

‘Four forms of co-creativity’: A framework for the analysis of artistic research as musical composition

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ABSTRACT: This article presents a new framework entitled ‘Four Forms of Co-creativity’ for the musical analysis of artistic (or practice) research projects involving co-creative activities with community participants to reveal the socially contingent properties of such activities. More specifically, this article details a research project involving a series of collaborative workshops with the Leeds Male Voice Choir (LMVC) to develop materials for a community opera. This process is captured through an ethnographic account of the workshops in conjunction with audio recordings and notated transcriptions of vocal improvisations conducted during the workshops. Together with a historical and social account of LMVC, the framework is then deployed to analyse the various levels of co-creativity present in the workshop activities and their effects on the ensuing passages of operatic dialogue. The article then considers the wider application of the framework to other forms of musical composition and performance possible within contemporary societies.

KEY WORDS: Co-creativity, ethnography, community opera, choral improvisation, composition.

The purpose of this article is to present a new framework entitled ‘Four Forms of Co-creativity’ that was developed for the musical analysis of artistic (or practice) research projects involving co-creative activities with community participants to reveal the socially contingent properties of such activities. More specifically, this framework was devised to dissect a research project involving a collaboration between myself (acting as a composer) and the Leeds Male Voice Choir (LMVC) to develop materials for a community opera.¹ However, the framework

¹ This represents one case-study of three for a PhD doctoral research project. The other two studies have been published as

developed to provide detailed consideration of this research project has the potential for wider application in musical composition as artistic research more generally. In the first section consideration is given to ‘co-creativity’ as a concept and the necessity of artistic research to capture and analyse its processes. The second section then details how the new framework was developed from previous examples of community opera composition, together with pre-existing models of collaborative relationships in musical creativity. In the third section the methodological approach to data gathering in the research project with LMVC is outlined, involving a combination of ethnographic techniques with audio recordings and other materials gathered during the research project. The fourth section proceeds to detail the research project that took place with LMVC over three workshops to co-create materials for a community opera that incorporates the choir, followed by an analysis of the research project using the new framework. In the final section some conclusions about the research project are made leading to a discussion concerning the potential broader application of the framework to musical composition as artistic research.

Co-creativity and artistic research

‘Co-creativity’ is a concept that goes by many names with different emphases, such as ‘group creativity’, ‘collaborative creativity’ and ‘distributed creativity’ (Sawyer, 2003; Miell & Littleton, 2004). These terms all reflect a general shift of attention away from research that focuses on musical creativity tied to individual composers towards a focus on how creative acts may be collective and contingent on the interaction between creators and performers and the social context of such interactions. ‘Distributed creativity’, for example, has been defined as an activity ‘in which collaboration and improvisation enable and constrain creative processes in contemporary music’ (Rink, 2017, p. iii). However, research into musical creativity generally, and within contemporary composition more specifically, are not the only fields that have witnessed this turn away from individual to collective creativity. Similar shifts have occurred in pedagogical music research and in the field of musical performance studies (Elliott, 1995; McPherson & Welch, 2012; Rink, 2015; Rink et al., 2017). Additionally, community music is an area of both practical and theoretical activity that since its inception has placed an emphasis on collaboration. Important concepts that define its activities include ‘cultural democracy’ and ‘participatory art’ which capture the aspiration to include communities in the actual creative process of composing new music, not just its performance (Graves, 2005). Lee Higgins, for example, argues that ‘those working as community artists shared a dislike of cultural hierarchies and believed in co-authorship of work and in the creative potential of all sections of the community’ (Higgins, 2012, p. 32). Likewise, François Matarasso has observed that participatory art is a ‘specific and historically-recent practice that connects professional and non-professional artists in an act of co-creation’ (Matarasso, 2019, p. 19). Although community music has its roots in the UK community arts movement during the 1960s and 70s, it has only recently begun to enter scholarly discourse, an emergence that has coincided with this general academic interest in collaborative approaches to creativity (Bartleet & Higgins, 2018).

During the 1980s this ‘co-creative’ approach, as I shall refer to it here, began to influence the work of opera houses and composers writing ‘community operas’ in the manner of

Benjamin Britten and works like *Noye's Fludde* (1958). As I will show, a common issue exposed by the scholarly coverage of the composition of these community operas has been the tendency towards generalised accounts in place of rigorous examinations of what precisely occurs when a passage of music is forged collaboratively. Whereas traditional musicology has published scores, composers' sketches, memoirs, and so forth, to piece together and analyse the creative process, co-creativity cannot be captured or analysed in quite the same fashion. How exactly musical material is created during a workshop setting has been to a large extent overlooked, mainly because such information has rarely been preserved (or considered worthy of preservation) and has only been accessed therefore in the form of unspecified recollections. The music theory of the musical materials that can make up an improvisation have been widely documented in, most obviously, jazz improvisation (Bailey, 1993, pp. 64-75). However, far less consideration has been given to the process referred to as 'emergence' and how the contingencies of a group scenario impact and shape the resulting musical objects (Sawyer, 2003, p. 12).² These contingencies may include the material and technological environment, as well as the cultural and social contexts and group dynamics of collaborative activities. This research gap has been highlighted by Clarke et al.:

While distributed and collaborative creativity in music are active topics of discussion, there are still comparatively few detailed accounts of the actual processes at play in such interactions. (Clarke et al., 2017, p. 116)

There are artistic research studies that have begun to counteract this gap which supplement observations with recordings and notated sketches from collaborative rehearsals and workshops (Frisk & Östersjö, 2006). As many have argued, artistic research is not so much a field but rather a 'method of enquiry' (Nelson, 2013, p. 8). It 'seeks to convey content that is enclosed in aesthetic experiences, enacted in creative practices and embodied in artistic objects' (Borgdorff, 2011, p. 45). In artistic research 'the act of creation itself is intrinsically an act of "proving" – of testing out the intimations and speculations' (Coessens et al, 2009, p. 7). However, artistic research also represents a response to the methodological challenges encountered by research into collaboration. As Bulley and Özden have noted 'practice research offers a way of inquiry through doing and making, and often takes place in communities and through collaboration' (Bulley & Özden, 2021, p. 4). In such studies the creative practice of artists working in collaboration becomes a form of data collection, which is subject to the same kind of controls, qualitative measures, and restraints found in laboratory-based research or anthropological fieldwork. Consequently, artistic research into collaborative processes has been directly influenced by ethnographic and autoethnographic techniques that have been adopted from anthropology and the social sciences – techniques that will be given consideration later in this article.

The artistic research approach is therefore arguably the most effective way of penetrating the circumstances in which an artistic artifact is created collaboratively; here is a way in which the generally overlooked specifics of the co-creative process can be documented and studied with analytical rigour. Moreover, it is perhaps the only way the actual subject of study *can* be captured and observed, and from which conclusions can be drawn, that is, through direct

² Many scholars now use the term 'emergence' to refer to complex systems which have this property that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. See Sawyer (2003, p. 12).

observation. How best to study and analyse co-creativity than by utilising all the accessible forms of recording technology and information sharing now available to capture the process as it actually occurs, rather than attempting to piece together the process after the event via an (often) inaccurate historical record involving deductive reasoning and many interfering factors and methodological issues?

