, who drew on perspectives from music learning and teaching when she adopted “a model of creativity involving an individual’s active construction of musical meaning through responsive interaction with [culturally understood] musical materials” (Custodero 2012:370) to argue that, in essence, we learn through creating (Barrett 2011, Burnard 2012, Schank *et al* 2012).

Building upon Dewey’s work, Custodero interpreted music-making as creative action. If drumming is creative action, then drummers, this thesis has argued, are not only agents of change, but they also make meaning from their participation in change. Viewed through this Deweyan lens, it is the cumulative experience of action over time, in a continuous cycle of doing and undergoing, that constitutes experience which, in turn, informs meaning for the creative music performer (Dewey 1934, Glăveanu 2013). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to develop a comprehensive view of the relationship between learning and creating, but when participants described something as a ‘learning experience’ they typically also identified a substantial creative element in either the learning itself or its outcomes.

Considerable research supports the idea that social and psychological factors must be taken into account by those studying the experience of music creativity (Csikszentmihalyi 1990, Gabrielsson 2011, MacDonald *et al* 2006:295). One important aspect of music experience is its appreciation or enjoyment by self and/or others (Cohen 2005); in this regard, entraining our bodies to musical rhythms brings pleasure (Levitin 2008, Doffman 2008). Participant reports consistently showed the experience to be amplified, heightened or made more powerful if shared in collaboration with attentive co-performers and engaged listeners, although it may be fulfilled alone. These findings converge with thinking in the areas of individual Flow and Flow within collaborative performance, which asserts that people experiencing high levels of Flow are generally more motivated and creative in both work and leisure (Csikszentmihalyi 1990, 1992; Hytönen-Ng 2013; Sawyer 2007, Lamont 2012).

With regard to positive affect in skill acquisition, findings supported evidence from the literature connecting the learning of popular music to Flow, fun and enjoyment (Green 2002, Schubert 2012, Csikszentmihalyi 1997, Hytönen-Ng 2013). Schubert asserts, for example, that “positive feeling - whether it be delight, pleasure, ecstasy, immersion, flow - is an essential part of the

creative experience” (Schubert 2012:132). Subjective descriptions of successful performances revolved around the fundamental traits of a state of Flow, where a balance of skills and challenges was prioritised (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi cited in Pachet 2006).

Within positive psychology, Lamont suggested that the two traditions of hedonism and eudaimonia are held to be necessary in the pursuit of happiness (Lamont 2012:575), and a balance is required between the three components of pleasure, engagement and meaning in order to achieve a state of subjective wellbeing and authentic happiness (Seligman, Parks & Steen cited in Lamont 2012:575). Participant reports strongly supported current thinking within performance psychology which suggests that greatest performer happiness lies in those domains which can both accommodate and welcome the personal expressive input of the performer and which afford him or her a sense of control over his own performance (Evans 1994; Ryan *et al* cited in Lamont 2012:575).

Authorial and experiential evidence, however, suggested caution. Professions of positive affect may be more forthcoming in interview than professions of negative affect, even within the context of anonymity and a supportive and understanding researcher-participant. The pain, disappointments and difficulties occasionally experienced in pursuit of creative performance were much less discussed. Literature documenting findings that musicians rarely focus on negative experiences when discussing musical issues, preferring to comment instead on ideal communal experiences, has already been noted in the context of the research method (section 5.3). My own experience of performance with little or no positive affect might serve as an example of an unsuccessful creative process (Bruford 2009); the likelihood of my case being an isolated one was not examined. It might be surmised that other musicians may have communicated significant difference effectively without the accompanying positive affect identified by Schubert (2012). In general, the data here strongly suggested that a collaborative context of aligned feelings and shared purpose affords both a favourable environment in which to incubate difference and the greatest performance pleasure; in this respect it adds further weight to the evidence surrounding creativity and wellness within performance.

Finally, the initial conceptual framework of this research called for a way to interpret the immediacy of the creative moment, described as a ‘slightly altered state’ (YO 742). The interaction between creativity, culture and meaning has attracted considerable attention in the literature (Negus and Pickering 2002, 2004, Clarke 2012, Glăveanu 2010a, 2010b, Ingold and Hallam 2007, Palmer 1997), but the discourse tends to preclude examination of the immediacy

of live music performance. For example Glăveanu's (2013) Action Theory of Creativity connects the pragmatism of Dewey to the action-theory of Boesch and Eckensberger within a cultural psychology framework, but it needs amendment to accommodate the fluidity of performance in which functionality, usefulness and validation tend to be construed as being 'in the moment'.

The composer has time to revisit or reconsider in private, before unveiling the artwork to the public; the performer creates and unveils simultaneously in real time, usually in the company of others. Given the immediacy of performance decision-making, characterised by both the rapidity of instinctive reaction to incoming musical information, and the interpretive moment that embodies both listening and 'speaking' (the simultaneous reception of incoming musical data and production of the outgoing response), some have called for a reappraisal in respect of creative performance (Sawyer 1992:257). This thesis had hoped to address some of these issues in greater depth, but space restrictions permitted only a preliminary analysis.

Across all interpretations, being 'in the moment' was valorised as something to be desired and achieved, but participant reports confirmed that there may be technical, technological, social or environmental blockages of Flow, causing short or long term obstructions to progress.

Perceptions of altered time in peak performance were insufficiently robust to coalesce into a theme, but were noted within the literature in musicians' descriptions of performance Flow (Boyd 1992:172, Hytönen-Ng 2013). I connected Flow to wellness and meaningfulness when I described Flow in performance as like "making circles in the air with a feather duster, a somewhat childlike activity that required no effort and produced an enormous sense of wellbeing. Imbued with a kind of undeniable rightness, such occasions are what people like me struggle to create for much of our professional lives" (Bruford 2009:151).

### **7.1.2 Creative performance means...**

*Descriptive Category 2* indexed the multiple meanings assigned to the lived experience of creative music performance. The cultural psychologist suggests that drummers think not only as individuals, but as members of a particular community with distinctive cultural traditions that allow them to ascribe meaning to creative experience and to circulate and exchange that meaning

(Cole 1996, Polkinghorne 1988). Everything is relational. Polkinghorne, for example, offers a powerful lens through which to view the “apparently independent and disconnected elements of existence [within, for example, drum culture] as related parts of a whole” (1988:37). Multiple participant references to the influences of a small group of community elders seemed to support the idea that pre-existing cultural traditions from within the community offer a store of plot lines, which can be used to configure events into stories (Polkinghorne 1988).

The participant acts in the drum culture and in doing so progressively constructs a personal history. My drumming relates me to my drumming history: “Every action or experience relates to other actions or experiences, near or far in time or space, more conscious or less” (Boesch 2001:480). I take my drums to go and play a gig. Following Boesch, the drums, the gig and the act of drumming are all cultural features and action possibilities, or possibilities within an action field (Boesch 2001:481). It is axiomatic of this approach that the performance of the action may itself be more important than the outcome (Boesch 2001:480). For example, within jazz performance the listener is invited to observe a series of engagements with music as an on-going process rather than the delivery of an end product. Any creative endeavour may have secondary meanings attached to it that are as important (or more important) than the overt concrete goal (in this case, creative performance); some examples emerging from the data might include YO’s reassurance, or IL’s spirituality.<sup>70</sup>

Polkinghorne’s assertion that experience is meaningful and human behaviour is generated from and informed by this meaningfulness (Polkinghorne 1988) encapsulates the basic phenomenological premise of this project, which concerns the structure of lived experience. The data showed how the drummer engaged with his or her performance; should the individual wish to seek meaning in that engagement, to make sense of it, s/he must actively bring it into lived experience (Smith *et al* 2009:16). His or her interpretation of that experience gives it meaning, which in turn informs further action, as depicted in the IMCM (section 3.4).

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<sup>70</sup> Creativity continues to have a spiritual dimension for a minority of participants. The data suggested a small but significant and surprisingly tenacious adherence to the ‘lone genius’ paradigm of creativity, indicating a residual traction to a conception of creativity that the discourse within modern psychology has long-since debunked. This may constitute an example of the way research tends to have neglected the voices of those for whom the paradigm retains substantial resonance.

### ***Meaningfulness in action***

An action theoretical account states that through his or her experiences with the object, in this case interactive experiences of performance with others, the subject not only gives meaning to them, but also personally experiences his or her *potentialities* of action. This brings the subject to the construction of the individual's meaning as person, that is, his or her identity (Boesch cited in Simao 2001:489). For example, a heterogeneous collection of objects are likely to have different meanings. The first drum kit I perform upon might carry the meanings that not only were my parents generous in assisting in its acquisition, but that it was the same colour or size or resonance as my drum hero. The data demonstrated participants making their drum performances carry multiple varied meanings at the individual level; of reassurance, of belonging, of negotiating constraints, of problem solving (Theme 15), of trusting (Theme 4) and of connecting and sharing (Theme 5).

To experience meaningfulness is profoundly satisfying and reassuring. Doffman develops an account of meaning-making within music performance that clarifies how the simple act of being in time together yields such significance for musicians (Doffman 2008). To experience meaninglessness, on the other hand, is for things to make no sense, or to be nonsense. Any drummer action generates a tangle of meanings to the participant, some of which might signify as creative. Boesch suggested a taxonomy of meanings that might include the structural, functional and emotional (Boesch cited in Lonner and Hayes 2007:310). The meaning of an object (such as a performance) never derives from the object alone, but also from its embeddedness in larger contexts, in this case, the drum culture (2007:311).

The data offered support for the above observations; namely that the meanings of creativity in performance are dependent on mode and context. This is important in the understanding of drummer agency because the way a drummer acts towards creativity is based on the meaning creativity has for him or her; creativity and meaning may best be connected through significant situated action in context. Within functional performance, for example, creativity might mean making the other person comfortable. Within compositional performance, it might mean oneself being comfortable with the uncomfortable, or making the other person uncomfortable.

Drummers derive meaning also from both their participatory discrepancies and the “unpredictable thousands of mis-intonations, uncontrollable hundreds of combinations of sound-

colours, and uncountable variations in rhythmic phrasing [...] collectively known as expression” (Bruford 2009:306). Domain or individual level meanings are informed by and inform the drum culture and are mediated by its psychology at the domain level of action (Figure 3.2). Mediated action is taken forward to become full experience, the communicative performance of which may be assigned creative significance by contributing to or changing the domain. In this way, action links creativity to meaning (Dewey 1934, Boesch 2001, Simao 2001, Glăveanu 2013).

Participants reported engagement in “the unending search for and the construction of meaning” (Boesch cited in Lonner and Hayes 2007:329), even if the meaning was only sometimes creative. When SI explained that “When you are creative [...] it’s joyously being here and [...] joyously being what you’re supposed to do” (SI 851), he cast creativity in action-theoretical terms. In this sense, drummers are what drummers do, and what they do takes place within a complex socio-musical matrix of people and artefacts. Meaning makes sense of our performance, our life, our existence. Like other musicians, expert drummers strive at meanings, the better to relate themselves to their world. To ask what this or that *means* is a basic question for all human beings (Boesch cited in Lonner and Hayes 2007:329).

Descriptive Category 2 distilled the multiple meanings that participants assigned to the lived experience of creative music performance into four themes: allowing (Theme 3), trusting (Theme 4), connecting (Theme 5) and surprising (Theme 6). First, the data suggested multi-variant ways in which the music may, consciously or unconsciously, be allowed to work or prevented from working. Being closed, distracted, judgemental, self-conscious or lacking in interplay were perceived as attributes that diminished the likelihood of creative interaction. Being forgiving, supportive, permissive, connected to and open to others were all personal attributes perceived as enhancing the possibility of creative interaction. For some, whole genres of popular music were designated as weapons of control (IL 174), designed to discourage musical interplay or interaction. These genres were seen as denying ‘letting’ and ‘allowing’ and thus inhibiting decision-making and selection, central components of creative action (Dewey 1934, Csikszentmihalyi 1988, Sternberg and Lubart 1999).

Second, to expert drummers, creative performance meant trusting and being trusted by co-performers. Interjection, interaction or ‘interference’ in performance were entirely permissible so long as the level of trust among collaborators was and remained sufficiently high. The high level of trust afforded the opinions of the co-performer relative to the low level afforded to non-

performers offered further evidence to buttress the idea of the importance of trust within collaborative creative endeavour generally (Monson 1996, John-Steiner 2000, Cottrell 2004).

Third, participants connected and shared with others through effective communication. Multiple methods and various dimensions of improvisatory and pre-determined music invention were most usually shared. In this respect, the data in Theme 5 supported a large amount of literature conceptualising drumming and grooves as emerging from forms of sharedness and entrainment (Doffman 2008) as shared knowledge (Zbikowski 2009) and as an engagement of experiences (Berger 2009, Bergey and Kaplan 2010). The sense of shared community amongst performers (Cottrell 2004) and between performers and listeners has been emphasised in examples of strong experiences of performing (Gabrielsson 2011, Sawyer 2006, Burnard 2012).

