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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,

IRVINE

The Narrative Bow Arm: Reimagining the Violinist through Japanese Storytelling Practices and
Autoethnographic Multimedia Performance

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Integrated Composition, Improvisation, & Technology

by

Lisa Yoshida

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Mari Kimura, Chair
Professor Amy Bauer
Professor John Crawford

2026

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DEDICATION

To

My family for their unwavering support

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¹Referring to my Master's Project Report, *The Audio-Visual Experience in Natacha Diels's Nightmare for JACK*. California State University, Long Beach ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, 2021. 28321392.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Narrative Bow Arm:
Reimagining the Violinist through Japanese Storytelling Practices and Autoethnographic
Multimedia Performance

by

Lisa Yoshida

Doctor of Philosophy in Integrated Composition, Improvisation, and Technology
University of California, Irvine, 2026
Professor Mari Kimura, Chair

The emerging field of practitioner-centered music theory and composition invites the performer's body, identity, and aesthetics to become a vital component of musical analysis. My creative practice as a Japanese-American violinist-composer reimagines bow arm gestures through Japanese storytelling art forms such as *Nihon-Buyō*, *Haiku*, and *Kamishibai* to perform autoethnographic memories and stories as a form of creative insight. Narrative arm gestures from my childhood studies of *Nihon-Buyō*², utilize props such as a *sensu* (Fan), *kasa* (Umbrella), or simply the *furisode* (Long Sleeve of a Kimono) to allude to a butterfly, falling snow, or the presence of moonlight, informing my violin bow arm gestures to carry multidimensional, semiotic meanings. Combining the narrative arm gestures endemic to *Nihon-Buyō* with classical violin bow techniques, new epistemologies of bow arm gestures emerge. Serving not only as a fundamental element to desired sound production but also as a visual component of performance, the violinist's bow arm gestures function as a method of communication, artistic expression, motif, motion data³, and dramaturgy. Arm gestures in my creative musical works aim to evoke a scene, which is a principle found in many aspects of Japanese culture, most notably the poetic

² Traditional Japanese Dance practiced from the Edo (1603-1868) period. I studied the *Bando-ryū* (坂東流) lineage of *Nihon-Buyō*.

³ My creative practice utilizes the MUGIC® sensor, which is a wireless wearable motion sensor created by Dr. Mari Kimura, that includes a gyroscope and accelerometer enabling bow arm motion data to be read in software such as MaxMSP.

device of *Kigo* (seasonal words) in *Haiku*. The violinist's body also becomes a "Musical Personae," as Philip Auslander describes,⁴ which can be further reframed to reimagine the violinist as a storyteller. In this way, the performing violinist's totality of sound, visuals, and body movements all support the narrative, parallel to the practice of a *Kamishibai-ya*.⁵ Through practice-based research, these Japanese narrative art traditions inform a vocabulary of bow-arm movements capable of evoking scenic imagery and autobiographical memory. Presented through a narrative framework, this research positions multimedia violin performance as a space in which lived experience functions as a critical source of knowledge.

Chapter One details the backgrounds of my practitioner-centered research, of American classical violin bow arm techniques, and Japanese narrative art forms. Chapter Two analyzes a survey of performer-composers who engage with the performing body as multimedia expression, such as in works by Natacha Diels, enhancing a string player's bow gestures through technology, such as in works by Simon Steen-Anderson and Mari Kimura, and immersing audiences into personal storytelling performances, such as in works by Kishi Bashi and Jennifer Walshe. Chapter Three synthesizes this research through narrative theory, improvisation, and technology to create new compositional and performance methods, exemplified through my original compositions. This chapter also analyzes the Dissertation Concert as a larger autoethnographic performance, cultivating a reciprocal performer-audience relationship through Chatman's theory of narrative communication.⁶

⁴ Philip Auslander, "Musical Personae," *The Drama Review* 50, no. 1 (2006).

⁵ A narrator in *Kamishibai*, which is a Japanese street-performance artform invented in the late 1920s.