As mentioned, there are studies that have begun to counteract this gap which



Example 1 – John Barber, Co-created melody from *We Are Shadows* (reprinted with permission).

supplement observations with recordings and notated sketches from collaborative rehearsals and workshops, generally conducted by composers operating within the 'experimental' paradigm (Frisk & Östersjö, 2006; Hayden & Windsor, 2007; McLaughlin & Berweck, 2010). However, rarely (if ever) has this approach been applied in the field of community music and its many manifestations and overlapping disciplines such as community opera.³ This would therefore seem an area ripe for growth given the centrality of co-creativity in a field whose *raison d'être* lies in the collaborative music-making of communities, rather than individuals. Before proceeding to a more detailed explanation of the methodology employed for this artistic research and the framework developed for its analysis, it is necessary first to review those examples of research that touched upon co-creative processes in community opera projects.

Recent community opera research

It is common to find academic coverage of community opera projects written retrospectively by composers. For example, Martyn Harry in 'an account of the creation of a children's opera [which] draw[s] attention to some of the collaborative circumstances of the project' stresses the importance of how 'individual musicians are a crucial starting point' for creative work (Harry, 2017, p. 155). However, Harry provides neither notated or audio examples of musical material, nor an account of how they were specifically influenced by these collaborative circumstances. Although there are some interesting observations concerning the tensions and dynamics between writer, director and composer, there is little detail provided to reveal how these affected or shaped the artistic artifact itself, and certainly not at the level of a particular phrase or musical gesture.

There have been some attempts to document such details, but these tend to be made by freelance composers without the carefully monitored expectations of formally prepared artistic research. For example, Jonathan Dove who composed three community operas commissioned by Glyndebourne Opera House involving co-creative activities in a workshop setting (Dove, 1999. pp. 121-5): *Hasting Springs* (1990), *Dreamdragons* (1993) and *In Search of Angels* (1995). Dove recalls that:

I developed a more playful way of working, finding different ways of getting groups

³ This is likely due to the 'postmodern' position of community music which places an emphasis on 'informal/nonformal' educational contexts which would mitigate such an approach (see: Higgins, 2012, p. 31). Another factor may be the relative absence of input from composers involved with community music research (see Evison, 2023 and Willingham, 2021).

improvising together in song (while stamping and clapping and even dancing), splitting into groups to try out several different ways of singing just one or two lines of a libretto, then all gathering around the piano to stitch the fragments together: this process often led to surprisingly organic melodies. Obviously, from the piano, I had a hand in shaping the music, but there was always a sense of collective achievement, and shared ownership. (Dove, 2020, n.p.)

Again, however, examples of musical materials produced using this method are not presented or examined in any further detail. John Barber and Omar Shahryar, however, have both made detailed accounts with the aid of notated musical examples of musical materials produced in workshops with groups of children directed towards the co-creation of a community opera. Barber, who comes the closest, describes how he ‘took specific vocal and instrumental lines from the workshop and set out to weave them into the piece in a way which would give them motivic significance.’ He highlights a ‘melody made up by a ten-year old’, stating that ‘the class were talking about the motivations of their characters and this text and tune came very quickly’ (Barber, 2015, p. 116). Barber then shows how this was subsequently written into the fabric of the community opera (see Examples 1 & 2).

Although Barber clearly indicates how this melody found its way into the overall score (assisted by the notated examples above), there is no further detail as to how the tune and text were devised or improvised, sung, written down, recorded, or transcribed etc. during the workshops; only that it happened ‘very quickly’ and with the briefest outline of stimuli (the character motivations). Furthermore, only one example was given, with no comparisons between contributions and what variations between examples might reveal about co-creativity in this context. Nevertheless, it is an important step that demonstrates the kind of artistic research that can reveal what happens during a co-creative workshop.

Shahryar took matters further by considered a series of three short operas written with and for children. Unlike Dove and Barber, these compositions were written within an academic context for a PhD thesis. The most revealing aspects about this research are the descriptions of various techniques used as ways of working with children to produce co-created musical material, such as what Shahryar refers to as the ‘squiggly line technique’. This consisted of the vocal contours of an improvised group melody sung in unison (using a pre-existing text) and generated through gradual repetition. The melody was then ‘transcribed’ by drawing a line on a whiteboard where the line matches the ups and downs of the melody, later forming the basis for a melody written in notated form. Shahryar described the techniques as follows:

Looking at a line of text, ask everyone in the room to improvise the same melody for that line all at the same time. This will sound chaotic, but when you get them to do this 3 or 4 times, a discernible melody should appear as people instinctively copy each other. The Receiver listens for any discernible melody lines appearing from the cacophony, and this becomes the melody. Notate the melody using the squiggly line technique. (Shahryar, 2019, pp. 82-3)

Unfortunately, Shahryar added such insightful descriptions only in an appendix as recollections following the composition of his three operas and identified no specific examples in audio or notated form of melodies devised in this way. Furthermore, Dove, Barber and Shahryar provide no explanation for *why* they took the approaches they did; there is no examination of the contingencies or social context of the working environment which led them to use the techniques they employed and what made these suitable for the participants they were working with.

57 2 + 2 + 3 Rattus *mf*
a rat is

60 *pp* sinister *pp*
born to know his place

63 *mf* *f*
a rat is born to know his place

mf *f* subito

Example 2 – John Barber, *We Are Shadows*, ‘a rat is born’, bars 57-66 (reprinted with permission).

Julian Philips does explore both these aspects of the working environment and the effects

these had on the composition of three operas written for a Glyndebourne Opera: *The Yellow Sofa* (2009), *Followers* (2011) and *Knight Crew* (2010). The last, with a libretto by Nicky Singer, 'investigates the potential of grand opera within a community-specific context' (Philips, 2012, p. 5) where, in place of 'site-specific' considerations where the contingencies of the production environment effect the composition of an opera, the contingencies of community participation (and the participants themselves) impact upon the form of the opera. Philips gives as an example:

It was clear that the young people's material would need to be vocally sympathetic in terms of register, and easily graspable, while the women's chorus – many of whom were parents of the young people participating – needed to be practical, any harmonic textures easily achieved with simple parallel chords. (Philips, 2012, p. 175)

The influence of the participants extended to their cultural and stylistic interests or backgrounds that effected both the musical and dramatic form of the opera. A 'polystylistic' approach was adopted where the music written for teenage participants (a street gang called 'Knight Crew' referred to in the title) comprised of 'more popular, vernacular musical styles' with the use of 'electric guitars to allude to rock music traditions with repetitions of a funky riff'. (Philips, 2012, p. 183) This is contrasted with other lead characters, such as Myrtle, whose music sets up a dichotomy between 'the urban grunge of the Knight Crew' with plainsong music and 'neo-pastoral sonorities' sung by a professional opera singer. As these various characters interact in the story so their musical styles interact in the score which Philips demonstrates with notated musical examples. Additionally, there are other characters such as 'two musical theatre voices for Elayne and Lance' which provide a 'middle ground between operatic and untrained teenage voices' (Philips, 2012, p. 195).

These are good examples of the ways in which the contingencies of community participants themselves can influence the details and structure of an operatic score, and Philips provides good practical and artistic reasons for why he adopted the different styles for the different types of participants. However, they all represent responses to observations made by the composer concerning the nature of the community participants and not an active creative interaction between the composer and participants. Although this does represent one form of co-creativity (as will be discussed later) it does not represent the full spectrum of possible interactions where participants are able to react and actively contribute to the creative process. As Philips mentions in his conclusions 'the sharing of collaborative process and experience around opera development may well offer strategies for fellow practitioners' (Philips, 2012, p. 207).