Fourth, in Theme 6, most participants expressed being surprised by, or surprising others with, the outcomes of their own or others' musical actions. The element of surprise is so prevalent within the creativity studies discourse that it may be considered not only a characteristic but also an indicator of significant action (Bruner 1962, Benson 2003, Boden 2004). This idea finds considerable convergence with Juslin's (2003) G.E.R.M.S model of five facets of musical expression, in which the author hypothesises that his 'S [surprise]-component' reflects a performer's attempt to deviate from performance conventions to add tension and unpredictability to the performance (Juslin 2003:287). The data here endorse this hypothesis and lends further weight to the argument that the unforeseen and the surprising are foundational constructs of creativity. Generally, participants saw the element of surprise as less welcome in functional practice but to be expected and encouraged in compositional practice, and connected to creativity in important ways that, while difficult to articulate, suffused their perceptions of the meaning of creative performance.

Two further points arising within Theme 5 were sufficiently robust to have salience. First, importance was attached to the ethical quality of the connections between all parties: performer, co-performer and listener. To be effective, both the performance and its communication must not only be trusting and trustworthy but also sincere and honest. The desire to produce the "most genuine-self drum part" (SI 462) performed by "the best version" of himself (YO 159) reflected participants' general concern to serve the music at that moment with integrity. Deviation from these precepts, it was implied, may compromise attainment of the goal of creative performance.



Second, some findings indicated divergence from the DSCA construct that posits communication as a critical element prior to creative attribution. The few participants who saw creativity as residing entirely within the person rather than the product (i.e. the performance) characterised periods of idea incubation in private deliberate practice most certainly to be creative thinking, if not creative action. This notion rows back from assertions that creativity is relational in nature and born of intersubjectivity, of explicit and implicit connections between an individual or collective creator and others (Glăveanu 2010b:152, Burnard 2012, Berger 1999). One way to reconcile this is to characterise the private/non-communicative stage as a part of the process that helps generate creative potential which can contribute to - and make more likely - the realisation of that potential in creative action (Peacock 2015; personal communication).

As has been noted, participants saw little inherent virtue in the ruthless pursuit of novelty for its own sake, preferring instead an approach that recombined existing elements usually, but not exclusively, from within the drum culture. In this way, connection to the drum culture was seen as a vital component of participant creativity. The great drumming ‘originals’ have clearly delineated antecedents in the work of their rhythmic forefathers. These connections ensure their cultural value, relevance and potency, if not their creativity. Some participants perceived technology as hastening to sever the beginner from the ‘old’ ways, the cultural modes of learning that not only transferred skills but delivered a cultural context for their appropriate use. A lack of cultural connectedness was taken as one aspect that makes it harder for younger drummers to be creative.

Broadly conceived then, the data within Descriptive Categories 1 and 2 show creative music performance to mean connecting with and trusting others in a negotiated interaction that allowed something to happen in a musical way, that could not be fully pre-meditated and that tended to cause surprise. The outcome has been characterised as “a ‘combinatorial explosion’ of potential interactions” resulting in ‘unpredictable emergence’ (Sawyer in Cook 2012:452). While the phenomenological project recognises that nothing can be understood perfectly, and at best the researcher attempts to make sense of others making sense (the double hermeneutic), the above may be as close as one can get for now to understanding how expert drummers conceptualise and make sense of creative performance (research sub-questions 1 and 2).

## **7.2 How do different performance contexts mediate drummer action? (Themes 7-12)**

*Descriptive Category 3* indexed the data relevant to six performance contexts in which action takes place as follows:

- Theme 7: Studio and live performance.
- Theme 8: Collaborative performance.
- Theme 9: Performance for a leader.
- Theme 10: Performance with a leader.
- Theme 11: Performance as a leader.
- Theme 12: Performance without a leader.

Themes 9 and 10 might further be grouped within the functional performance mode; Themes 11 and 12 within the compositional mode. While in practice neither contexts nor modes were quite so clear cut, all participants seemed to recognise their essential qualities, differences and boundaries while acknowledging there are many shades of the ways in which people collaborate. The FCC proved to be a useful thinking tool in the ordering of so disparate a collection of perceptions across such a wide range of practice.

### **7.2.1 Public and private performance**

Theme 7 revealed that expert drummers continue to frame performance within the studio/live dyad identified earlier, even as distinctions between the two are becoming increasingly slippery and contested. Live performance was seen as freer, less constrained but with potentially less controllable outcomes than the studio equivalent. An imperfect connection with a live audience was marginally more conducive to creativity than the potentially more controllable connection achieved by ‘chipping away’ at a studio performance. This adds a certain weight to Lamont’s finding that performers’ strongest experiences of music, (as characterised by engagement and a search for meaning), were in front of an audience. In her view, these experiences provide

valuable and positive memories of performing which performers can draw on to sustain their motivation for music (Lamont 2012:589). Experiential evidence suggests that performance expectation in the popular music recording studio lies somewhere between the relaxed live concert and the potentially inhibiting expectation of perfection now seen as the norm in classical music recording sessions (Blier Carruthers 2013).

This account of the locus of creative performance contrasts strongly with research within the Western classical tradition, where “by far the most significant creative activity takes place in the privacy of the practice studio when an artist first settles on a particular interpretation” (Chaffin *et al* 2006:201). The disjunction may centre, in part, on the demands of the DSCA construct used here as a theoretical framework through which to examine drummers’ particular situated action in context, which holds, *inter alia*, that the performance is not creative until it is communicated. In this way at the very least, the necessary conditions for the attribution of creativity to instrumental performance within popular music appear to diverge from those pertaining to the classical tradition. Further research, it is hoped, might seek to resolve this tension.

From inception to the adoption of editing techniques, recordings of performances have tended to be characterised as permanent and immutable. To the performer, they permitted a relatively objective scrutiny of performance (Cottrell 2004). Currently however, (2015), the invasive surgery afforded by post-digital technology into the body of the recorded performance offers impermanence and mutability in a perpetual re-imagining of the original performance by remixers and re-modellers, subject only to the will of rights-holders. If the audio recording was typically seen as capturing a performance that could be revisited and worked on, both live performance and the *experience* of any kind of performance were characterised as unrepeatable.

No clear participant preference emerged as between the type of controlled performance embodied within a recorded artefact available for repeated listening with no immediate response from others; or the messy, largely uncontrollable, unrepeatable live performance with immediate audience feedback. Both tended to be seen as two sides of a performance coin, each with its meanings and mediations of creative action. Public and private performances communicate with listeners in different ways (Hargreaves *et al* 2005). However, the assertion that “the presence of other performers and an audience in the live situation opens up many more channels of potential communication than for sound produced by a loudspeaker” (Hargreaves *et al* 2005:13) would appear questionable. Even the longest tour will reach but a fraction of the pairs of ears available

at the end of a computer stream or a national broadcast, both emanating from uncountable loudspeakers.

### **7.2.2 Collaborative interaction**

Seen as an arena of action, collaboration overarches and suffuses most drummer performance contexts. Taking creativity as the construction of new knowledge from existing, Vass characterises collaboration as the joint construction of new knowledge, and creative collaboration as the transformation of that knowledge (Vass 2004). This thesis has argued that all drumming that is disseminated is collaborative and given meaning through its co-constructive relationship with community. In this way meaning constructs community which constructs meaning, the reflexive process which Drath and Palus identify as “culture” (Drath and Palus 1994:13).

Theme 8 revealed drummers to be social creatures that prioritise the collaborative, supportive rôle and seek creativity in those pastures rather than on the rockier terrain of solo performance. Findings tended to support Sawyer’s confident assertion that “collaboration makes each individual more creative” and that “the emergent results of group genius are greater than those any one individual could think of alone” (Sawyer 2007:125). A collaborative context of aligned feelings and shared purpose afforded not only the greatest performance pleasure but a secure, favourable environment in which to incubate difference (John-Steiner 2000, Bruford 2009).

Participants repeatedly evoked creativity in the context of a close dyadic relationship with a band or group leader - usually an internationally recognised ‘star’ performer. This individual was seen as bestowing not only employment, status and reflected glory, but also a framework for individual performance creativity. These findings are consistent with the literature; John-Steiner, for example, emphasised the stretching of one’s identity through comparison and contrast with one’s collaborator (John-Steiner 2000). Referencing the melding, exchange and appropriation of insights, approaches and modes of thought with those of the partner, and the trust and confidence to ‘live in the other’s mind’, John-Steiner’s collaborator Michele Minnis drew attention to the level of ‘emotional fitness’ needed for the rigours of creative collaboration (John-Steiner 2000). Both underlined the generous give and take, the listening skills, the willingness to see the other

point of view, all manifest in the sophisticated level of personal interactivity necessary for the sort of trusting creative relationship identified earlier in Theme 4. Theme 8 data were concordant with much of the literature on group creativity (Hennessey 2003, Littleton and Mercer 2012, Paulus and Nijstad 2003). Following Sawyer (2006, 2007), further research into individual creativity within collaborative performance should aim to investigate possible fit with MacDonald and his colleagues' findings that group levels of Flow are more closely related to higher creativity than individual levels (MacDonald *et al* 2006).

### 7.2.3 Performing for a leader

Theme 9 and Theme 10 highlighted drummer narratives of 'functional' performance *for* a leader and *with* a leader respectively. While all agreed that creativity can subsist in functional performance, there was less agreement as to how and to what extent that might be so. A re-contextualisation of Sawyer's question might ask how the individual drummer can creatively participate in the event, working within the constraints of tradition and culture but with room to strategically interpret and extend them (Sawyer 1998:15). This frames the central dilemma of functional performance; namely, the extent to which creative performance is achievable for those who play only as directed by others with strictly governed license for interpretation.

Participant reports suggested that being able to play on demand, to supply an appropriate performance in any genre in any situation at any time, constituted creative action. In specific musical instances (for example, transforming the demonstration recording of a track into a finished master, or breathing life into a poorly programmed version of a recording) 'doing a good job' meant 'making it feel like music'. In the broader thematic context, 'doing a good job' tended to mean 'making the leader sound good' and by extension 'making it [the performance] work', an action imbued with greater creativity than a reading of the literature might lead one to expect.

Boundaries between working for, with, as, or without a client/leader/producer were not as clear-cut as may be imagined. Music is a domain in which power and differential of power are significant factors. Findings supported the idea that the structure of power within music collaborations is fluid, negotiated and re-negotiated and, at some times and in some places, more

covert than overt (Burnard 2012, Berger 2009). In a robust sub-theme that spoke to drummers' strong sense of cultural identity, the salient musical aspects of the relationship between leader and drummer were seen as always remaining the prerogative of the drummer. Of all actors, the drummer retained the power to make the music work or not work.

Even though functional performance was perceived as less directly supportive of creativity than compositional performance, creative expression was nevertheless available in the 'little corners' of even the most tightly constrained of functional situations. Broadly, almost all performance was perceived as permissive of creativity, notwithstanding that creativity is not always welcome, not always an 'unmitigated good' (Florida cited in Barrett 2012:212). The creativity manifest in departure from the norm is not always welcome in music performance (Clarke 2012, Monson 1996, Berliner 1994). This was born out in the data; while participants insisted they could see creative potential in almost any musical situation, they were judicious in their unlocking of that potential in functional performance, lest it prevent the music from working to the leader/client/producer's satisfaction.

#### **7.2.4 Performing with a leader**

All participants sought, more or less consciously, to construct a musical identity over the course of their working lives. A performer's self-identification, irrespective of the manner of its construction, frames the creative experience and is one of the factors that interprets it and assigns it meaning (MacDonald *et al* 2009, Smith 2013, Wirtanen and Littleton 2004). Most sought to develop an individual voice on the instrument as one path to musical identity. Mapping the development and expression of identity along the FCC might offer insight into the point at which the expression of identity moves from suppression to development and projection, the point at which 'doing a good job' becomes 'allowing me to be me'. The data indicated that the close working relationship with a leader identified earlier within collaborative interaction (Theme 8) served not only as a framework for individual performance creativity but also as a seedbed of identity construction.

Participant reports suggested that interaction may be required for creativity to be attributable. For Burnard, all performance of any kind was to some degree collaborative (Burnard 2012) and

interaction hard to avoid, be it in the moment or postponed pending later dissemination of the (captured) performance in the case, for example, of the stay-home drummer. Monson suggested that, away from the instrument, the practice and experience of creative drumming required “the interactive shaping of networks and communities to facilitate the creative act and the development of culturally variable meanings and ideologies that inform the interpretation of drumming in society” (Monson 1996:2). These ideas are concordant with those of visual or plastic artists, who often describe the art-making process as an ongoing interaction between person, product and environment (Mace cited in Peacock 2008:248).