⁶ James Phelan et al., "Authors, Resources, Audiences: Toward a Rhetorical Poetics of Narrative," *Style* 52 (2018): 2.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation, along with a concert of original creative work, emerges from my long-standing practice as a violinist. From my classical music background, exploring jazz, experimental arts, and audio-visual multimedia performance practices has expanded the sonic and artistic palette of my craft. Drawing guidance from principles of Japanese narrative art forms, I integrate my personal narratives as a Japanese American immigrant for a unique autoethnographic perspective on Western violin performance. Themes of bilingualism, biculturalism, familial teachings, childhood, and ancestry are at the core of my works. My compositions aim to vividly illustrate and immerse the audience in the narrative onstage. Bow arm gestures, which are vital in sound production and as an expressive visual element, serve as the primary vehicle for my storytelling performances. The multimedia works I compose and perform immerse the audience in these transformed memories and stories presented on the concert stage. Most of my compositions feature audio or visual field recordings, which help the performance allude to historical, spiritual, or environmental references; a practice stemming from Haiku poetry called *Kigo*, or a poetic device used to denote a season. The manipulated field recordings in my compositions range from a choir of frogs in July from Sapporo, Japan (*Kero Kero Choir*), videos of young flowers and plants to denote the coming of Spring (*Mai 舞 : Variations on Bow Arm Gestures*), or themes of comfort and home, such as my mom's rice cooker filled with freshly cooked white rice (*Eat Every Grain of Rice*). Ultimately, my research seeks to redefine the violinist as a dynamic, multi-faceted artist expressing their own stories through their own voice through new, immersive live performances. I aim to amplify the performing violinist's stories through modern technologies to establish unique framework I synthesize as autoethnographic multimedia violin performance practice.

My compositions center on my experiences as a Japanese immigrant raised in the United States. I was born in Yokohama, Japan, and at the age of two, I moved to Southern California. My parents didn't speak English fluently, so I grew up in a household with the Japanese language, mannerisms, food, and celebrations. I was also very lucky to have attended Saturday Japanese School for six years in elementary school, visited Japan to meet extended family every summer, and even attended a local elementary school for three summers in Yokohama. These summers were spent at my grandparents' houses in the Kanagawa Prefecture, so much of my cultural experiences of Japan occur through the lens of ancestral and familial connections.

Before playing the violin, I took traditional Japanese dance lessons (*Nihon-Buyō*) for two years around the age of seven with Ayako Moriguchi. I studied the Bando-ryū (坂東流) lineage, which emphasizes meaning in the movements, similar to acting principles.⁷ Accompanied by traditional Japanese music, intricate movements of my neck, hands, arms, and feet were practiced. I recall my dance teacher explaining these movements through scenic imagery, such as learning the three static head movements, *mittsu furi* (三つ振り), to “look at the moon,” or spinning the *kasa* (umbrella) to imitate various speeds of wind. The *furisode*, which is the long sleeve draping over the arms, is also used to depict scenic and narrative elements, such as mimicking a butterfly, or partially hiding the face to allude to modesty or shyness. As a child, I enjoyed being able to express a narrative through my gestures and props that served as an extension of my body. This premise, endemic to *Nihon-Buyō*, is a foundational pillar of how I approach the violin bow to creative storytelling performances.

⁷ Itsuo Bandō, “‘Nihon buyō tte?’” Bando-ryū Nihon Buyō Kyōshitsu (Yokohama) Bandō Itsuo, n.d., <https://www.bando-itsuo.com/what/>.



Figure 1: My sister and I, before our Nihon-Buyo lesson, posing with the kasa (umbrella) and wearing vibrant Kimonos.

My experiences as a child growing up in a foreign country included navigating the complexities of assimilation, difficulties maintaining a strong connection to my ancestry and extended family an ocean away and retaining my mother tongue. In my adult years, I seek to honor and reinterpret these narratives through the violin in a multimedia performance setting to explore and express this dynamic cultural identity. In the dissertation concert, I will feature six compositions that loosely follow a chronological order from my childhood to my adulthood, illustrating an overarching autobiography.

The expansion of violin performance into multimedia presentations started with reexamining the bow arm's gestures. These bow arm gestures not only serve as a fundamental element to desired sound production, but also as a visual component of performance. The visualization of the bow arm's gestures expands its expressiveness and potential as compositional material; the kinetic energy or pathway of the bow arm can be reinterpreted as a visual motif. With the use of motion sensors like the MUGIC®, these gestures can be further

explored through direct conversion of their kinetic energy into data. As a performer-composer, the violin and the autonomy of the violinist, particularly the bow arm, become the root of my compositions. The memories, stories, and cultural experiences shaped by my upbringing as a Japanese-American immigrant inform my understanding of the violinist's bow-arm gestures as a central expressive medium.

Throughout my studies in the PhD Program in Integrated Composition, Technology, and Improvisation at the University of California, Irvine, I have developed a comprehensive skill set in electronic technologies to create multimedia performances. This includes creating backtracks for performance in digital audio workstations such as Logic Pro, live sound processing using MaxMSP, and implementing surround sound systems with MaxMSP and the GALAXY Meyers System. Additionally, I have advanced proficiency in self-directing and editing videos in Final Cut Pro and Jitter, and I experiment with projecting onto objects such as a rock or organ, instead of just the screen or wall. Finally, I have incorporated the MUGIC® motion sensor into my bow arm technique, which converts my bow arm gestures into data, whether on or off the strings, that can electronically manipulate a sonic or visual element. The presence of the motion sensor also alters the nature of my gestures by expanding the expressive possibilities available to the violinist. Collectively, these technologies have tremendously expanded my sonic and visual palette as a violinist. I do not use all of these technologies at once in a singular work, but rather choose which technologies will best serve the narrative I am trying to convey through the violin.