A case-study that touches upon all the co-created elements described above by Shahryar and Barber together with the community-specific features executed by Philips is Will Todd's *Song of Our Heartland* written for Northern Heartlands and Opera North (Rudland, 2021). Here both the social and environmental contingencies and co-created musical details can all be seen to feed into the compositional process, as well as aspects of the narrative content. During the workshops for *Song of Our Heartland* there were 'break-out' moments when Todd and others involved, like director Caroline Clegg, would go round and talk to the participants individually and in small groups about their lives and histories. These were recorded and Clegg was responsible for collating these stories and identifying some strands that could be forged together to form a plot for the opera. One particularly fruitful encounter was with Emma, a teenage participant, and her school friends. Emma recounted how when their music teacher

had recently gone on maternity leave the school could not afford a replacement and they had no choice but to ‘run the choir themselves’. Additionally, various school buildings, including the music block, were going to be sold off for private use, which Emma objected to. These ideas were worked into the story of the opera in the form of one of the main characters, called Skylar, whose family suffers from the effects of poverty due to unemployment and economic austerity and who likewise has had her music lessons cancelled.

One good example to pick out from this case-study is a song evocative of the natural landscape of the Wear Valley concerning a rare atmospheric phenomenon present in the surrounding moors known as a ‘moonbow’, that is, a rainbow that happens at night with moonlight instead of sunlight. Todd responded to participants’ accounts of moonbows in one of the workshops for *Song of Our Heartland* by inverting the famous song ‘Somewhere Over the Rainbow’ into ‘Nowhere Under a Moonbow’. In the context of the story this has the effect of highlighting the notion of their local community as being ‘nowhere’, and therefore in some ways less important to the powers that be that imposed economic austerity upon them. Example 3 below shows the passage with a delicate accompaniment suggestive of moonlight passing through rain droplets:

Such recollections and ideas shared during the workshop context were a crucial element in the creation of such a song, particularly since Todd had never heard of moonbows before.

Example 3 – Will Todd, ‘Nowhere Under a Moonbow’ from *Song of Our Heartland*, bars 1351-1353 (reprinted with permission).

This song is a good example of the kind of interaction that sits in between the co-created materials of Barber and Shahryar, and Philips. It is an example of a collaboration where creative ideas are actively suggested by participants in a workshop, but where the *realisation* of the creative ideas is dominated by the input of a composer.

Developing a co-creativity framework

‘Nowhere under a Moonbow’ from *Song of Our Heartland* involved non-musical ideas and suggestions for a song from participants, with a realisation of these ideas in music by Todd. This contrasted with the extract from *We are Shadows* where Barber transcribed and incorporated a musical idea directly composed or improvised in some way by a participant. Here are two levels of co-creativity; one involving the conceptual suggestion of what form a song could take (without specifying pitches), the other involving the participant suggesting some of the pitches. This distinction (amongst others) could be approached by developing some more abstract concepts to measure forms of co-creativity that would describe the

different relationships between composers and participants in which creativity occurs across different activities.

There have been various definitions and frameworks proposed by community music theorists and composers that attempt to create such a framework. François Matarasso has suggested the following eight rungs on a 'Ladder of Citizen Participation' (see Figure 1).

These are grouped into three basic categories: non-participation in creativity, degrees of 'tokenism' where there is some degree of participation in creative acts and 'citizen power'

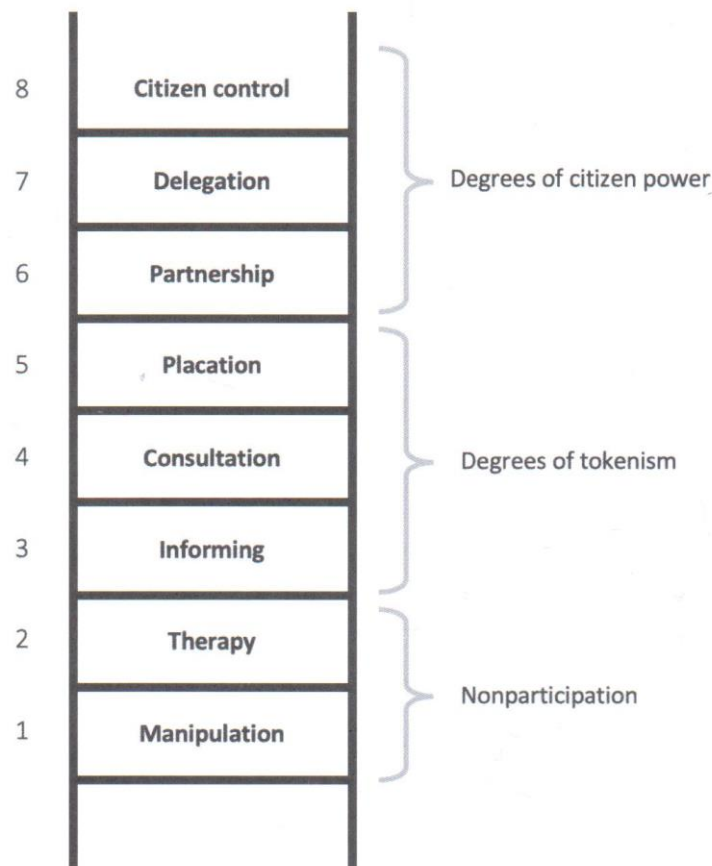


Figure 1 – Ladder of Citizenship Participation (Matarasso, 2019: p. 106, after Arnstein, 1969).

where participants fully engage in creativity. These last two categories could be said to tally with the two examples given above, with Todd as 'tokenism' and Barber as 'citizen power'. However, there is no reason to assume that the participants in Todd's workshop were acting as 'tokens' or were subject at any point to 'manipulation'. 'Tokenism' and 'manipulation' are terms that suggest a political dimension and are therefore perhaps prone to a degree of subjective assessment. Nevertheless, Matarasso's categories do provide useful suggestions for how assessing different co-creative circumstances might be approached. Hayden and Windsor have proposed three similar (and more objective) categories by examining collaborative exercises in contemporary composition between one another. They proposed three different composer/performer relationships as follows:

- 1.) Directive: in which there is a hierarchy, and the composer instructs the performers.

- 2.) Interactive: in which there is negotiation between the partners, ‘...but ultimately, the composer is still the author’.
- 3.) Collaborative: in which ‘...the development of the music is achieved by a group through a collective decision-making process’. (Hayden & Windsor, 2007, p. 33)

Drawing on this work, Alan Taylor suggests that the presence or absence of hierarchy in decision-making in collaborative composition is a separate aspect to the that of the division of labour. From this observation, Taylor extrapolated the following framework outlining four different types of working relationships:

The separation of degrees of hierarchical organisation (or lack thereof), however, represents a problem for this artistic research project, as in all the workshops with LMVC a hierarchy is present and without which it would not be possible to coordinate or conduct the activities. Hierarchies are present in LMVC between the musical director and the choir with the lead singers on each part and accompanist acting as intermediaries. There is often an assumption in the educational and community music literature that the presence of hierarchical structures has the effect of excluding participants from community music-making in some form, as was touched upon above in relation to the definition of community music espoused by Higgins. However, in LMVC and similar community organisations the reverse is true; hierarchical structures *enable* inclusion. Here the more proficient singers establish a musical structure (coordinated by the conductor and accompanist) that allows the less proficient singers to join in parts either beyond their capacity or enabling them to sing parts they could not pitch as easily without support. LMVC have an open members policy where membership is not determined by prior musical training or experience and any number of singers can join meaning it’s hierarchical structure generates inclusion rather than presenting an obstacle to

Hierarchy in decision-making			
		Yes	No
Division of labour (separation of tasks) in imaginative input.	Yes	<i>Hierarchical working</i> Tasks are divided between the participants. One or more participants decide on the contributions made.	<i>Co-operative working</i> Tasks are divided between the participants, but decisions-making is shared.
	No	<i>Consultative working</i> The participants contribute to the same task or tasks. One or more people decide on the contributions.	<i>Collaborative working</i> The participants share both the tasks themselves and the decisions on the contributions.