Performing *with* someone rather than simply *for* someone evokes a hierarchical distinction, one that affords the possibility of contribution rather than ‘mere’ execution. Here, the drummer is caught awkwardly between two strands of oppositional thinking. On the one hand, rhythm involves constant variation (Dewey 1934:170). In so far as there is no variation, there is no rhythm, and much ineffectual music may have been brought into existence on that premise. From Csikszentmihalyi’s perspective, the origin of well-being is to be found in particular forms of interaction, and therein lies the motivation for studying Flow (Pachet 2006:351). On the other hand, the commercial imperative requires the consistency of functional performance. Understandings that deprecate rhythmic ‘inconsistency’ and the ‘taking of liberties’ while implying a degree of irresponsibility (Zagorski-Thomas 2010) sit awkwardly with those which insist that artists have always taken liberties with music because those liberties distinguish mechanical or purely objective construction from artistic production (Dewey 1934:170). Participant data addressing highly constrained performance suggested creative variation was available in the smallest of gestures, in the tightest of corners. Playing out of time consistently and with precision (section 2.5.1), for example, evidences a high skill level and one point of reconciliation between the two philosophies of rhythm. It is at their intersection, in practice, that many begin to develop a distinctive style or voice.

### **7.2.5 Performing as a leader**

Themes 11 and 12, focused on narratives of compositional performance *as* a leader and *without* a leader, respectively. The data indicated that assumption of the leadership rôle was seen first as a catalyst for action, and second as a way of designing and controlling a vehicle for creative

expression, thereby decreasing the chances of its dilution. A spectrum of leadership models emerged. Different models might be adopted for different, sometimes simultaneous, projects, ranging from the loose assembly of musically compatible individuals to ‘see what happens’, through the hiring of specific key individuals to realise the leader’s more closely defined personal vision, to the complete control of all aspects of the collective performance. Common to all was the creation of a ‘space’ in which music may occur.

Having created a space and possibly, but not necessarily, a text or composition, the leader may or may not cede further direction or control to others, such as a musical director. In this process, many looked for an empathetic relationship; a ‘special chemistry’ with co-performers upon which to construct the situation that would support the compositional project. The analysis thus far has indicated first, that the drum culture imbues a loyalty to ‘making it work’; and second, that the music must work functionally before it can be said to work compositionally.

Compositional performance thus has a pronounced element of functional performance already embedded.

The construction of participants’ own groups tended to be informed by prior experience of successes, failures, inhibitions and blockages to the Flow state undergone in other peoples’ groups. The benefits and drawbacks of group ‘brainstorming’ have long since been identified in the literature and continue to be debated (Nickerson 1999). Authorial experience within the sphere of progressive rock suggested that the expensive process of brainstorming in rehearsal had mixed results, but has now fallen into disuse under financial constraints. The data here indicated that an improved process built around extremely ‘light-touch’ guidance, scarcely more than the provision of a suitable performance space and a blueprint for action, yielded more consistent results.

The perspective on creativity as social and interactionist has been propagated particularly within organisational and management fields. Both are concerned with team creative processes, and often use the improvisational nature of the jazz ensemble as metaphor (Amabile 1996, Glăveanu 2009, Barrett 1998) or research focus (Seddon 2004, MacDonald and Wilson 2006). Bastien and Hostager (1988) characterised jazz as a social process of coordinated innovation with a collective outcome, as an activity in which inventiveness is to be expected. The data supported these ideas. Participants assumed that the purpose in assuming leadership was to offer something perceived of as new or original [*cf.* ‘originals bands’] and “to produce new modes of discourse and new means of presentation” (Burnard 2012:44). Interestingly, they tended to consider the



experience of creativity in either functional or compositional performance as equally valid. In this sense, they achieved and experienced similar dimensions of creativity, albeit in different ways and to different degrees, in the propulsion of their own musical vehicles as in the propulsion of someone else's.

### **7.2.6 Performing without a leader**

The three preceding themes have addressed collaborative performance contexts which comprise some degree of giving or receiving direction. Theme 12 collated ideas about self-directed performance, in public or private, with or without technology, and with or without further human agency, although others may be present.

Almost all participants had experience of leaderless performance in the primary context of 'solo' performance, by which is meant performing alone and without external direction. Near instant global communication renders external direction hard to avoid. Solo work on previously recorded tracks, for example, might take place in a commercial studio or alone at home under any level of direction from a client/leader/producer, present or absent. With respect to performing 'in private' with no or minimal direction, the data highlighted a set of issues surrounding a) the complexities of 'pretending' to perform for an unknown and unseen virtual customer; b) the super-imposition of the qualities of human performance on the unbending non-negotiable aural space of the automated track; and c) the expansion of expectations, chiefly that the drummer should broaden her or his rôle to include that of record producer. In the public sphere, drum workshops, clinics, and 'exhibition' styles of 'solo' performance were generally disliked and undertaken only out of some sense of obligation to instrument manufacturers or sponsors. In the event that the Western drum kit was involved in solo 'art' performance with creative intent, it tended to be augmented by percussion and/or electronics.

The second context embraces the fringe experience of performance with others, none of whom has assumed the functions of musical-leadership (for example, free jazz, or improvised duo performances). The extent to which any performance with others can be achieved without some degree of leadership, no matter how unstated, is debatable and beyond the scope of this thesis. It might be noted in passing that while collective improvisation, for example, may purport to be leaderless, the music is furthered at any given moment by one actor or another. S/he who 'gets to

the next note first' may be said to be exerting leadership, and is certainly, if involuntarily, exerting a temporal authority. Performance combining a high level of autonomy with the benefits of leaderless collaboration was enacted in duo, a format seen as highly satisfactory by the three participants and the researcher-participant who had experienced it.

It was difficult to insert these observations of 'leaderless' music performance into any research on the meaning of creativity for drummers because so little exists. Opportunities to perform alone have only recently become available and 'drummer performance' is itself a fluid concept in the post-digital environment. It has been noted, however, that in one respect performing alone may afford greater freedom to 'play' because the obligation to play a specific part so that others can play theirs is removed; no one else is impeded from doing their job by the performer going 'off book' (Peacock 2015; personal communication). That freedom seemed to be negated by the countervailing data which strongly indicated that when performing alone, the experience of creativity was diminished. The understanding that the presence of listeners and/or co-performers tended to facilitate, amplify and heighten the experience further buttressed research highlighting the value of collaborative performance (Sawyer 2007, Burnard 2012, Blaine and Fels 2003, Martin 2006).

The predominant environmental change in participants' performing lives was uniformly considered to be the advent of music technology and the digitisation of the domain. Music technology was generally seen as a helpful tool, albeit with accompanying drawbacks. First, it was considered inherently unable to distinguish the musical from the unmusical. Some ascribed it mechanistic properties that needed to be guarded against. Second, it was held responsible in part for a diminution of collaborative interaction in performance, lamented by some. Third, technology was seen as disconnecting the younger player from the cultural ways of learning that transfer skills and deliver a cultural context for their appropriate use. It was thus the principal agent underlying the decline of cultural connectedness identified in Theme 5.

Together with the emerging picture of the meaningful experience of creative performance framed within Analytic Category [A] (see section 6.0 to refer to the list of Categories and Themes), this interpretation of the themes comprising Analytic Category [B] goes some way to explaining how different performance contexts mediate and govern drummer action, the nub of the third research sub-question. The discussion now turns to the three Descriptive Categories nested within Analytic Category [C], enfolding themes of constructing, communicating and

assessing significant difference attempt to answer the three remaining parallel research sub-questions.

### **7.3 How do expert drummers construct, communicate and assess significant difference? (Themes 13-22)**

#### **{a} Constructing difference**

*Descriptive Category 4* collated dimensions of action and influences on action whose goal was the construction of difference.

##### **7.3.1 Appropriate performance**

The data underpinning Theme 13 suggested a strong and repeated emphasis on the idea of appropriate performance. The appropriate selection from multiple options in the moment was generally interpreted as the epicentre of creative achievement in functional drum performance. A good performance is seen as appropriate, if not significantly different. The notion of appropriateness is much in evidence in creativity studies (Hennessey 2003, Sternberg and Lubart 1999, Williamon *et al* 2006) as a “crucial birthmark” of creativity (Ward *et al* 1999:191). Appropriate work is identified by Lubart as that which “satisfies the problem constraints, is useful or fulfils a need” (Lubart 1999:339); by that token and in this context, appropriate performance fulfils a musical need. A drum performance may be characterised as ‘useful’ in any one or all of three ways: a) in the micro-sense of furthering the measure or phrase of music at hand; b) on a medial level of gluing the performance together; and c) in the macro-sense of redefining possible futures for the instrument and its practice. On this last level, for example, drummers following Max Roach’s useful (and creative) performances were simultaneously relieved of onerous performance demands and offered a new framework within which to perform appropriately.

All participants sought an individual performance style in the development of a personal voice. This was generally perceived as a means to differentiation and individuation; important components for the development of a solo career (see Theme 18). However, individual performance style was interpreted always as subject to behaviour appropriate to the broader musical style in which the performance was embedded. While drum styles may be unstable and heavily contested (Curran 1996, Covach 1997), there remain sufficient typical examples to permit broad agreement as to the main features of, for example, 'funk', 'swing', 'metal' or 'hip-hop' drumming. Drum action then becomes more or less appropriate for that style. As befitting of experts, the data revealed participants as both highly attuned to the shifting borders of style and sufficiently confident as to mix, match, appropriate, challenge or transgress them at will, governed only by immediate performance constraints.

### **7.3.2 Deciding what to play**

Themes 14-16 addressed three action areas: decision-making, the negotiation of performance constraints, and the use of individual strategies and processes to promote creative difference. The relationships between these topics are blurred, multi-variant and multi-faceted; few sit neatly in a single analytic receptacle. Some repetition is therefore inevitable but not necessarily uninformative if it addresses the subject topics from a different point of perception.

The first action-goal is to decide what to play and how to play it, but, as noted, the paradox of choice in performance is that it both enables creative action and complicates it. In practice, drummers tend to seek reduction of the available choices and components to those which will make the performance work; their primary function being perceived as the provision of appropriate performance rather than creative performance. Participants viewed the former as foundational; the latter as something that may be attended to after foundational concerns have been addressed. It may be possible to be appropriate without being creative, in for example, the highly constrained world of the tribute band or the circus drummer. Arguably, highly unconstrained solo performance is the only context that would seem to entertain creativity without appropriateness; if one function of art is to shock, it may be appropriate to be inappropriate.

Allan Moore formulated the notion of the ‘standard rock beat’, by which is implied a bar or measure of four beats distributed around the kit with certain emphases. This drum kit pattern, found throughout Western popular music, he takes to be normative (Moore 2013:51). The extent to which engagement with this model permits, constrains or enables the effective communication of experience which might come to be assessed as ‘significant’ was an important question in the analysis and interpretation of the data. In practice, participants seldom engaged with the standard rock beat, from which it might be deduced that they found that formulation an overworked seam when it came to the search for significant difference.

Two further inter-linked perceptions were sufficiently robust as to warrant mention. The first concerned the properties of the instrument itself. The drum kit was seen as having a greater sonic facility to shape the music than other instruments common to popular music ensembles. Secondly, partly in consequence of the first perception, participants saw themselves as having the greatest power of all popular music instrumentalists to affect outcomes. These perceptions indicate the distance between the way drummers are seen and the way drummers see themselves, between what is expected of them and what they expect of themselves. This resonates with the oscillation between centrality and marginality noted in section 4.4.4.

Having decided what to play, the manner in which it is expressed becomes crucial. Within music, expression has been described as the “added value of a performance” and as “part of the reason that music is interesting to listen to and sounds alive” (De Poli 2004:1). To communicate experience, it must first be expressed. The production, expression and communication of experience may in turn be assigned significance. On Juslin’s account, music performers blend instrumental, interpretive and expressive skills with their “expressive intentions” to determine specific performances (Juslin 2005:87).

Findings from research among both expert classical and expert popular musicians suggested that the idea of ‘playing expressively’ is largely defined in terms of ‘communicating emotions’ and ‘playing with feeling’ (Lindström *et al* cited in Juslin 2009:378). Participant perspectives appeared to diverge from this. In so far as drummers’ expressive intentions were specifically broached within the data, they tended to be characterised less in terms of an intention to express emotion to a non-performing listener, more in terms of an intention to express experience to a co-performing listener, and receive recognition and acknowledgement for it. This may in part explain drummers’ orientation towards the conveyance of meaning to co-performers rather than non-performing listeners, an observation supported by the data underlying Theme 19. Most

research on expression in music performance having hitherto been conducted within the classical tradition (see, for example, Chaffin *et al* 2006), further investigation into parallel areas within popular music performance would be welcome.