As a central inquiry of this dissertation, I examine how my practice-based research in autoethnographic storytelling performances redefines the boundaries between composer and performer. By weaving together my background in Western classical violin training with a phenomenological study of my experiences with Japanese narrative arts, I create performances

that immerse audiences in both fictional and non-fictional stories and memories. Chapter One establishes a practitioner-researcher framework and draws on Japanese narrative art forms such as *haiku*, *Nihon-Buyō*, and *kamishibai* to contextualize the bow arm as a communicative, kinesthetic, and dramaturgical medium.

Chapter Two surveys contemporary composer-performers whose work expands the performing body through multimedia and technological augmentation. Natacha Diels's work *Nightmare for JACK* (2013) engages the performing bodies of a string quartet as a vital element of multimedia expression. Composers such as Simon Steen-Andersen and Mari Kimura use technology to amplify the visual bodily gestures of string players, creating unique concert experiences. Mari Kimura's innovative MUGIC® motion sensor can translate data points of a bow movement, such as acceleration and position, into a computer. Larger works that contain multiple stimuli, such as video, lighting, and props, fully immerse the audience into the narrative of a performance or a composer's "worldmaking." This immersion is especially powerful when the performance recalls a personal story or recreation of a lived experience, such as in the works by violinist and singer-songwriter Kishi Bashi and vocalist-composer Jennifer Walshe.

Chapter Three brings these strands together through an autoethnographic lens, synthesizing narrative theory, improvisation practices, and Japanese artistic principles to articulate new approaches to composition and performance. My dissertation concert features six compositions experimenting with different intersections of autobiographical narrative, violin bow gestures, visual elements, and technologies. In the dissertation concert order, they are: *Eat Every Grain of Rice* (2024) for violin, soprano saxophone, percussion, video, and live electronics; *Peach Boy* (2024) for violin, narrator, electronics, and MUGIC® sensor; *I Pledge Allegiance?* (2023) for violin, electronics for Quadrophonic or 8-channel surround sound; *Kero*

Kero Choir (2025) for violin, percussion, organ, electronics, and video projection; *Hibiscus* (2023) for violin, piano, and mixed improvising ensemble, and *Mai 舞 : Variations on Bow Arm Gestures* (2025) for violin, drums, piano, cello, and voice. Video documentation for all compositions discussed in this dissertation is provided in Appendix A.

CHAPTER 1: The Violin Bow Arm as Creative Agency

1.1 The Practitioner-Researcher

My research spans multiple fields of artistry, most notably classical violin, improvisation, Japanese narrative arts, and music technology. The creative process of composing, rehearsing, and performing is heavily informed by my lived experiences and memories. This puts my body of research and work in line with practitioner-centered theory and research, fueled by many similar practitioner-researchers, including violinist-theorist Jonathan De Souza. In his 2025 keynote at The Ohio State University, De Souza examined phenomenological approaches to the intertwining of musical practice and emerging theories based on the performer's body and gestures. Approaching music theory in this way allows the *performer's* mind, background, and culture to be considered when analyzing the music.⁸ Thus, as a performer-composer, I tune into the symbiotic relationship of creation off and on the stage, and research methods of autoethnographic storytelling as a personalized practice of violin performance.

This dissertation research examines the synchronization of bow arm gesture and sound production as a mode of inquiry that expands the craft of narrative violin performance. The bow arm's gestures are a crucial interface that connects the violinist's kinesthetic body movements to sound production, which is then interpreted by the audience as an audio-visual performance. Therefore, examining and expanding the gestural and visual dimensions of the bow arm will, in effect, alter the reception of the multi-sensory performance. Examining how to best utilize the bow arm, a violinist's connective tissue of body and sound production, to narrate effectively in a performance, is the question that drives this creative research. Through the processes of

⁸ Jonathan De Souza, "Phenomenological Reflections on Music Theory and Practice: A Violinist-Theorist's Perspective," Keynote Lecture, Practitioner-Centered Music Theory: Concepts, Methods, Perspectives, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, October 10, 2025.

deconstruction, reconceptualization, and datafication of bow arm gestures, new performance practices emerge that extend the expressive and narrative capacities of the violinist. These evolving practices develop a gestural language of the bow arm, encompassing emotional, stylistic, and cultural inflections that can enhance multimedia performances. Furthermore, my creative research's "product," as Robin Nelson details in his Practice-as-Research methodologies, is not simply illustrating a narrative, but *performing* a narrative, to generate knowledge of intuitive, visceral, and resonant performances.⁹