Figure 2 – Alan Taylor, ‘Types of Working Relationship’ (Taylor, 2016, p. 569).

it.⁴ Observations of this kind have led to a distinction between ‘inclusive hierarchies’ and ‘exclusive hierarchies’.⁵ For the purposes of the research conducted here therefore, Taylor’s hierarchical binary is replaced by a measure of how actively/inactively participants can engaged with co-creativity. Developed from this distinction is the new framework presented

⁴ Bell suggests that it is selective auditions that provide a ‘bold dividing line’ for community-based choirs in contrast to other vocal groups. (See: Bell, 2008, p. 233).

⁵ The notion of ‘inclusive musical structures’ has been developed by Smith in relation to brass bands. (See: Smith, 2013, p.9).

below that outlines four forms of co-creativity, with labels given to describe each:

FOUR FORMS OF CO-CREATIVITY	Inactive creative involvement	Active creative involvement
Indirect musical participation	<i>Observative Co-creativity</i> When the characteristic features of participants or a community group suggest to the composer a compositional approach to form or content.	<i>Consultative Co-creativity</i> When participants make a general or conceptual suggestion that influences the musical decisions in form or content made by the composer.
Direct musical participation	<i>Responsive Co-creativity</i> When a composition is modified by the composer in response to how participants rehearse or perform the composition.	<i>Collaborative Co-creativity</i> When participants make specific musical or textual suggestions which are subsequently integrated by the composer.

Figure 3 – Oliver Rudland, Four Forms of Co-creativity.⁶

‘Active’ forms of co-creativity (Consultative and Collaborative) represent those elements where participants actively provide creative input, such as in Todd and Barber. ‘Inactive’ forms of co-creativity (Observative and Responsive) represent those elements where the musical gestalt or configuration (e.g., the voice types a choir uses and their ranges) of a community group, or the performance limitations of participants, or their stylistic preferences and other musical characteristics inactively influence and shape the composition of music written for them (and without which the music would not have been written), such as those outlined by Philips for *Knight Crew*. In such circumstances participants provide inactive creative input.⁷

Cutting across the division between ‘active’ and ‘inactive’ forms of creative involvement is the distinction between those with ‘direct’ or ‘indirect’ musical participation. ‘Direct’ musical participation (Responsive and Collaborative) is when the form of co-creativity involves the participants performing or improvising, that is, direct contact with the music and lyrics, such as in Dove, Barber and Shahryar. Indirect musical participation (Observative and Consultative) is when the participant’s influence is one step removed from the music, such as when participants make conceptual suggestions, such as a song about moonbows as relayed by Todd or, as described above, when the musical gestalt of the community group shapes the

⁶ The labels ‘creative involvement’ and ‘musical participation’ reflect the distinction that can be made between the composing or creative aspect of music, and the performing aspect of music. This distinction, however, is not a sharp one, but one that sits on a continuum which the framework below divides up for the sake of analysis.

⁷ ‘Inactive’ (and more specifically the sub-division labelled ‘informing’) creative input therefore may represent a more politically neutral way to describe what Matarasso refers to as ‘tokenism’.

music.

This new framework evolved out of the examples of community opera projects reviewed above in conjunction with previous frameworks demarcating different types of co-creative involvement. Before documenting the research project with LMVC and applying the framework to its outcomes, it is necessary first to consider the methodological approach to recording these outcomes.

Artistic research project methodology

To account for the methodological approach adopted for this artistic research more deeply, it is necessary to have a closer look at the adoption of ethnography and autoethnography by musical and artistic research referred to earlier. Ethnographic research is an approach that was developed to document anthropological and sociological fieldwork. Sociological ethnography (often associated with the 'Chicago School' approach in sociology) has referred specifically to the task of the researcher (or 'participant observer') who 'gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group or organization they study' (Becker, 1958, p. 652). When applied to music, this involves participation in the musical activities of a group or organisation, similar to those envisaged for this research. For example, Paul Oliver (1965), David Evans (1982) and Alan Lomax (1993) conducted such research on the Mississippi Delta folk blues culture. Through a variety of techniques, including extensive participant observation, interviewing, and recording songs, this ethnographic work 'emphasised how blues musicians in that context drew on the reality of their surroundings, particularly chronic poverty and institutionalised racism, to infuse their songs with both ironic reflection and emotional intensity' (Grazian, 2015, p. 108).

Recent years has seen the evolution of 'autoethnography', a term that refers 'to fieldwork in which the ethnographic self is the *only* informant involved' (Collins & Gallinat, 2010, p. 10). Rob Drew (2001), for example, conducted fieldwork in thirty karaoke bars to examine how individuals use their bodies to publicly express themselves musically by drawing on his own experiences as a participant observer. More recently still, this autoethnographic approach has been pushed further to the point where the subject of inquiry is not solely the group or musical activity, but rather what the activity reveals about the researcher. Bartleet and Ellis described this approach as practice research in which composers and performers uncover the ways in which their personal lives and cultural experiences intertwine in the creation and interpretation of musical works resulting in 'illuminating stories and analyses of how their authors have grappled with and moved through joys and challenges to come to new understandings of themselves as musicians, and ultimately as human beings.' (Bartleet & Ellis, 2012, p. 14)

The approach adopted for the artistic research undertaken here sits somewhere in between ethnography and the more recent autoethnographic approach outlined above. Although the research is conducted by participating in the activities of various community music groups (a male voice choir rehearsal) by collecting creative ideas from individuals who are all a part of this group, it also involves the existential experience of the researcher who is bound up in this process by acting as a composer providing creative input to the process that generates the creative ideas, making their collection possible. It involves reflections that exist in a space between ethnographic and autoethnographic observation, which involve a composer's subjective perception of a collaborative activity, and the impression such a

process has on the subsequent creativity of the composer. This does not represent the common methodological issue in much anthropological and sociological research of mitigating the influence of the researcher on the research, because such an influence is in fact a part of what is under investigation and cannot be separated from it. This is an approach reflected in much artistic research. Doğantan-Dack, for example, has argued in relation to performance that:

In artistic research, the artistic values and aesthetic sensibilities that the performer brings to the research process are regarded as validating the research, rather than compromising it. Consequently, the discourse the artist-researcher uses to communicate her findings and bring to light the “insider’s view” on preparing and making performances takes account of her complex lived experiences and values as an artist. (Doğantan-Dack, 2022, p. 27)

In the case of this research the “insider’s view” is a composer collaborating with participants in a community setting so that, although it involves group activity, this activity is nevertheless observed through the lens of an individual artistic researcher’s experience. What is important is that influences on the researcher are recorded in reflective form (i.e., in a diary) and that this record, as the anthropologist Lynette Šikić Mićanović has stated, ‘foregrounds the ethnographic-self as embodied, situated and subjective rather than invisible or transparent’ (Šikić Mićanović, 2010, p. 57). This involves writing in the first person, the inclusion of experiences in rehearsals that a/effected decision making, and impressions that a/effected the creative thinking of the composer in conjunction with participants. Šikić Mićanović’s research investigating the role of women in rural societies by examining her own experiences as a woman working in this environment mirrors the research here investigating co-creative elements in workshops that feed into the composition of a community opera by examining a composer engaged in this process. The consequence is that, as Šikić Mićanović describes her research, ‘both the researcher and the researched engage in a symbiotic process during which the data and relationships are co-constructed’ (Šikić Mićanović, 2010, p. 49).