### 7.3.3 Negotiating constraints

In Theme 15, participant notions of constraint were categorised as a) negative and internally imposed, b) positive and internally imposed, c) negative and externally imposed, d) positive and externally imposed. Examples of the first category included perceptions of self-consciousness (YO 157) and a shortage of skills (ER 292) or knowledge (HT 507). The second category included, for example, the self-limiting of performance parameters (AU 297), the personalised design of a recording protocol (YO 216), and the use of music technology (“it has to be organic” HT 698). The third category included a situation in which the appropriate foundational concerns have not been attended to (i.e. the music was not working) (AU 252), or one in which negative instructions from client/producer/leader have inhibited action goals. Finally, positive external constraints may lie within the recognition, solution or resolution of multiple problems in matters musical, social, conceptual or psychological, or the receipt of positive feedback from client/leader/producer or other listeners.

Participant experiences of constraints found substantial fit with existing creativity models. For example, the Geneplore model brought forward by Ward *et al* (1999) demonstrates the way in which ‘pre-inventive’ or preliminary ideas are interpreted during an exploratory phase (practice and rehearsal) and then expanded conceptually through modification and the imposition of constraints (Ward *et al* 1999:193). Research has shown constraints to be not ‘merely’ conducive to creative achievement in the course of performance (Merker 2006, Pressing 1998, Peacock 2008) but also as a necessary aspect of the creative process (Tafari in Deliège and Wiggins 2006:151). Participants devised a multiplicity of imaginative ways to circumnavigate or co-opt real or perceived constraints. Creativity was understood as both constrained by and achievable within any genre or style, although different genres and styles may be more or less conducive to the communication of creative difference. Far from being restrictive, participant interaction with

these constraints through multiple interlinked strategies and processes tended to fuel creative action (Peacock 2008).

Two further sub-themes were briefly addressed. First, the data indicated that goal-orientated action was mediated as much by the socio-cultural as the sonic environment. Making it work was, in the first instance, making it work for others. Second, most located both novelty and creativity in the recombination of existing elements rather than the pursuit of newness for its own sake. One might surmise there were strongly pragmatic reasons for this; employment opportunities within popular music as much as classical music tend to encourage the pursuit of 'better' while discouraging the pursuit of 'different' (Cottrell 2004).

#### **7.3.4 Individual strategies and processes**

There was little commonality with regard to the multiple individual strategies and processes cited by participants in the bringing about of creative outcomes. Simply put, there were many ways to make it work or make it matter. Emphasis was given to things avoided: the avoidance of 'demons', for example, or the avoidance of the typical. The two most common pathways to individuation were a) the avoidance of what others were doing and b) the development of an individual voice; the latter being examined further in Theme 18. Other strategies included the artificial imposition of constraints, abrupt severance from existing patterns of thought and action, the adoption of a faux-naïveté, the "showing up empty" (AU378) and the doing of less; all framed within a broad precept which saw the construction of the completely new to be not so much impossible as irrelevant. As mature individuals long enculturated within the drum culture, participants selected and adapted cultural contents to create the idiosyncratic meaning of the action for them.

The way in which participants engaged with the finding, solving or resolving of problems was also of interest. While Deliège and Richelle found little support for the hypothesis of creative acts in music as problem solving, the conflation of the two continues to be widely accepted in the dominant cognitivist paradigm (Deliège and Richelle 2006:2). The underlying data showed that expert drummers invoked the notion more frequently than might be expected. Problem finding was used in order to think, and to develop new attitudes or approaches to the instrument

and its practice from which “new problems are seen and old ones seen in a new light” (Gruber and Wallace 1999:109).

Other problems pertained to the circumstances surrounding the creative performance rather than the performance itself, encircling the creation of a ‘good situation’ in which creative action might take place. Participants cited hectic schedules, mental pressure and multiple vexatious issues surrounding everything from health, family and personal relationships to visas, transport and equipment as inhibitors or disablers of creative action. Overcoming these peripheral problems ‘allowed’ one to ‘invite’ creativity into performance, thus permitting engagement with a Flow state discussed in Theme 22.

One frequently deployed strategy for the realisation of creative performance was for the individual to control the social, musical and audio environment (the ‘situation’) in which the drumming might be heard. One way of achieving that was to form your own band. All but one of the participants pursued a parallel career with the nurturing of creativity seen, implicitly or explicitly, as the primary action goal. Those who sought to control the performance space by forming their own groups tended to find, on occasion, they had replaced one set of problems with another (Bruford 2009).

### **7.3.5 Change and transformation**

The data revealed participants as concerned less with the origin of an idea than its transformation. Jazz musicians, for example, frequently transform standard tunes into novel versions, and the degree of skill and novelty involved in doing so is commonly taken as a yardstick of creativity (MacDonald *et al* 2012:246). What counted among participants was not where they (and others) got it from, but where they took it to. Research here and within music more broadly shows how knowledge is not only shared but transformed through negotiation in the course of collaborative rehearsal (Littleton and Mercer cited in Cook 2012:452, Bruford 2009). The data lent weight to Vass’ (2004) interpretation of collaboration as the joint construction of new knowledge and creative collaboration as its transformation.



Within an emerging hierarchical distinction that associates compositional performance with greater creativity than functional performance, participants were intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to seek out significant difference in their performances. The data illustrating this were laid out in section 6.4.5 (Theme 17) and need be revisited only briefly here. AA3, for example, saw it in terms of an obligation: “It’s something you have to do, isn’t it?” (AA3 531). The origins of participants’ strong motivation to achieve, experience and communicate creativity in performance were not made explicit and can only be surmised. However, the anecdotal and experiential evidence addressing a pitched-instrument prejudice (section 4.2.2) supported the idea that drummers may need to assuage feelings of insufficiency or inferiority, to persuade others that they are necessary, that pitched and unpitched are mutually constituted. The extent to which these may be compensation mechanisms born of reaction to the prevailing pitched-instrument prejudice is an interesting question beyond the scope of this enquiry, which may be answered only with further research.

Most of the data on performance contexts (section 6.3) demonstrated convergence with Amabile’s Intrinsic Motivation Principle (Amabile 1996) which suggests that the intrinsic motivation involved in self-directed or shared performance might be seen as conducive to creativity. Concomitantly, the controlling extrinsic motivation associated with highly directed functional performance may be seen as detrimental to creativity. The enabling extrinsic motivation embedded within the close relationship of a benevolent leader who ‘allows me to be me’ may be seen as potentially conducive, “particularly if initial levels of intrinsic motivation are high” (Amabile cited in Collins and Amabile 1999:304).

### **7.3.6 Going further**

The idea of ‘going further’ in the addition, omission or transformation of something is prevalent throughout the creativity literature (Miell and Littleton 2004, Boden 1994, Csikszentmihalyi 1988, Sternberg *et al* 2004, Sawyer 2006). One aim of this research was to tease out commonalities as to what that ‘alchemical component’ might or could be. The reports from which Theme 18 emerged suggested that it was connected in some way to the development of an individual musical voice which might be used to contribute to and determine outcomes, and

thereby to communicate significant difference. This process was seen as one path to sonic differentiation; a way to rise above the clamour, identify the speaker and be heard. Any recombination or synthesis of past or current stylistic approaches of others was 'fair game' (AU 613) in the pursuit of this type of identity construction.

Participants tended to frame individuation as a sonic composite of what is said (content), the way it is said (expression), and the tone of the voice in which it is said (touch, feel and timbre). Some or all of these may be brought to bear or sublimated in performance, not least in accordance with the performer's perceived position on the FCC. Anecdotal evidence suggested that a recurring consideration was whether to settle for one's voice as currently constituted - after all people may not recognise you if you keep changing - or continue to find progressively unusual approaches to enable ever greater creative expression.

It is axiomatic of functional performance that individuals avoid imposing a personal approach or voice on the music unless otherwise directed. The question then arises as to how the functional practitioner may be considered creative if effectively unidentifiable. A cursory functional/compositional reading would suggest that only compositional performers are creative; that one has to have a voice before one can be 'heard' and assessed as creative. The issue was revealed, however, as being more nuanced, with creativity in functional performance framed in the 'making it work' of Theme 9, in the being 'sympathetic to any situation you might walk into [...]; to be musically 'creative enough to be able to walk into a situation and play exactly the right thing for the music' (AA3 453).

In sum, Descriptive Category 4 has focused on participant efforts to locate the something extra that most agree is required to establish significant communicable difference. What is it that matters? While under certain circumstances creativity may inhere in functional practice, most participants made bold statements about their performance practice along the lines of "it's not just..." It is not just building it up; it is making it work. It is not just keeping time; it is making it go. It is not just keeping some of it together; it is keeping all of it together. It is not just interfering; the right to interfere has to be earned first. Participants provided a fascinating insight into a constellation of ideas around what they do being 'more than' just keeping time, or other 'menial' functions. The fact that such an essential custodial function is seen as menial may be another manifestation of the pitched-instrument prejudice that, running deep in the culture, informs that attribution of creative meaning.

## **{b} Communication and assessment**

*Descriptive Category 5* assembled participant perceptions of the purpose or value of communication and the ways in which it is achieved. Viewed from a position which sees all effective music creativity as ultimately a collaboration between, at minimum, addresser and addressee, it follows that for music performance to be achieved something needs to be communicated by one to another. Communication of the variation or difference, it is argued, is a prerequisite for the attribution of creativity.

Within music communication studies, research with classical music performers indicates that the object of the exercise tends to be the communication of emotion to the non-performing listener (Juslin and Sloboda 2001, Juslin 2005, Lamont 2012). The data here, however, indicated that drummers framed their communication less in terms of emotion and more as an expression of significantly different experience. Everything the performer has done, lived, thought and performed up to and during the moment of performance constitutes the experience that is expressed (literally, pressed out) during the creative moment (Dewey 1934). As AA3 has it, it is “the moment where everything that’s about you comes out” (AA3 1077).

It is this element that the participants were asked to identify in their selections of tracks embodying their own creative expression of experience and this element that they mostly pointed to; the ‘something else’ that both adds value to the functional performance and embodies the significant difference between the functional and the compositional, the catalytic component to be communicated prior to creative assessment. The divergence here may have less to do with the differing classical/popular understandings of communication than the straightforward unpitched/pitched dichotomy. Extant research primarily involves expert performers on pitched instruments (Juslin 2005). While some headway has been made in the investigation of emotional expression within pitched-instrument classical music performance (see Juslin and Lindström 2003), further research in the area of the communication of emotion by performers on unpitched instruments would shed light on this under-researched area.

### 7.3.7 Attitudes to the receiver and reception

Audiences were seen as fickle, unreliable and possessing a lower level of listener expertise than co-performers. This echoed the anecdotal evidence from classical musicians who considered that “many of the audience cannot distinguish an excellent performance and a poor one” (Cottrell 2004:166). Most participants shared HT’s assessment of audiences as emotionally (and financially) invested in the performance event and thus favourably predisposed to like it: “You know what it’s like, people are generous, I feel, at concerts” (HT 443). As Gjedde and Ingemann (2008) noted, listeners to music use strategies to create meaning in relation to their personal agenda and identity and, as the inexperienced performer may soon come to realise, the meaning they make may be far from her or his meaning. These observations may in part explain why most participants privileged the co-performing listener over the non-performing listener as the appropriate judge of significant difference and the individual whose approbation they sought. Frith’s proposition that creativity is not just an action but the way the action is recognised and acknowledged (Frith 2012) receives support from the data underpinning Themes 19 and 20. Recognition and acknowledgment were valued by participants as indicators of successfully communicated action.

Audiences were nevertheless deemed, on balance, to be of greater help than hindrance in the construction of the action-goal of creative performance. Irrespective of the stance individual participants adopted to non-performing listeners, all acknowledged their collective centrality as powerful co-constructors of meaning in the reciprocal experience of performance. Perhaps counter-intuitively, participants professed a greater indifference to audience reception of their intrinsically-motivated compositional performance than of their extrinsically-motivated functional performance. One reason for this might be that, by its nature, the former is invested with greater sense of personal authorship and ownership; as such it is less available for external approval or critical reappraisal. Functional performance, on the contrary, was a matter of what Frank Zappa might call ‘industrial correctness’ (Zappa cited in Milkowski 1983:1). It was viewed as “very important that we get it right, put it that way” (AA3 351).

Lamont proposed that exploration of similar experiences in a wider sample of participants at different levels of musical achievement is necessary to investigate how important the audience is for providing the appropriate level of motivation for high quality performance experiences

(Lamont 2012:589). Findings here went some way towards an understanding of some dimensions of the performer/listener relationship at one level of expertise.