Nevertheless, in order to gather evidence of a more objective and tangible kind about and toward which such existential diary reflections can refer, this research (like sociological ethnography) will also involve the presentation of audio recordings of the workshops and sketches made by participants during them. Additionally, such materials produced with participants are obviously important for showing and demarcating the process, as well as detailing, explaining and describing the co-creative processes that were necessary to bring them into being. They also provide a crutch that can assist with the process of accurately recalling the activities in the workshop. This raises the matter of the inaccuracy of memory for studying the activities in co-creative workshops. As Joan Tumblety has summarised the matter:

One striking feature of scholars’ turn to memory in recent years is how similar are their conclusions about the workings of the human mind. What emerges from research across quite divergent scholarly disciplines, including cognitive psychology and neuroscience, is that individual memory does not function like an archive of lived experiences deposited somewhere in the brain, but is rather constructed anew at each moment of recall. (Tumblety, 2013, p. 7)

Several strategies were implemented to circumnavigate the possibility of the contents of the workshops being ‘constructed anew’ by the researcher later in the process: 1.) the workshops were recorded in audio so that events could be retraced. 2.) all jottings, writings and sketches

of any kind made during the projects were also maintained so that recollections would have concrete reference points which could be laid out in chronological order. 3.) the ethnographic diary was written immediately after each workshop session on the same day. The last point is not a perfect solution to the problems raised above, but in conjunction with the first two would make the resulting research data as accurate as possible in the circumstances.

Finally, there might appear to be a contradiction between the existential approach to ethnography and the requirement to avoid the reconstructed nature of memory recall. However, it is intended that the two can work in tandem providing an accurate factual record of events in combination with a record of the effect existential features had on the composer *during the workshops*, rather than after the event. This is a difficult balance to maintain, and one that admittedly involves a certain degree of subjectivity, but it is a necessary one to strive towards, so as to provide a complete picture of all the facets and processes that feed into co-creative activities. As explained, what is necessary is to foreground materials collected during the co-creative workshop with the experiential knowledge provided by the ethnographic diary.

With the new framework developed to analyse the research explained and the methodological issues concerning data collection outlined, I will now turn to the artistic research project itself, which draws all these elements together.

LMVC ARTISTIC RESEARCH PROJECT

Leeds Male Voice Choir (LMVC) are an amateur male voice choir made up roughly of 40 members aged 25-70 years. As mentioned, they operate an open membership policy and have weekly 3-hour rehearsals in a church led by a conductor and supported by a piano accompanist. LMVC consists of members who have some music reading ability and some with none. However, they are all experienced at learning to sing in harmony as a group, at learning to sing music from memory and at public performance. The following are extracts taken from an ethnographic diary which was written in response to the first of three workshops with the choir, during which these characteristics of LMVC were discovered and their abilities and interests were investigated to develop a concept for the artistic research (similar to the 'break out' sessions for *Song of Our Heartland*) and to devise approaches for the following workshops.

Workshop 1

- I was invited to attend a rehearsal of the LMVC at Lidgett Park Methodist Church, Leeds. The choir sang *Abide with me* (Monk), *Beati Mortui* (Mendelssohn) and *Onward, Ye Peoples* (Sibelius). I followed the sheet music that the choir used and noticed that the music was written for four parts and presented in open score (i.e., separate staves for high tenor, low tenor, high bass and low bass) which opened up how to compose for a male voice choir in my mind.
- I noticed from various passages in the arrangements (particularly the Hymn Tune) what a confident and impressive sound the choir produced when singing unison passages (i.e., all singing the same musical line) as opposed to when they were singing different parts in harmony.
- Towards the end of the rehearsal LMVC's conductor introduced me to the choir and explained that we would be working together to compose sections of a community opera. I

explained that the first element that needed to be decided upon was the story. There was not time for individual discussion so I asked them what stories they might like to tell together as a choir. There was not much reaction to this inquiry until one member responded to the question more literally than anticipated by suggesting that they could base on opera on the history of LMVC itself, which I was then told had been formed in a colliery during the first world war.

- This idea delighted me as I could instantly envisage the group of (mostly) middle-aged men that stood before me as an operatic chorus of coalminers. I responded by saying that that was a very good idea.⁸
- At this point another member pointed out that they had previously sung some authentic 'Miner's Songs' (see 'The Blackleg Miner' and 'Union Miner' in Hunt & Oliver, 2007). The conductor told me he could give me some copies of the music for these and that a more detailed history of LMVC was on their website (see Figure 4 below). I thanked the choir and told them I would consider all these ideas.

In discussion with several members after the rehearsal I learned that LMVC were quite slow at learning new repertoire as many members cannot read music, and with little or no experience at improvisation. This generally takes place over the course of several weeks of rehearsals carefully guided by their conductor. However, they are a group accustomed to using their ears to learn music away from notation and fitting individual parts together to sing complex harmonies.⁹

⁸ In combination with the two other artistic research projects cited above, this led to the decision to base the plot for the community on the novella *A Kestrel for a Knave* by Barry Hines set in a northern coalmining community.

⁹ This reflects the general tendency for amateur male voice choirs, of which there are about 500 across the UK. Most members do not read music fluently, however, there are generally a few members on each part who can read music from sight. (See: Campbell, 2016, p. 70).

1916 – 1924



Leeds Male Voice Choir was founded in South Leeds at the same time as the Battle of the Somme was being fought across the fields of Northern France. On 16 September 1916, Thomas Crossland, the organist at Stourton Wesleyan Chapel, conducted forty male voices before the match kick-off at Leeds FC. In this first known performance, the choir helped raise funds for wounded servicemen. Leeds Male Voice Choir originally took the name of Middleton's Broom Colliery where many of the singers worked. The first major concert was performed in Leeds Town Hall, under the name Broom Excelsior Male Voice Choir, on the evening of Sunday 16 March 1919, to raise funds for injured servicemen. Further charity concerts occurred on a regular basis at both the Queen's Theatre and the Town Hall throughout the interwar years. The choir began to establish its reputation with some early appearances, in the mid-1920s, on the newly founded BBC wireless service. Television of course had not yet quite arrived for the world or the choir

Figure 4 – History of the formation of the Leeds Male Voice Choir (2022).

As a consequence of the above factors, it was decided that the two workshops to follow would focus on two different approaches; the first on a rehearsal of a 'Coalminers' Chorus' written in response to the choir's suggestion for a story related to their history relayed above. The second was devoted to some improvisational exercises shaped by the experiences and outcomes of the second workshop, and also based on a coalmining theme to produce passages of operatic dialogue. The following are further extracts taken from an ethnographic diary which was written in response to these two workshops, which consisted of two three-hour long rehearsals. Interspersed between the accounts of the two is an explanation of the development of materials used for the improvisational exercises.