### **7.3.8 Intra-performer communication**

Intra-performer communication was assigned much importance within the data supporting Theme 20. The topic has been the subject of some research, particularly in the area of movement and collaboration (Davidson 2005, 2009)<sup>71</sup>. As performance moved along the FCC towards the compositional pole, the assumption appeared to be that individual co-performers needed less direction, or communication, of any kind. MacDonald and Wilson have noted the ability of jazz groups to innovate simultaneously with a virtual absence of verbal communication; a striking feat that has drawn research interest from several disciplines (MacDonald and Wilson 2006:59; see also Pinheiro 2010, Davidson 2005) and is convergent with the data here. Despite, or because of, its scarcity, intra-performer communication was highly valued as an important indicator of respect, recognition and awareness. Visual communication was seen as an equally important conveyor of meaning between co-performers and audience, confirming recent insights into the centrality of visual communication between performer and listener to the creative experience. Juslin points to existing research indicating that visual components of the performance can also make important contributions to the perceived expression of the music in live settings (Juslin 2005:388).

### **7.3.9 Attributing creativity**

*Descriptive Category 6* collated descriptions of the ways in which drummers distinguish between significant and insignificant action into Themes 21 and 22. The first addressed perceptions of personal creativity and the second sought meaning in the creative actions of self

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<sup>71</sup> A full engagement with the body in performance is beyond the scope of this study, but Davidson 2009 offers an overview of important insights in the context of the perception of musical intention and the possibilities for sharing and participation.

and others. As has been noted, if the analysis is sufficiently fine-grained every musical performance “is bound to differ from every other performance in some way, somewhere” (Clarke 2012:17). One way drummers appear to distinguish the significant from the insignificant is by interpreting the former as meaning-creating. Performing upside down may constitute difference, but the action is likely to create meaningfulness only for the individual or onlooker rather than appropriate observers, and may thus be attributed insignificance.

Participant assessments of significance and its possible loci revealed some divergence from the conceptions of both the exclusivist theories of Csikszentmihalyi (1988) and Arieti (1976), and the inclusivity of those such as Burnard (2012), Boden (1994) or Barrett (2012). The data indicated that participants preferred to frame their ‘everyday’ drummer creativity in terms of a symbiotic collaboration with another or others, the principal goal of which was to make the music work. While a small majority positioned creativity squarely at the centre of their music consciousness, a minority downplayed the centrality of the phenomenon and assigned it less meaning than might have been expected. Why might that have been?

The explanation appears to be in part cultural psychological. Anecdotally, the drummer seems to be among the most heavily encultured of popular music instrumentalists. The dominance of this culture influences the practitioner’s decision-making process. In the context of a broader culture that tends not to associate creativity with drummers, the data suggested that in practice, unsurprisingly, drummers do not prioritise creativity. From this perspective, drummers think not only as individuals and human beings, but as members of a particular community with distinctive *cultural* traditions that allow them to ascribe meaning to creative experience, and to circulate and exchange that meaning. Man and culture are in “mutual dependency”; there is no separation between culture and psyche (Glăveanu 2010b:158). They do things because they are drummers (Monson 1996).

As members of a community of practice whose principal listening tends to focus on the work of other members of the community, participants frequently measured and assessed significance against the normative practices of not only community elders and acknowledged experts but also those with the greatest reach, i.e. the most popular drummers. This emphasis on community is concordant with the line of thinking based on the work of Boesch, Wertsch, Wenger and Glăveanu which suggests that significance is attributed from within community. Cook notes research within both developmental studies and classical performance indicating that musical difference is significant “within a musical community whose participants - listeners as much as

performers - are highly sensitive to nuance, to the meaningful, negotiated shaping of the notes” (Cook 2012:457).

The data to hand indicated that participants characterised that musical community as comprising other drummers and co-performers as assessors of significance. A clear majority considered a positive assessment of their creativity by others in the domain to be important. Such an assessment was valued not only for pragmatic reasons to do with employment opportunities, commercial concerns and status, all of which impact upon dissemination of the product (i.e. the creative performance), but valued also for confirmation that one is heard and a state of Flow recognised. Assessment by the few within the domain, then, was sharply prioritised over that of the many without.

Few clear findings emerged from the data addressing the assessment of creativity in respect of its impact upon the domain. As has been demonstrated (section 2.6), expert drummers may be creative at the highest level, but that tends to be exceptional and unrepresentative of participant views of the phenomenon. Taking something and slightly altering it may have profound domain change capability; taking something and substantially altering it may serve only as a minimal contribution to the domain. Anecdotally, Max Roach’s choosing to play a few notes less per measure on the bass drum was a minor alteration that caused uproar; the shot that was heard around the world. Bernard Purdie’s hi-hat ‘barks’ behind singer Aretha Franklin in the 1970s crystallised a nascent hi-hat technique and reconceived the rôle and function of the hi-hat as a key instrument in the kit in a way that mattered to drummers. On the other hand, Gavin Harrison’s sophisticated rhythmic illusions (Harrison 1999) have radically altered notions of pulse and metre but have had slower adoption in the domain; in Hope Mason’s terms and within the context of the current discussion, they matter less. The speed of the adoption of the variation into the domain may be interpreted as an indicator of its attributed significance.

Gardner’s distinction between on the one hand, an individual’s high achievement in a domain, and on the other, his or her bringing about of change in the domain’s current structure, (a change which may have been the last in a series of small incremental steps), is apposite (Gardner 1993: 40-41). However his conclusion that the former may be ascribed to talent and the latter to creativity was not supported in the data here. Participants professed a much more inclusive approach than that, preferring to see creativity in almost all drum action, from the microstructure of performance to macro-level redefinitions of what it means to drum. Creativity, then, tended to be judged less by its contribution to the domain and more by its contribution to making things

work. Creative functional performance was broadly interpreted in terms of making things better, creative compositional performance in terms of doing things differently. The phenomenon of domain-changing creativity is thus sufficiently rare as to be only partially meaningful and of only marginal utility.

Attributions of creative worth within the arts are notoriously unstable, subject to multiple changes of assessment criteria within shifting socio-cultural landscapes (Sternberg and Lubart 1999, Sternberg *et al* 2004). Within music, producers, performers and receptors may shift their view over time, leading to a perception that, while important, assessment is beyond performer control. Anecdotally, several drummers have proposed that it can take years to forget the mistakes and errors made in the sometimes traumatic process of a recording session, the fruits of which having nevertheless been long-since assessed by others as creative. In recognition of the unverifiable, subjective nature of the self-assessment of one's own creativity and its dependency on the individual's personal definition of creativity, which may be more or less stringent (Lubart and Guignard 2004:52), the interview schedule used here deliberately addressed the topic only obliquely, preferring rather to solicit perceptions of performance practice.

Reflections on many years of high-level performance has been seen to offer a useful window into the way people conceptualise their own creativity (Kaufman and Baer cited in Sternberg *et al* 2004:52). Participants were asked to reflect upon and assess the actions and processes of self-selected others, in the expectation that such an approach might not only reveal fresh perspectives on participants' own endeavours, but also provide a yardstick by which to assess and measure significant difference. All were familiar with a wide variety of examples of the work of other drummers across a plethora of genres, eras and styles. Knowledge of the output of current and past practitioners not only certifies one as a member of the community, but potentially provides directions to unexplored territory.

The data indicated that the primary metric for creative assessment within the community of practice is both subjective and pragmatic. It asks 'have I heard it before?' and then, quite rapidly, 'how can I use it?' In this way, to be assessed as creative, the action must not only be novel but also functional or useful to the broader domain. Most expressed a desire to absorb, adopt or adapt something of these revered practitioners; some had already done so. This is entirely consistent with the dominant discourse in creativity theory (Boden 2004, Hope Mason 2003, Deliège and Wiggins 2006, Starko 2001).



Within the context of the current debate as to whether creativity should be assessed by the critical acclaim of experts or popularity with the masses, the data here strongly supported the former approach, with the added nuance that it is current practitioners who *ipso facto* are the appropriate assessors by virtue of their swift adoption of anything deemed new or useful to performance. If ‘difference’ was detected in their own or another’s performance, then that performance ‘mattered’ and was deemed thus to be creative, irrespective of any domain-changing potential. This is the sense in which ‘making it matter’ matters, and it is important because it demonstrates the strength of the opinions and actions of ‘other guys’, namely the gatekeepers of significance, the people for whom this matters most.

In sum, Analytic Category [C] ‘Making it Matter’ has focused on participant efforts to locate the something extra that most agree is required to establish significant communicable difference. What is different and does it matter? The most appropriate observer to answer those questions, participants suggested, is the individual practitioner. Analysis of these perceptions as to how expert drummers construct, communicate and assess significance difference offered substantial insight into the final three research sub-questions, restated in section 7.0.

## CHAPTER 8: Conclusions

### 8.1 Aims, goals and achievements

This chapter reviews the work that has been done and the extent to which it has achieved its aims and objectives. A range of views from action theory, cultural psychology and expert practitioners were synthesised to interpret perceptions of creativity and meaning in Western kit drummer performance. Creativity and cultural psychology models were tested and critiqued, but require extension or adaptation to cast a more focused light on the meaning of creative performance for drummers. Drawing together and developing the work of Csikszentmihalyi, Dewey, and Boesch, I argued that the construct of ‘significant action in context’ might not only provide the conceptual and methodological framework within which to begin analysis of this relationship of mind to cultural setting, but may also serve as the central determinant that establishes meaning in creative drummer performance.

Three new tools were fashioned to sharpen focus, reduce the substantial area of interest, and frame conceptual thinking. First, I drew a subjective subset of four key dimensions of creativity from the literature to form sure footings for a difference / selection / communication / assessment (DSCA) framework of performance creativity. The purpose of the construct was to frame and contextualise the process of creative performance within the specific domain of the Western kit drummer. Second, I offered a trio of artificial constructs to connect the drummer to the decision-making process: ‘functional performance’, ‘compositional performance’, and the ‘functional / compositional continuum’ (FCC). These constructs were useful in modelling the action contexts perceived as meaningful for the participants themselves. Third, I constructed an integrated model of the circulation of meaning (IMCM) to explain how drummer action generates lived experience, which informs meaning. Meaning forms a basis for possible change in practice. Findings offered broad support for this interpretation.

In pursuit of understanding of perception rather than objectively-determined facts, I adopted a qualitative interpretivist paradigm. Semi-structured interviews and autobiographical data of

expert or eminent practitioners were used to generate rich data. A provisional template (Appendix II) was drawn from four sources: the study's action-theoretical framework; *a priori* higher-level tentative themes that I wanted to address; my own experiential data; and pre-formulated hypotheses drawn from the literature. The data were analysed and interpreted according to the precepts of thematic analysis, expanded here to encompass both autoethnographic and phenomenographical components. My agency as researcher-participant was assumed throughout, and the importance of scholarly self-reflexivity highlighted.

While what governs the choices and actions of the Western kit drummer has occasionally been interrogated within the literature, the voices of drummers themselves have been less heard. Those whom one might imagine to have most to say on creative music performance, the eminent or the expert, have been heard even less. The aim here was thus to fill a gap by presenting data supporting further understanding within the broader domain of unpitched practitioners. Extrapolating from the line of thinking that suggests that the capacity for creative thought is the rule rather than the exception in human cognitive functioning (Treffinger 1995, Ward *et al* 1999:189) these data demonstrated that the capacity for creative action is similarly the rule rather than the exception in Western drum kit performance.

The emerging discipline of cultural psychology and more established understandings from social ethnography overlapped to form the disciplinary landscape; the immediate area of interest was the psychology of music performance. The objective of the study was to elaborate a cultural psychology of the Western kit drummer to better illuminate aspects of creativity and meaning in performance. An overdue study of the way expert drummers create and derive meaning might first, assist in a reappraisal of the power and place of creativity in our rhythmic culture; second, balance historical misunderstandings of the experience of creativity among a substantial subset of popular music instrumentalists; and finally, contribute to the growing understanding of the psychology and practice of music creativity. In so far as the findings below have added to our meagre understanding of popular music performance, the research will have substantially achieved its aims and goals.

## 8.2 Summary of findings

Findings showed that expert drummers generally seem to characterise creativity as making something, or causing someone to do something, an observation that gave rise to the three analytic meta-categories: [A] Making Meaning, [B] Making it Work, and [C] Making it Matter. As mature, peak-career performers, the participants enjoy an international status derived from the repeated attribution of creativity to their ‘products’ (i.e. performances), even though the acquisition of such an attribution may not necessarily have been the primary intent. The purpose rather, was to make the music work by making it swing or making it groove, often by making others comfortable. They want to make their performance better, or different. They want to make it matter, and make it mean something to themselves, to other drummers, and collaterally, to the listener. Indeed, an early desire, common among young musicians, was expressed anecdotally as wanting to ‘make it’; i.e. be successful. In one of its simplest characterisations, creativity is the act or process of making something new (Tafuri in Deliège and Wiggins 2006:135).

This thesis has attempted to capture a rounded picture of the expert Western kit drummer in his or her natural environment to show how s/he engages with the world of sound to create meaningful experience. Several of the insights revealed have not hitherto been considered in the music performance literature. While findings broadly concurred with the ethnographical and phenomenological work upon which the study builds (Berger 1999, Berliner 2004, Cottrell 2004, Monson 1996, Hytönen-Ng 2013), there was significant divergence from understandings of music performance within the Western classical tradition (Chaffin *et al* 2006, Juslin 2003, 2009, Williamon *et al* 2006, Pachet 2006). For example, meanings of creativity in performance, of how it is enacted and the extent to which it may be invoked; perceptions of perfection and conceptions of what it is that is to be communicated; all appear to drift substantially from understandings within popular music.

Expert popular instrumentalists do however, share some of the concerns of their classical counterparts; for example, the amount and quality of deliberate practice, the appropriate degree of expressive input, the relationship between control over outcomes and performance ‘wellness’, and the relationship with audiences. While anecdotal and experiential evidence can only suggest that greater performer control may lie within popular music rather than classical music

performance, the linear relationship between performer control and performer wellness was strongly supported in the current data.

In respect of creativity in drummer performance, principal findings showed that:

- Greatest creative satisfaction inheres in those performance contexts that can best accommodate and welcome expressive input and afford a sense of control of outcomes.
- Creativity tends to be seen not as a foundational concern, but rather something that may be attended to after foundational concerns have been addressed.
- A capacity for creative action is the rule rather than the exception.
- Expert drummers tend to privilege other drummers and co-performers over non-performers as the appropriate observers best placed to assess significant difference.
- Creativity is understood as both constrained by and achievable within all genres and styles.
- Greater technical control in music invention affords a greater number of possible options from which to select.
- The two most common pathways to individuation are a) the avoidance of what others are doing and b) the development of an individual voice.

In respect of meaning-making in drummer performance, findings included the following:

- Creative performance is embedded within a meaningful shared experience around collaboration and community.
- Creative meaning is conceptualised less in terms of changing the structure of the domain than in contributing to it.
- A small majority of participants place creativity squarely at the centre of their music consciousness. A substantial minority downplay the centrality of the phenomenon and assign it less meaning than might have been expected.
- The ‘making it work’ in appropriate performance is interpreted as meaningful action that occupies most participants most of the time.
- Creative meaning is derived less from the expression of emotion to a non-performer, more from the expression of experience to a co-performer.

- Within popular music ensembles, the drum kit is perceived as possessing a greater sonic facility to shape the music than other instruments. The drummer perceives herself or himself to possess the greatest power to affect outcomes.
- A pitched-instrument prejudice is an important constituent of the drum culture and its attendant psychology.

### **8.3 Contributions to the body of knowledge**

This exploration of the way drummers make things work, make things matter, and make sense of their creative performance has contributed to the immediate body of knowledge in three ways. First, in light of the proposition that perceptions of creativity and meaning within pitched-instrument classical music performance have only limited transference to a group of ‘unpitched’ popular music performers, the study has begun to fill a gap in the knowledge by constructing a more comprehensive picture of creative music performance as viewed by experts drummers.

Second, while no claim to originality is made in interpreting and drawing upon the works of others, the nuanced action-theoretical understanding of significant, mediated action-in-context presented here should have future value in helping to understand the meaning of creativity in music performance. Findings have justified the construction and application of three original conceptual tools (the DSCA and FCC constructs, and the IMCM) which may have utility in illuminating the creative behaviour of other pitched-instrument practitioners.

Third, the study of this community of practice in the round should promote a clearer understanding of the power and place of creativity in our rhythmic culture. Taken together, these insights represent a significant contribution through their potentially useful application to the wider body of knowledge.

### **8.4 Implications for theory**

Findings presented here have several implications for neighbouring disciplines, including but not limited to music education, developmental studies and the psychology of performance. Within

music education, I believe my work contributes to a fuller understanding of the creative process, illumination of which is of “significant importance to teachers and researchers in determining the ways in which teachers define and set targets for children in creative music-making in the classroom” (MacDonald *et al* 2006:293). The work may be used to help develop or improve a performance curriculum within popular music in which students may aspire to, and attain, even greater musical inspiration and creative individuality. Within music education, the ways in which people learn through creating is a central area of interest (Custodero 2012, Burnard, 2012, Barrett 2011); findings here may have implications for practice in this area. Finally, as has been noted, the linearity of the relationship between control of the dimensions of performance and wellness, a key concern within the discipline of the psychology of music, is given added weight here, but further nuance would be welcome.

## 8.5 Critical review

Reflective evaluation suggests that the limitations, challenges, strengths and weaknesses outlined in Chapter 1 and expanded in Chapter 5 are in need of some *post-hoc* reappraisal. The delimitations and assumptions that were deliberately built into the research design were outlined in section 1.6. One unanticipated limitation became apparent as the research progressed. While the sample cohort covered as broad an age range as possible, the youngest participant was already aged 34. These mature professionals’ perceptions of creative performance and the meanings they assigned to their actions in context were thus, broadly, shaped in a pre-digital environment. Post-digital, mainstream popular music appears to be increasingly unsupportive of the type and level of skills these digital immigrants evidenced. Further research with a younger cadre of digital natives might reveal different insights born from a different set of attitudes, skills and assessment mechanisms. If, as Cook states, “better practices of teaching [...] depend on better models of creativity” (Cook 2012:458) this study may have implications for the teaching of drummers through the application of certain of its findings.

In retrospect, the research challenges identified in section 1.5 proved to be overstated; in part mitigated by a selection process that prioritised the widest possible range of ethnicities, styles and contexts to capture as broad a picture as possible of contemporary drummer performance. Outside of their chosen profession, the only thing participants appeared to have in common was

their expertise. Constant attention to the responsibilities and obligations of a complete-member researcher in my view proved sufficient to balance the emic and etic positions. The harder challenge was to know whether a participant had knowingly or unknowingly misinterpreted or misrepresented their experiences. While prior research has found that performers possess an adequate vocabulary for the expression of music and emotions, and can accurately describe performance situations (Lamont 2012:579), the researcher can only explore the kinds of experiences participants choose to report and any commonalities in those experiences (Lamont 2012).

In this research design, the veracity of these reports necessitates measurement against and comparison to my own lived experience in a subjective attribution; a fact which points to the high degree of subjectivity in this type of research. The subjective relativism at the core of this study assumes that what is said to be ‘the way things are’ is really just ‘the sense we make of them’ (Crotty 1998), which is why I have been assiduous in teasing out the sense people make of things. Individual drummers proved to have different accounts of their lived experience of creativity, in which truth and reality were individually defined and subjectively assessed. The positivist approach attempts to measure the output of humans objectively with the goal, in this context, of directly assessing the performer. Unfortunately, this tends to exclude “the most important and interesting aspects of creativity - mainly subjective ones” (Pachet 2006:347).

The particular strength of the research lies in the unusual level of access afforded me by a group of people who have not hitherto been researched. Prior studies of music performance seldom gained access to the lived experience of internationally known peak-career expert performers. As researcher-participant, I knew what questions to ask and was able to contextualise and interpret responses within the broader music culture into which I have long since been enculturated. This process came with the caveats drawn out in section 1.5, and they need not be rehearsed again here.

The decision to anonymise participants was amply rewarded with frankness and a level of honesty that might not have been forthcoming had the data been attributed. Participants’ willingness and enthusiasm for a topic which most considered valuable and under-researched spoke to an underlying preoccupation with it. However, while interviewing a small sample in depth had the advantages outlined by Smith *et al* (2009), it was impossible to pre-determine the quantity and richness of the data gathered. Findings from some 100,000 words were transcribed and analysed in six Descriptive Categories, but space restrictions necessitated some omissions.



On reflection, the interview schedule might have asked fewer, narrower questions and probed for answers in even greater depth.

It was not felt appropriate to return to the participants for secondary interviews. An alternative methodology would have allowed participant access to the original transcripts and room for comment. My inexperience as a researcher argued for the clearest possible design with the least room for error. The unavailability of the resources necessary to process further data was taken less as a problem, more as a creative restraint. Finally, further research might defray the shortcomings of the IMCM, presented in section 3.4.

## **8.6 Implications for further research**

Future studies in Western music performance must distinguish between classical and other-than-classical traditions, the two having drifted sufficiently far apart as to warrant separate investigation. The extent to which ‘unpitched’ practitioners in popular music differ in perception from their pitched-instrument classical colleagues with regard to the topics of creativity and meaning is substantial but poorly understood. The degree of transference of research from the latter to the former, and within both traditions, appeared to be sufficiently low as to call for further work to be done in this area. Further research might seek to:

- 1) recalibrate existing creativity models to tell us more about creativity in the context of the ordinary drummer. An adapted, expanded model that accounts for a lower-level personal creativity that neither seeks nor demands domain change, and which foregrounds the rôle of the socio-cultural milieu in which the creative action takes place would provide a more nuanced insight.
- 2) reveal different insights born from a different set of attitudes, skills and assessment mechanisms exhibited by a younger cadre of digital natives than those of the digital immigrants examined here, with implications for the teaching of drummers.
- 3) explicate creativity and meaning within the music performance of non-expert Western kit drummers.

4) use these findings to develop instruments for guiding quantitative work to investigate the more measurable attributes of popular music creative performance.

In summary, this programme of research has sought to establish first, that drummers achieve creativity in music performance by the effective communication of significant difference; and second, that creativity is both experienced and assigned meaning through significant action in context. In other words, drummers find creative meaning in making it work and making it matter. They may, however, be a special case in the sense that the 'making it work/matter' is often done at the functional polarity of the FCC in a somewhat covert, 'invisible' manner, anonymous in terms of authorship, and constrained by the dimensions of the drum cultural psychology as described above.

The thesis emerged organically from an ongoing sense of needing to know, or at least understand better, the extent to which cultural psychology might be a principal determinant of what drummers do, and how elements of action theory might be used to explain it. The work should both contribute functionally to drummer practice and illuminate collaborative and creative interactional processes in music and other artistic spheres.

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Roach, M. (1966) *Big Sid* taken from the album *Drums Unlimited*. Album. New York: Atlantic.

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# Appendices

## Appendix I (a): Blues for Big Sid

Transcription Munson 2012: used by permission

**Blues For Big Sid**

The score is written for a Drum Kit in 4/4 time. It consists of ten staves of music, each starting with a measure number on the left. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and triplet markings (indicated by a '3' below the notes). Brackets and arcs connect groups of notes across measures, indicating motifs. Motif A is a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and rests. Motif B is a more complex pattern involving sixteenth notes and rests. Motif C is described as a transition to motive truncation, fragmentation, and note value alteration. The score shows how these motifs are repeated, varied, and fragmented throughout the piece.

Drum Kit

5

10

15

19

23

27

32

37

41

*A*

*B*

*C - Transition to motive truncation, fragmentation, and note value alteration*

*Fragmentation of A and B*

*Continued transitory material*

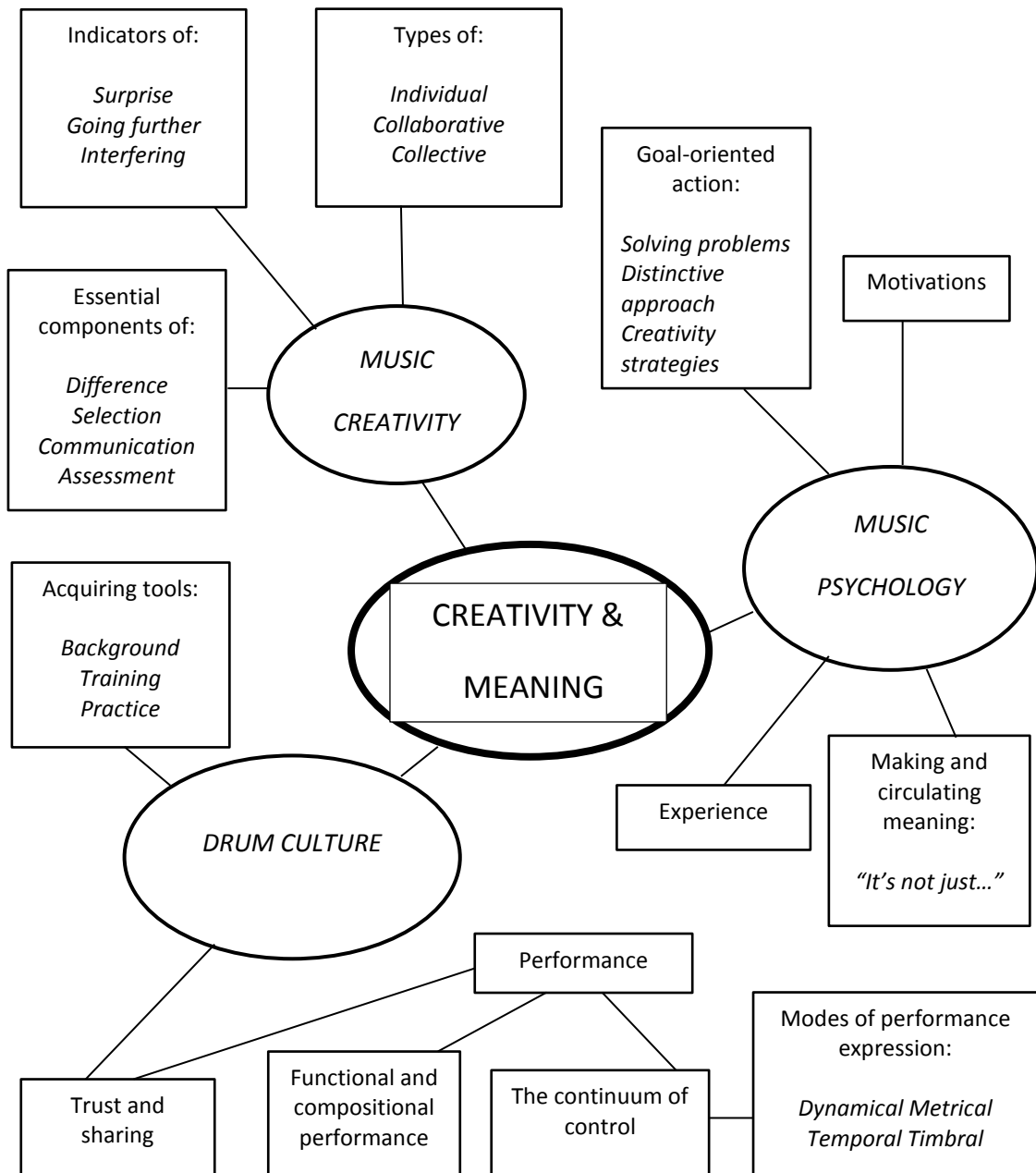
*Fragmentation of A motive*

*Fragmentation of B motive*





## Appendix II: Initial template



## **Appendix III: Topic areas [TA]**

Interview schedule questions were loosely grouped to cover the following Topic Areas:

### **TA1: Family and musical background [Q1] of the interview schedule]**

This was intended to be introductory, ‘easy’ and factual.