Workshop 2

- The choir began the process of learning the 'Coalminers' Chorus' Sketch (see **Appendix**). This was undertaken at a very slow pace with the conductor teaching each of the four melodic parts to the singers separately, four bars at a time assisted by the accompanist. After the four bars had been learned, the choir then sang them altogether in harmony before proceeding to learn the next four bars in the same manner, until all the music up until bar 25 had been learned.
- This process took about an hour, nevertheless, the choir seemed to enjoy singing the music, and did not appear to become dissatisfied with the time it took. It confirmed the approach I had taken in response to Workshop 1 and study of the repertoire that they had sung in this i.e., to carefully compose each part (especially the inner parts) so that they functioned as melodies in their own right, as much as to create harmonies between the parts. This also had the effect of producing some piquant, dissonant harmonies (e.g., the chord in quavers in bar 3 consisting of a B-flat, C, D-flat and F in close harmony (see Example 4 below) which added to the appeal of the ensuing music.
- However, when bars 26-30 were reached the choir found this music very difficult to pitch when sung altogether. To solve this the conductor tried a different approach by teaching each individual part a 16-bar passage as this suited the longer phrasing of this section. This approach did not however improve the results and the choir continued to miss-pitch the music, collapsing into an uncertain unison.
- Recalling how confidently the choir sang the hymn in unison during Workshop 1, I suggested that the choir all sing the top part in unison instead, which was to a certain extent what was happening anyway as the top part was the only one most members of the choir could pitch correctly.
- This worked very well and in fact improved the sound of the music as a strong unison line at this moment provided a nice contrast to the murkier sound created by the counterpoint in the first 24 bars. It also solved an awkward moment in the music at bar 34 where the first tenor entered, and the second bass dropped out (re-entering in bar 39) as singing in unison meant such tricky entries were no longer necessary. Additionally, the harmony was retained in the accompaniment which meant the musical logic here was not lost, in fact it was strengthened as the principle melodic line was highlighted by now being sung in unison.
- The choir responded immediately to this alteration; finding the music much easier to learn and maintaining singing into the second verse (as can be heard in **Recording 1**). Consequently, the conductor recommended singing the first 25 bars *a capella* with the piano accompaniment entering for the new unison section which furthered the contrast. Again, the choir responded well to this alteration.

Recording 1 – ‘Coalminers’ Chorus’ first verse sung by LMVC.

<https://soundcloud.com/oliverrudlandresearch/coalminers-chorus>

- One additional feature of the rendition of the Coalminers’ Chorus by LMVC was the tendency of the choir to slow the tempo at the descending figuration in bars 3, 5, 7 and 9. Although not a desirable interpretation for performance, this did strongly suggest to me in the rehearsal a development of this figuration by extending it out as an expression of the coalminers’ moroseness, due to the hardship of their labours. The slight miss-pitching in the singing here also suggested colouring the harmony to match (see Example 4 below). The impression of the choir singing the chorus conveyed a feeling of despair to me.¹⁰

The Coalminers’ Chorus was written to suit the abilities and gestalt, or configuration, of LMVC. It was then subsequently modified in Workshop 2 according to how the group realised it musically, adding unison passages. The impression that LMVC gave singing the Coalminer’s Chorus also suggested a motif developing out of their realisation, the result of which was the Despair Motif. As I will discuss below, all these outcomes from Workshop 2 then provided materials and information for preparing the improvisatory activities for Workshop 3.

Coalminer's Chorus (bars 1-5)

Augmentation suggested by LMVC's rendering of the Coalminer's Chorus

Despair Motif

Example 4 – Derivation of the ‘Despair Motif’ from the Coalminer’s Chorus.

As a consequence of the above, a 1950s blues or ‘boogie-woogie’ was decided upon with an extended twelve-bar blues structure similar to the famous songs *Rock Around the Clock* (1952) or *Shake, Rattle and Roll* (1954), which marked the beginning of ‘Rock ‘n’ Roll’ music during the 1950s in both the USA and UK and is emblematic of this time. This was chosen to facilitate a simple and direct form of improvisation suited to the skills of the LMVC than the complexities of, for example, swing or jazz improvisation. Additionally, the stylistic idiom of

¹⁰Although beyond the scope of this paper, the ‘Despair Motif’ became an important reminiscence motif in the complete score for the community opera.

these songs are familiar to the choir, many of whom were alive when they were re-released during the 60s and 70s (Weinstein, 2015, p. 57). Using this style is again entirely appropriate for the dramatic context of the setting of the story (which is set during the 1950/60s) which includes a scene set in a pub during where miners socialise.¹¹ The Coalminers' Blues was written to facilitate this process and was constructed from several sources: First, a 'boogie-woogie' bassline typical of those examples given above but extended to 20 bars (see Example 5 below). Second, the 'Despair Motif' developed during Workshop 2 which was superimposed above the bassline and transposed a tone higher as a complimentary ostinato and also a chromatic run in contrary motion transformed into a swing style, similar to (for example) the chromatic gestures found in Glenn Miller's arrangement of *In the Mood* (1939), also based on a twelve-bar blues structure, to frame the blues and provide a break before its repetition. Together these three elements were combined to form an accompaniment above which a simple unison melody was added, as shown in Example 5.

The lyrics ('Shake and roll, dig that hole, find that coal') are an obvious adaptation of *Shake Rattle and Role* playing with the words that have associations with both coalmining and 'Rock 'n' Roll' music. Combined with the unison melody (which uses only five pitches) this was composed to facilitate swift retention during a rehearsal and easy comprehensibility, so that vocal improvisations could be superimposed above the simple melody without distracting those continuing to sing it underneath, which was how the improvisations would later be added. Additionally, there was a two-bar gap left at the end of each of the four short phrases to encourage responses from members of LMVC, that is, 'call and response' improvisation. The melody was also written for a pitch range that would be easy for both tenors and basses to sing without straining either voice type beyond its comfortable range. Most importantly, the use of a simple unison melody was justified by the slow pace at which LMVC learned the music in Workshop 1 and the strong sound they produced when singing a hymn tune in unison.

¹¹ This is evident from the film *Kes* (1969) during which a performance of such 1950s 'Rock 'n' Roll' music is seen as part of a scene (without spoken dialogue) that takes place in a pub and at which coalminers are present.

Andante (♩ = 90)

Tenors & Basses

Shake _____ and roll!

Despair Motif Variant

5

T. B.

Shake _____ and roll!

9

T. B.

Dig _____ that hole

13

T. B.

find _____ that coal!

17

T. B.

Example 5 – Coalminers' Blues used for improvisational activities during Workshop 3.

Workshop 3

- I asked the conductor about what to use to warm up the choir and he suggested using something that reflected the piece I was going to teach them (i.e., The Coalminers' Blues). I therefore started a warm up by teaching the choir to sing an ascending D harmonic minor scale, followed by a rising blues scale in D.

Recording 2 – LMVC warming up using scales in D.

<https://soundcloud.com/oliverrudlandresearch/malevoicechoirexcerpt-1>

- I then taught the choir to sing the Coalminers' Blues which they picked up very quickly, without the need for music in most cases.

Recording 3 – LMVC learning to sing the Coalminers' Blues.

<https://soundcloud.com/oliverrudlandresearch/malevoicechoirexcerpt-2>

- I then asked the choir to improvise collectively ('scatting' as I described it). I demonstrated a few scats but also suggested that they could quote songs they might know, like 'Jerusalem' by Parry, for example.

Recording 4 – LMVC unison group improvisations above the Coalminers' Blues.

<https://soundcloud.com/oliverrudlandresearch/malevoicechoirexcerpt-3>

- The response was positive, so I continued by asking the singers to improvise in smaller groups – tenors first, then basses, with those not improvising to continue singing the Coalminers' Blues underneath.

Recording 5 – LMVC sectional group improvisations above the Coalminers' Blues.

<https://soundcloud.com/oliverrudlandresearch/malevoicechoirexcerpt-4>

- Next, I asked them to write down some words on paper copies of the music that had been handed out – most members of the choir jotted ideas down. I had not decided what the words would be about: one idea was that the words might refer to what a group of coalminers' might say entering a pub.
- However, whilst playing the music with the group it became event that many responses would have to be a 'work song' and they would be 'singing as they work' and that the words should be what a coalminer might sing whilst working 'down the mine'. This communicated itself very well to the choir and was perhaps why they responded so positively. I asked some of them to read out their words and again the choir enjoyed listening to each other's contributions, especially Participant One who composed a complete four-stanza poem, which the choir applauded afterwards:

Recording 6 – Members of LMVC reading out their individual lyrics.