**Sub topics:** Parental involvement / formal and informal music education / practice schedule.

### **TA2: Choice and control [Q2-3 of the interview schedule]**

The sub-topics here included issues of choice and control over performance parameters. My conception of creativity in music performance foregrounded the ability to select from possible options as an essential component - hence the ‘Continuum of Control’. ‘Functional’ practice at one pole of the continuum was theorised as embodying less control and less creative intent than ‘compositional practice’ at the other. Drummers were construed as predominantly functional or predominantly compositional practitioners.

**Sub-topics:** Constraints on choice / selection / constraints of working for a leader (but see also under collaboration /creativity in own work).

### **TA3: Creativity and self [Q4-9 of the interview schedule]**

**Sub topics:** Motivation / development of an individual voice / conceptions, descriptions, definitions and understandings of the meaning of creativity / composition.

### **TA4: Creativity and collaboration [Q10]**

To what extent does collaborative creativity enable and give meaning to individual creativity? Is creativity something that occurs on its own or in concert with others?

**Sub topics:** Playing with others as game-raising.

**TA5: Consideration of creativity in own work [Q11-13]**

The deliberately restricted choice of examples forced the participants to be selective in considerations of past work. Had their creativity allowed them to understand something they had not previously understood, or helped them to be more creative in future performance? Focusing on actual examples made responses not only less vague but arguably easier to verbalise.

**TA6: Consideration of creativity in work of others [Q14]**

Deliberately restricted choice of examples, again, encouraged selectivity. Interest here lay in convergence or divergence in the emblematic work of previous or contemporary practitioners.

**TA7: Reflection on the changing environment in which to enact creativity [Q15]**

Implications of the arrival of the digital age upon human performance. Multiple ripples out from this into the ecology of drummer creativity in the digital age.

**Sub topics:** Implications of the homogenisation of tempo and dynamics / stylistic fragmentation / use of computer v. use of acoustic kit etc.

**TA8: Performance [Q16-17]**

**Sub topics:** Playing with others / ramifications of various types of audience reaction upon performance creativity / attitudes to the listenership.

**TA9: Reflection on meaning and chance to add [Q18-19]**

What does creativity mean to you / how do notions of creativity impact upon performance? This was a chance to add any aspect that may have been overlooked.

**TA10: Participation in the interview [Q20-21]**

How did the participant feel about the interview process?

## **Appendix IV: Interview schedule**

Preliminaries included a reminder that was the participant's personal experience that was being sought, from their point of view; what sense s/he makes of it, and how if at all that meaning informed action. There were no right or wrong answers. S/he was free to withdraw from the interview at any time.

### **1 How did you come to be a drummer?**

This 'gateway' question addresses multiple issues surrounding the choice of instrument, degrees of parental support and encouragement, formal and informal learning and training, attitudes and actualities of practice. It is intended to shed light on the manner and extent to which appropriate skills and tools are acquired and musical identity constructed.

### **2 Is it important to your creativity to have choice and control over what you play?**

Issues of choice, selection and control are at the core of the continuum of control between functional and compositional practice.

### **3 If and when you have choice and control, how do you decide what you play?**

From what raw materials does the autonomous practitioner begin to construct significant action?

### **4 Turning now to how you think about yourself, do you consider yourself creative?**

[Probe: what, if anything, does creativity mean to you?]

### **5 How important is it to you to consider yourself creative?**

### **6 What motivates you to be creative?**

### **7 How important to you is it that others identify you as creative?**

To what extent do the opinions of others count in the enabling or disabling of potentially creative action?

### **8 How important to you is it to develop your own distinctive voice, and work with or resist the influence of others?**

This question addresses the perceived requirement of developing (or obscuring) a distinctive approach, ‘standing out from the crowd’.

**9 Turning now to composing or writing, could you tell me something about how and why you came to do this?**

To what extent did the individual begin writing or band-leading as a deliberate strategy to either a) control the musical environment in which his or her distinctive musical voice might develop and grow, or b) gain status and control, i.e. to become ‘musicians’ or c) because s/he or others saw drumming as inherently or insufficiently creative? When did it become a decision?

**10 Can you say something about collaborating with others, and how, if at all, that might determine your understanding of creativity?**

To what extent does the collaborative give meaning to the individual? To what extent is creativity construed by this participant as embodied in the individual or the collaborative? Is there a sense in which creativity is enacted in ‘the space between’; self /other, orthodoxy/ iconoclasm, or, from a practitioner’s perspective, the space *between* the notes?

**11 Tell me a little about your selections of creativity in your own work.**

This request is designed to enlighten a set of issues about their performance process. Had the participant come to understand something about this music (or himself or herself) in a way that hadn’t been understood before? Had something new emerged in the approach to the music? Had learned something that would help you to be more creative or original in future performance?

**12 Is there is any thread running through these examples, something they have in common that enabled your creativity?**

The intention here is the reconstruction of experience.

**13 What is it that makes you describe what you experienced in these particular examples as ‘creativity’ rather than something else?**

**14 Could you name three drummers, living or dead, whom you consider creative, and why you consider them so?**

Here the question seeks looks for participant convergence or divergence on previous practitioners whose work may be considered emblematic of creativity. How does meaning

circulate within the domain? It also aims to elicit insight into the participant's own practice by contrast or comparison.

**15 Have any changes in the drum scene since you started made creativity more or less possible?**

Has the arrival of the digital age made creativity more or less possible? Multiple ripples run out from this into the ecology of drummer creativity: the heterogeneity or homogenisation of tempo and dynamics, stylistic fragmentation, the use of music technology, digital v. analogue drum its and more.

**16 How do you see the audience or listener in respect of your creativity?**

What attitude is taken to the listener – co-performers, paying audience or other receivers? Are they seen as a help, a hindrance or essential partners in a co-creation?

**17 Can you tell me a bit about what you like or dislike about performing in public?**

The latent question here concerns the degree of importance attributed to performance. How important is playing in public to practitioners sense of themselves as drummers?

**18 Given everything you've said so far about creativity in your work, what does it mean to you?**

This asks participants to reflect on meaning. How do they construct notions of creativity and assess potentially significant action in themselves and others?

**19 That's just about all the questions I've got. Is there anything else on the subject that we haven't covered?**

This question allows the participant to lead into areas that may have been overlooked.

**20 Just about the interview itself and how it felt: what have been the positives and perhaps negatives involved in taking part?**

**21 Do you think taking part has had, or might have in the future, any effect on the way you might think of creativity in your drumming, or drumming in general?**

## Appendix V: Participants' biographical data

Identifier	Biographical data	Most creative drummers	Cultural / geographical locus
[1] S.I.	<p><b>Israeli-British male. Born: 1969. Age at interview: 44. Active in the profession: &gt; 25 years.</b></p> <p>A fiercely committed jazz drummer, band-leader and composer S.I. began his career in 1990. Alongside multiple credits as a side-man on jazz dates for others, he has written, directed and produced seven CDs of original material over some fifteen years.</p>	<p>[These names requested in a follow up email. 24:04:14]</p> <p>Elvin Jones Gary Husband Jack DeJohnette Jim Keltner Terry Bozzio</p>	European
[2] A.A.	<p><b>Anglo-American male. Born: 1960. Age at interview: 53. Active in the profession: &gt;30 years.</b></p> <p>A.A.'s career began in 1978, since when he has toured and worked globally and steadily for internationally celebrated leaders in rock and jazz. As a band leader and composer, A.A. has five critically acclaimed CDs and he has written music for other jazz and rock musicians and for television. His primary experience is in rock groups, jazz groups and drum duets.</p>	<p>Jim Keltner Terry Bozzio Vinnie Colaiuta Steve Jordan</p>	North American
[3] A.A.2	<p><b>British male. Born: 1964. Age at interview: 49. Active in the profession: &gt; 30 years.</b></p> <p>AA2 is a drummer/producer/composer and a Professor at two prestigious London Music Academies. His ability to traverse musical styles that include jazz, rock, rhythm'n'blues, funk, pop and classical music has enabled him to work as a London-based session musician with internationally-known names in the music business. His credits include radio and TV commercials, motion picture soundtracks and performances on countless albums with artists from around the world. Alone among the participants he has no commercial releases under his own name.</p>	<p>Philly Joe Jones Jack DeJohnette Tony Williams Steve Gadd</p>	European

[4] A.A.3	<p><b>British male. Born: 1964. Age at interview: 50. Active in the profession: &gt;30 years.</b></p> <p>Primarily a jazz drummer on multiple recordings for other leaders, AA3 teaches and records under his own direction, two albums to date. His activity is principally in Europe rather than North America. He has recently completed a run in a London West End show, a somewhat different discipline.</p>	<p>Joey Baron Tony Williams Jack DeJohnette Ringo Starr Max Roach Zigaboo Modeliste</p>	European
[5] I.L.	<p><b>African-American female. Born: 1959. Age at interview: 55. Active in the profession: &gt; 30 years.</b></p> <p>I.L. has been for many years a stadium-level rock drummer as a ‘day- job’ and a prolific leader of her own jazz ensembles ‘on the side’. She has numerous credits with others, and eight album recordings as a leader.</p>	<p>Art Blakey Elvin Jones Tony Williams</p>	North American
[6] H.T.	<p><b>Norwegian male. Born: 1972. Age at interview: 42. Active in the profession: &gt; 20 years.</b></p> <p>This participant is a jazz musician and composer, known from more than 60 albums and much collaboration with internationally acclaimed musicians worldwide. In the way of jazz musicians, he is simultaneously in several collectives drawing on a wide group of primarily European players. He has a distinguished record as composer or co-composer of multiple commissioned works, and he teaches at a national conservatory. Of all the participants, H.T. is the most versed in solo improvised performance.</p>	<p>Jon Christensen Tony Oxley Elvin Jones</p>	European



[7] A.U.	<p><b>Italian-American male. Born: 1980. Age at interview: 34. Active in the profession: &gt; 14 years.</b></p> <p>Conceptual synthesist and youngest participant in the study. Of all the participants, A.U. has most successfully connected the rhythms of the community elders from bebop through hip-hop to the sine-waves and oscillators of the gaming generation. A prolific touring musician and recording artist, he has released four titles under his own direction, and approximately another 20 in conjunction with others.</p>	Jim Black Jeff Ballard	North American
[8] E.R.	<p><b>Anglo-American male. Born: 1954 Age at interview: 60. Active in the profession: &gt; 42 years.</b></p> <p>ER is a jazz drummer and composer who has been a session drummer, recording and touring with many famous jazz and rock artists. Unusually, he has rare experience of performing in the modern classical idiom. He also produces teaching materials, such as books, videos, and online content. E.R. is the oldest participant in the study.</p>	Elvin Jones Burnard Purdie Paul Motian	North American
[9] Y.O.	<p><b>British male. Born: 1969. Age at interview: 45. Active in the profession: &gt; 25 years.</b></p> <p>Y.O is a British drummer, bandleader, session musician and composer. He has played on over 60 albums by others, and produced five ‘solo’ albums, primarily in the jazz vein. He has also performed and interpreted music by classical composers at one end of the spectrum and rhythm ‘n’ blues artists at the other.</p>	Roy Haynes Tony Williams Bill Bruford	North American

## Appendix VI: Transcription protocol

Removals: less than a sentence [...]  
more than a sentence [...]

Pause: less than two seconds ...  
more than two seconds ....

Interviewee significant mannerisms: square brackets [laughs]

Interviewee short interjections: round brackets (uh-huh)

Interviewer significant mannerisms: *italicised square brackets [laughs]*

Interviewer short interjections: *italicised round brackets (uh-huh)*

Interviewer text: *all italics*

## **Appendix VII: An example of the coding protocol**

### Sample analytic category:

- Making it Work

### Description of this analytic category:

- This category addresses the nature and dimensions of performance action whose goal is the achievement of significant difference. This category originally arose from answers to Q9 and Q10.

### Sample descriptive category (lower level):

- Performance contexts

### Description of this category:

- This category indexes the principal contexts in which participants perform, and situates references to creativity in both modes of performance (functional and compositional) within the relevant context.

### Emerging theme:

- Theme 12: ‘Allowing me to be me’: performing with a leader

### Data extract and surrounding analysis:

In the following vignette, IL’s understanding of the different interpretive requirements as between the recording of a song in a studio in front of a handful of people and the live performance of the same song in front of tens of thousands did not accord with that of the group’s rock-star leader:

... we were playing parts (*oh, yeah*). You were playing the part that was on the record, and for me, as we went along I would add little things here and there and improvise some stuff there because what's on a record, to me, doesn't always translate, firstly to what's appropriate for a live situation. You might need to really fire something up at a certain point, much more than it is on the record, or you might need a different feel here or there, so for me I would temper that to what I thought was necessary at the moment (IL 112).

In this stadium-rock example, the leader has decided that the live rendition has drifted too far from the recorded artefact, irrespective of the drummer's perception that what is on the record "doesn't always translate" without adjustment. The drummer is being 'too creative'. The tension between the demand of 'live' and 'studio' is resolved in the interest of 'making it work': "he might say to me or to all of us 'hey, let's get back to what worked on the record'" (IL 123). From the leader's perspective, IL's inappropriate interference caused sufficient disruption as to jeopardise the trust that was between them. From IL's perspective, her accommodation of his instructions underlines her professionalism, re-establishes trust and avoids further confrontation. The incident further demonstrates the subtle and unspoken shifts of trust, power and emphasis to be negotiated in different performance contexts. The notion of appropriate performance is examined in depth in Theme 13 (section 6.4.1).

## **Appendix VIII: Initial list of Descriptive Categories used to index meaning units**

### 1 FAMILY AND MUSICAL BACKGROUND

- 1.1 10,000 hours and issues surrounding
- 1.2 Constraints on practice
- 1.3 Creative expression
- 1.4 Early successes, disappointments
- 1.5 Fun, luck, happy coincidence
- 1.6 Heroes and influences
- 1.7 Learning training education
- 1.8 Parental support
- 1.9 Persistence, determination
- 1.10 Practice regime
- 1.11 Problems and complexities
- 1.12 Proper instrument
- 1.13 Turning points
- 1.14 Unusual, strange, different
- 1.15 Why drums? Early attractions

### 2 CHOICE AND CONTROL

- 2.1 Acquiring and using tools
- 2.2 Change and transformation
- 2.3 Choosing, selecting, deciding
- 2.4 Compositional drummer
- 2.5 Creative strategies
- 2.6 Creativity unwelcome
- 2.7 'Fair game'
- 2.8 Genres
- 2.9 Going further
- 2.10 In the moment
- 2.11 Technical capacity and virtuosity
- 2.12 Trust
- 2.13 Value and effect of musical contribution
- 2.14 What drummers do
- 2.15 Work v. play

### 3 CREATIVITY AND SELF

- 3.1 Allowing, inviting, bringing, surrendering
- 3.2 Assessment and locus of own creativity
- 3.3 Circumstances enabling or disabling creativity
- 3.4 Constraints on creativity
- 3.5 Creative impulse
- 3.6 Development of personal voice
- 3.7 Discipline
- 3.8 Identity - importance of others identifying you as creative
- 3.9 Inadequacies
- 3.10 Motivation to be creative
- 3.11 Obligations, responsibilities and excuses

- 3.12 Problems and obstacles
- 3.13 Surprise
- 3.13 What's needed - creativity in drumming
- 3.14 Who or what is the music for?
- 3.15 Why and how do you compose?

#### 4 CREATIVITY AND COLLABORATION

- 4.1 Being 'offered creativity'
- 4.2 Comfortable, uncomfortable, fear of failure
- 4.3 Commercial distinguished from creative
- 4.4 Creativity in compositional performance
- 4.5 Creativity in functional performance
- 4.6 Degrees of collaborative creativity
- 4.7 Drummer knows best
- 4.8 File sharing and creativity
- 4.9 Functional / compositional dyad
- 4.10 Interference
- 4.11 Working for a leader
- 4.12 Working under direction.
- 4.13 Working with others
- 4.14 Working with producers

#### 5 CONSIDERATION OF CREATIVITY IN OWN WORK

- 5.1 Why are these choices creative?
- 5.2 Connecting thread 1
- 5.3 Creative process
- 5.4 Creativity enhancing understanding or learning in own work
- 5.5 Genuine self, natural
- 5.6 Leaving your mark
- 5.7 Performing alone
- 5.8 Working as a leader

#### 6 CONSIDERATION OF CREATIVITY IN WORK OF OTHERS

- 6.1 Being themselves, genuine
- 6.2 Connecting thread 2
- 6.3 Difference - a question of degree
- 6.4 Drums as sports
- 6.5 Influences
- 6.6 Other people's creative abilities, strategies and processes
- 6.7 Unaware of creativity
- 6.8 Why are these choices creative?

#### 7 THE CHANGING ECOLOGY. REFLECTIONS ON THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH TO ENACT CREATIVITY.

- 7.1 Click track as tool
- 7.2 Creative use of music technology
- 7.3 Current ecology
- 7.4 Heritage, lineage, cultural significance

7.5 Implications of music technology

7.6 The old days

## 8 PERFORMANCE

8.1 Attitude to audience or listener

8.2 Constraints of place

8.3 Environment affects content

8.4 Ethical, aesthetic and moral imperatives and constraints

8.5 Improvisatory and pre-determined creativity

8.6 Likes or dislikes about performing in public

8.7 Live v. recorded

8.8 Performance aspects, place, touch, feel, dynamics, tempo, metre, timbre

8.9 Self-worth validated by audience

8.10 Status

8.11 'Successful' performance

## 9 REFLECTIONS ON MEANING AND CHANCE TO ADD

9.1 Chance to add

9.2 Creativity as freedom

9.3 Looking for creativity

9.4 Reflection on meaning

## 10 PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERVIEW

## Appendix IX: Glossary

*Art Blakey*: American drummer (1919-1990).

*Baby Dodds*: Warren 'Baby' Dodds, American drummer (1898-1959).

*Bernard Purdie*: American drummer (1939- ).

*Billy Cobham*: Panamanian-American drummer and band-leader (1944- ).

*'Blasticks'*: strikers that are softer than sticks, but harder than brushes. They play like a stick but produce a soft and full sound.

*Bob Mintzer*: American tenor-saxophonist and band-leader (1953 - ).

*Carlos Vega*: American drummer (1957-1998).

*Chair*: position held in a jazz group, as in 'the saxophone chair', or 'the drum chair'.

*'Chameleon'*: track from Herbie Hancock featuring the funk style of drummer Harvey Mason.

*Charleston*: popular American dance of the 1920s.

*Chick Corea*: American jazz pianist (1941- ).

*Chick Webb*: American drummer (1905-1939).

*Chico Hamilton*: American drummer and band-leader (1921-2013).

*Chart*: written instrumental part.

*Chops*: technical ability.

*Chris Dave*: American drummer and band-leader (1968- ).

*Crush or crushed roll*: drum rudiment of military origin.

*Click or click track*: any type of automated metronome, typically played to the drummer through headphones and designed to keep him or her in time.

*Clinic*: technical display, demonstration or workshop.

*Clock-time*: accurate tempo measurement, usually computer- or machine-generated.

*Comp, comped*: derived from 'accompany' or 'accompanied' (another musician).

*D.C.I.*: U.S. Company specialising in the manufacture of instructional drum videos.

*Elvin*: Elvin Jones, American drummer and band-leader (1927-2004).

*'Feels Good to Me / One of a Kind'*: the researcher's first two albums as a drummer-leader.



*Fill*: either a noun (a fill) or a verb (to fill); a short musical passage to sustain rhythmic propulsion during a pause in the music, frequently linking one section or phrase to another.

*Flam accent*: a rudimental sticking pattern.

*Jack*: Jack DeJohnette, American drummer (1942- ).

*Gadd*: Steve Gadd, American drummer (1945- ).

*GarageBand*: a digital audio workstation and music sequencer that can record and playback multiple tracks of audio.

*Gear*: equipment.

*Han Bennick*: Dutch drummer (1942- ).

*Harvey Mason*: American drummer (1947- ).

*Head*: A drumhead or drum skin is a membrane, now typically synthetic, stretched over one or both of the open ends of a drum.

*'Heritage' rock*: a US radio-format that features artists who focus on their past achievements or recorded 'heritage'.

*Jay McShann*: American band-leader (1919-2006) most associated with the Kansas City sound of the 1940s.

*Joe Bergamini*: noted local American drum teacher.

*John Bonham*: British drummer with Led Zeppelin (1948-1980).

*John Riley*: American drum teacher, musician (1954- ).

*John (J.R.) Robinson*: much-lauded American studio drummer (1954 - ).

*'K' cymbal*: a grade or type of cymbal produced by the Zildjian Company and much favoured by the drum masters.

*'Laying out'* in music performance: not playing.

*Lead-sheet*: a form of music notation that specifies the essential elements of a popular song: the melody, lyrics and harmony.

*Lick (noun)*: a short pre-prepared phrase or pattern.

*Levon Helm*: American drummer and vocalist with 'The Band' (1940-2012).

*Max Roach*: American drummer and band-leader associated with the bebop style (1924-2007).

*M.D.*: Musical Director.

*Mel Lewis*: American drummer and band-leader (1929-1990).

*Messengers*: abbreviation of 'The Jazz Messengers', Art Blakey's long-standing group.

*Miles*: Miles Davis, American trumpeter (1926-1991).

*Mike Manieri*: American vibraharpist - leader of group 'Steps Ahead' (1938- ).

*Moog*: Robert Moog, inventor of the Moog synthesiser.

*Neil Peart*: Canadian drummer, lyricist with the group 'Rush' (1952- ).

*Pad*: a 'bed' of sustained chords fleshing out the sound under the melody line, typically on a synthesiser in pop music. In a different context, also refers to the instrumentalist's printed music for a show e.g. the 'drum pad'.

*Philly*: 'Philly' Jo Jones, American drummer (1923-1985).

*Pre-set*: a pre-configured synthesiser or electronic drum patch available for instant recall.

*Pro-Tools*: a digital audio workstation widely used in the audio industries for recording and editing.

*Rhodes*: a type of electric piano.

*Ronnie Scott's*: a London jazz club.

*Roy*: Roy Haynes, American drummer and band-leader (1925- ).

*Ride*: the ride cymbal, upon which, post 1940, the rhythmic continuum generally is kept.

*Set*: an uninterrupted block of performance for popular musicians, who might play 2 or 3 'sets' a night.

*Seth MacFarlane*: American actor, movie director, singer-songwriter (1973- ).

*Shelly*: Shelly Manne, American drummer (1920-1984).

*Shred, shredding*: to play many notes very fast in a display of technical prowess.

*Sibelius*: music writing computer software package.

*Situation*: in this context has the meaning of a performance situation - the socio-musical environment around somebody's band, ensemble or recording session.

*Song*: in US musician parlance, this typically refers to the music under discussion, irrespective of whether or not it embodies any singing.

*Sock-cymbal*: early name for the pedal operated hi-hat cymbals.

*Subs*: abbreviation of 'sub-woofer loudspeakers' dedicated to the reproduction of low-pitched audio frequencies.

'*Trading fours*': in jazz performance, trading fours usually occurs after each musician has soloed, and involves alternating four-bar segments with the drummer.

*Turnaround*: see ii – v – 1.

*Tony*: Tony Williams, American drummer and band-leader (1945-1997).

*Vince Mendoza*: American arranger, composer, conductor (1961- ).

*Vinnie*: Vinnie Colaiuta, American drummer (1956- ).

*Weckl*: Dave Weckl, American drummer and band-leader (1960- ).

*'Wide open'*: in respect of drum-tuning, the drums are left un-dampened.

*ii – v – I*: jazz musician's shorthand for a common harmonic device.