<https://soundcloud.com/oliverrudlandresearch/malevoicechoirexcerpt-5>

- It was obvious that the choir were enjoying the workshop a lot, bouncing jokes off each other about the process and the ideas that they were developing, which gave me further confidence to proceed with some individual improvisations.
- I then decided to ask for improvisations with words – adding words to the 'scatting' they had already done. The choir responded very confidently again, and I realised in this moment that I could ask for solos from them all. Spontaneously, I asked members to put their hands up who would like to try.
- For the first round of improvised solos there were seven volunteers and I asked them to put their hands up so the session could be coordinated during the actual improvisation by pointing to them when it was their turn. After this round, which produced some excellent improvisations, I asked for more volunteers and there were four more.

Article

- We then ran through the whole blues again; first with the second four, then the first seven and then concluding with a final collective improvisation involving all present.

Recording 7 – LMVC solo improvisations above the Coalminers' Blues incorporating individual lyrics.

<https://soundcloud.com/oliverrudlandresearch/malevoicechoirexcerpt-6>

- There was a very warm spontaneous round of applause from the choir as soon as the workshop concluded.

Following the workshop, the word sheets were collected and LMVC's texts collated as shown below:

Participant No.	Written Text Reactions (lyrics)
1.	pay the man get my bond get me scran, don't need a hand feet's blistered hand's numb runny nose on a black face man
2.	where my dinner need a pint have a shower in the tub – rubber dub need my hound lost my ferret
3.	look at the muck in here going for a pint? fish & chips twice
4.	thirsty work dirty mines
5.	it's hot work – will need a bath after work where the pit pony
6.	fly my soul to heaven keep my children safe if I'm lost to the dark.
7.	dark dirty, damp & cramped back breaking
8.	drill, drill, hack, break, break, please strike volatile it's hot, shovel, shovel down, down, up, up sweat, blood and tears
9.	dirty job dark & hot soon be over home sweet home
10.	very hot mines very dark too I am digging! pay the wages.
11.	(shake and role): better than dole? (shake and role): on home (dig that hole): wait till home
12.	I found gold! cough, cough thud, thud, thud
13.	we sweat & bleed

	sweating, bleeding, coughing, dying for who?
14.	hope the sun shines
15.	match, goal, foul robbed back, feet, pubs
16.	hot baby, come to me baby come on now, come to me baby

The improvised solos (i.e., those audible in Recording 7 above) were then transcribed and these were then added to the short score of the Coalminers' Blues. These solos are laid out in Example 7 below without the accompaniment for convenience in order of appearance. In a few cases the vocal improvisations remained in 'scatting' form without words being added. In these cases, words were added from the text reactions in Figure 5 that would fit as closely as possible with the improvised melody, i.e. those written by Participant 5 for Improv. 1 and Participant 11 for Improv. 3. There were also two cases where participants took the suggestion to quote from songs they already knew: Improv. 3 whose scatting was in fact a quotation ('Heigh ho, heigh ho, it's off to work we go') from the famous Disney adaptation of *Snow White* (1937) adapted into 'better than't dole', and Improv. 7 which quoted the nonsense nursely lyric "rub a dub, dub three men in the tub", although delivered in the first person. These choices were not arbitrary, however, and were reactions both to the dramatic situation and other improvisations; the *Snow White* referencing work down a mine, and the nursely lyric a response to the dirty nature of mining work referred to by other participants (e.g. Improv. 2 'dirty work, dark and hot'). It was for this reason that the lyrics from Participant 5 'it's hot work here, will need a bath after work' were added to Improv. 1 so that Improv. 2 would make more sense as a response to Improv. 1. This itself reflected an occasional tendency in the improvisations for members to respond to one another. For example, Improv. 10 'Can't wait for the next finals' was a response to Improv. 11 with an appropriate horse-racing reference: 'On me pate, Lesley Tate' (i.e., I bet it is 'Lesley Tate' [a racing horse]). The responses were also sometimes shaped by an improvised rhythming scheme such as Improv. 9 in response to Improv. 8 (i.e. What's for *snap*? Ah, mi *back*).

Incorporating the LMVC improvisations into a dramatic context

The above demonstrates a capacity by LMVC for spontaneous coordinated group improvisation – this coordination evolved towards the end of the workshop, after many attempts during which ideas were tried out and shared, which the choir then refined in later attempts. The reallocation of various participant's lyrics to the transcribed improvisations was done to strengthen this coordination, that is to enhance a feature already present in the group improvisation. The improvisations (Example 7) were then integrated into a scene set in a pub where the Coalminers' Blues was added as a dance number, which can be seen in Example 8 with the improvisations labelled. The improvisations that made sense in this dramatic context (i.e., a scene taking place in a pub) were retained (i.e., Improvs. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, and 11). The position of the individual improvisations over the Coalminers' Blues as they occurred during the workshop was generally retained, however, some overlapping was added to enhance the flow of the dialogue and the impression of a group of coalminers chatting over one another. The improvisations not included, such as Improv. 8 and 9 (i.e.,

‘what’s for snap? Ah, mi back’), were put to one side to be reused in the scene that takes place down the coalmine where the lyrics would make more sense in this context.

Analysis of the co-creative elements in LMVC project

The above demonstrates a process whereby collective improvisational exercises with an amateur male voice choir facilitated a process that contributed to the creative content of an operatic chorus and operatic dialogue, as well as to a motif to be developed during the course of a community opera. It shows some of the specific co-creative musical processes, why in relation to the choir’s abilities they were chosen, and the outcomes of vocal improvisational activities, such as those described earlier by Dove and Shahryar. It also reveals that adult community participants with some musical experience, but who cannot necessarily read musical notation, can successfully engage with group improvisational activities. In the table that follows (Figure 6, below), the outcomes of the three workshops and ensuing musical compositions are analysed using the ‘Four Forms of Co-creativity’ framework. The abstract definitions outlined in Figure 3 are replaced by those specific instances revealed in the artistic research project outlined above with LMVC.

Reflections on LMVC project

The project revealed fundamental ways in which the response of community participants to music written for them and the ways in which the music had to be adapted to suit this response can also contribute to the evolving structure of an operatic chorus and passages of operatic dialogue. The project also produced material that, when integrated into the operatic scene, enhanced the dramatic authenticity of the ensuing music i.e., the musical realisation of a spirited, rowdy conversation between a group of coalminers in which many exchanging voices can be heard at the same time. As Kari Veblen has observed, ‘music learning in adulthood is generally self-initiated and embedded within social contexts. Current research exploring the importance of social context in learning music indicates that musically saturated environments [such as in churches, music festivals etc.] are extremely significant for lifelong music learning’ (Veblen, 2018, p. 244). It was very much the social environment of the different members of the choir making fun out of the experience, throwing ideas out and responding (as if joking amongst themselves) that generated the musical materials. The co-creative workshop also unearthed expressions and colloquialisms that are very unlikely to have been discovered without the workshop, especially the fast interchange of such phrases. The use of blues improvisation was surprisingly well-suited to this co-creative process as ‘call and response’ improvisation very often resembles spoken dialogue. Although, a good deal of direction was provided for the musical materials and structure of the LMVC workshop, nothing would have been generated without the sociability of LMVC’s rehearsal environment. The ensuing musical materials were, in a sense, a snapshot of the social nature of LMVC, and it is perhaps not a surprise that a coalmining themed project generated this impression given that this was the historical origins of the choir, and so their improvisations reflected these origins.

Andante (♩ = 90) $\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{ } \text{♩}$

Improv. 1 It's hot work here will need a bath af - ter work_____
(a whob bah bah, a whob a bah bah, bah ye - jeb!)

Improv. 2 Dir-ty job, dark and hot

Improv. 3 Bet - ter than't dole...
(Hi - ho, hi - ho!)

Improv. 4 Soon be o - ver

Improv. 5 Work get paid

Improv. 6 Could do with a pint, I'm parched__

Improv. 7 Rub-ba dub, dub, I'm in the tub

Improv. 8 What's for snap?

Improv. 9 Ah mi back, Ah!

Improv. 10 Can't wait for the next fi - nals

Improv. 11 On me pate, 'Les-ley Tate'

Improv. 12 hope the sun - shines____

Example 7 – LMVC improvisation transcriptions.

Rock & Roll (Poco meno mosso $\text{♩} = 90$) **Improv. 1** *f*

Miners

238

mf It's

Shake _____ and

mf *f*

mf *f mp*

mp

242

hot work here will need a bath af - ter work _____

roll!

Shake _____ and

246

Improv. 7

Improv. 3 Rub - ba dub, dub, I'm in the tub

Dir - ty job, dark and hot

roll!

Dig _____ that

Example 8 – LMVC improvisations integrated into the ‘Coalminer’s Blues’

Improv. 2

250

Miners

Bet - ter than't dole_

Improv. 5

Work get paid

hole, find_ that

Improv. 6

254

Miners

Can't wait for the next fi - nals

Could do with a pint, I'm parched_

coal!

Improv. 10

Improv. 11

258

Miners

On me pate, 'Les - ley Tate'

Example 8 (continued)

FOUR FORMS OF CO-CREATIVITY	Inactive creative involvement	Active creative involvement
Indirect musical participation	<i>Observative Co-creativity</i> Composition of the 'Coalminers' Chorus' with four stand alone melodic contrapuntal lines. Composition of the 'Coalminers' Blues' with unison melody to suit the limited music-reading abilities of the choir and written in such a manner so that it can be swiftly committed to memory with limited pitches and designed to facilitate call and response improvisation.	<i>Consultative Co-creativity</i> 'Coalminers' Chorus' concept suggested by the choir's history and origins in a coalmine. Adding participant lyrics to some of the textless improvised melodies to enhance the coordinated, dialogue-forming group improvisation demonstrated by LMVC.
Direct musical participation	<i>Responsive Co-creativity</i> The use of a unison texture in bars 25-34 in the 'Coalminers' Chorus'. Development of the 'Despair Motif' from the Coalminers' Chorus.	<i>Collaborative Co-creativity</i> The improvised solos (see Example 7) superimposed above the Coalminers' Blues during Workshop 3.

Figure 6 – LMVC workshops co-creativity analysis

'FOUR FORMS OF CO-CREATIVITY' FRAMEWORK AND ARTISTIC RESEARCH AS MUSICAL COMPOSITION

The artistic research project discussed in this article reveals various ways, on multiple levels, in which the community participants shaped the ensuing music. First through the choice of subject matter, second through music written to suit the musical experience and capacities of the choir, third through changes, adjustments and developments generated by the choir's rendition of music written for them, and finally through improvisational exchanges facilitated by music forged from interactions with the choir. At all these levels, something of the social characteristics of the choir had an influence, whether through the choir's history, through their experience and musical interests, through their knowledge of mining culture and other cultural tropes discovered through improvisation, and finally from the good-humoured sociability of LMVC's rehearsal environment. Although, as demonstrated, these features influenced and shaped both the structural and surface level details of the music, none of this analysis touched exclusively upon conventional musical analysis, such as contrapuntal

techniques, harmonic progressions, pitch-set classes or other such technical tools or perspectives. Of course, the music presented above could be easily analysed in this fashion, and some of the descriptions examining the co-creative processes involved adopted analytical terminology of this kind. Nevertheless, none of the processes outlined above could be understood purely through such terminology, which are in many ways ineffable without recourse to the social context of LMVC as outlined. The various ways in which LMVC shaped the music are just, if not more, significant to an understanding of how this music came into being as any analysis of the musical materials from which this shaping process occurred.

An analogy here might be drawn with a potter shaping a vase out of wet clay; an analysis of the constituency of the clay or the final form in which it sets can in no way account for the motivations for why a potter chose to shape a vase in a particular way, which can only be understood with recourse to the broader social context of the potter. A full musical analysis, such as the research project documented in this article, must in some ways explore this social context at the multiple levels outlined, and which I have attempted to demarcate using the 'Four Forms of Co-creativity' framework. Doğantan-Dack has pointed out the similar influence postmodern critiques of notions of knowledge and subjectivity have had on artistic research and New Musicology. (Doğantan-Dack, 2022, p. 19) Another, perhaps more obvious connection between artistic research and New Musicology, is the analysis of music that focuses upon the social context in which it operates in a variety of modes, whether this be historical, political, or ideological. New Musicology, however, such as the much-discussed works of Susan McClary or Richard Taruskin, are generally concerned with the musical analysis of what is broadly referred to as 'Western Art Music', that is, it is historical research focused on a certain canonical perspective. In contrast, artistic research as musical composition can access, in an "intensely practical" way, the social context of music composed in the here and now (Crispin, 2015, p. 60).

All composition self-evidently takes place within a social context of some kind and will always, no matter the materials out of which the music is forged, or the techniques used to shape such materials, relate to a social context and, more often than not, a group of performers or musicians, or if not then at least some kind of socially contingent audience community (Clarke, 2012). The framework presented in this article offers one such tool for capturing the emergent social context of musical composition. It has been fashioned to examine music written for community participants, but this does not limit its use to such collaborations. Community opera projects of the kind reviewed in this article make the ways in which performers and their social backgrounds shape music more apparent as an especial effort is made to discuss such features as participant involvement is not obscured by technical proficiency and is, so to speak, what these participants bring to such projects. Community opera projects are therefore a logical context for the development of this framework, particularly since the creative starting point of such projects are the participants themselves. But there are many composers that discuss the effects that those for whom they compose (including themselves as performers, of course) have on their creative processes. Benjamin Britten often noted that the personalities of the instrumentalists he wrote for (as well as singers) was ever present in his mind as he composed (1964). A composer writing for an ensemble of chamber musicians may equally consider the ways – through a process of interactions, workshops and rehearsals – the creative steps that were affected by the musicians, their characteristics, and so forth, and the general social milieu and context in

which performances take place, as Östersjö recalls in collaborations between a composer and a guitarist. The 'Four Forms of Co-creativity' framework discussed here offers one way in which such interesting and fundamental details can be captured, dissected, and analysed.

More pertinent perhaps, is the changing societal context in which composition now operates. As contemporary sociology tells us, the effects of living in a technologically mediated, globalised world has changed the nature of communities and societies in ways unimaginable 20 years ago (see, e.g., Delanty, 2018, pp. 1-9). Society itself therefore can be seen as a creative starting point for musical composition in ways which are rich and challenging. A good example to highlight here is the new musical organisation 'Third Culture Collective', which fosters new collaborations between South Asian and Western musicians (Third Culture Collective, 2023). Such projects that explore new ways of forming collaborative musical relationships with instrumental and performing techniques drawn from different cultures, and which often produce new compositions, are also a good example of the kinds of future developments that could benefit from the application of new analytical tools to capture their sociological details, such as the framework developed here. The musical historian Robert P. Morgan commented, in an attempt to anticipate the future in which we now exist, that 'for music to change, the world will have to change' (Morgan, 1991, p. 489). Well, the world certainly has changed in the last couple of decades, and therefore there seems much scope for artistic research as composition that considers the relationships that exists between the world and the music it shapes.

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