This creative research approach aligns with Nelson's praxis triangle and the multi-modal processes of being a practitioner-researcher. Conceptualizing one's practice as a practitioner-researcher inquires "defamiliarization and affirmation," or finding dissonances and consonances between the practice and other disciplines.¹⁰ In my research, these disciplines include studies of dance, theatre, sound design, and education. Collaborating on interdisciplinary creative work and deeply connecting with a non-musician or a musician with a non-classical background, forces new approaches and deconstructs my classical music training. In past experiences, musical parameters such as odd-time meters, harmony, or violin technique were not a shared language with the collaborator; in these cases, gesture and narrative effectively communicated direction and synchrony. Therefore, through collaborations with practitioners of other disciplines and "defamiliarizing" myself with violin technique or classical music jargon, I arrive at a new methodology of interdisciplinary and multimodal performance practice structured by a narrative framework.

⁹ Robin Nelson, "From Practitioner to Practitioner-Researcher," in *Practice as Research in the Arts*, ed. Robin Nelson (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013), 26, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137282910_2.

¹⁰ Nelson, "From Practitioner to Practitioner-Researcher," 31.

Argentine German composer Mauricio Kagel details that music can be “indescribable,” but the “plot, dynamic forces between persons, and the tensions” are more easily recounted.¹¹ Kagel adds that composers inherently narrate “things all the time,” balancing “sound visualization” and “optical visualization.”¹² Particularly in my practice, bow arm gestures become the conduit of sound visualization and the basis of optical visualization in multimedia violin performance. In a more technical discipline, the education of bow gestures to other violinists yields deconstruction and documentation for pedagogical purposes. For pupils to correlate the body or material (bow hair) for optimal sound production, bow arm gestures can be defamiliarized with simple kinesthetic movement. For example, in the opening passage of Alban Berg’s Violin Concerto, the four open strings (G, D, A, E) can be performed meticulously and controlled in a metric fashion. This, however, yields a tighter bow arm to change the angle of the bow. My professor from California State University Long Beach, Dr. Moni Simeonov, instructed me to create an arc with the bow arm and let gravity help with the descending arm motion; this yielded a smoother and seamless string crossing for a more lyrical melodic line, and in effect matches the “innocent” character of the piece’s dedicatee, who was a child.

Know-How

The praxis triangle outlined by Nelson of “know-how,” “know-what,” and “know-that” provides methodologies for my practice as research. The “know-how,” which are “actions, recognitions and judgements” we “carry out spontaneously,” mainly constitute classical violin bow technique, my years of performance experience, and previous interdisciplinary collaboration methodologies based on gesture and narrative.¹³ This praxis also includes the cognitive and

¹¹ Juan María Solare and Mauricio Kagel, “Curiosity Is Limitless: A Last Interview with Mauricio Kagel,” *Tempo* 63, no. 250 (2009): 20.

¹² Solare and Kagel, “Solare and Kagel, ‘Curiosity Is Limitless,’” 20.

¹³ Nelson, “From Practitioner to Practitioner-Researcher,” 42.

bodily capacities, which equate to the range of the bow arm's "biological, psychological, and cultural" contexts.¹⁴ The "know-how" encompasses intuitions, or "patterns of stimulations" that carry out not only in performance, but also in the process of composition as bodily intelligence that leads inquiry and expressive meaning.

Peter Spissky, in his dissertation, "Ups and Downs, Violin Bowing as Gesture," explores the violinist's body as a "factor in the interaction with the instrument" and "in the interpretation of a composition."¹⁵ Therefore, the body of the violinist is inseparable from the instrument. Spissky claims that this gesture-based compositional method dates back beyond the Baroque Era.¹⁶ Most notably, secular instrumental Baroque music is based on dance and poetry, from its form and "mimetic gestures."¹⁷ In the work of Spissky, he "[reconstructs] performance practice through historical information," by incorporating the gestural element of dance and poetic imagery, such as in the works of Telemann and Vivaldi.¹⁸ This reconstruction of performance practice also applies to my creative research, as narrative theory and the act of narration augment the process, performance, and audience interpretations.

Know-What

The "know-what" invites critical reflection, such as through self-feedback, and analyzing documentation. Taking a step back from "repetitive experiences of a specialized practice" to recontextualize the practice resonates with Christopher Small's theory on musicking.¹⁹ Finding new meanings of Western concert music performance, challenging the human relationships, or

¹⁴ Nelson, "From Practitioner to Practitioner-Researcher," 43.

¹⁵ Peter Spissky, "Ups and Downs: Violin Bowing as Gesture" (Lund University, 2017), <http://www.upsanddowns.se>.

¹⁶ Spissky, "Ups and Downs: Violin Bowing as Gesture," 2.

¹⁷ Spissky, "Ups and Downs: Violin Bowing as Gesture," 2.

¹⁸ Spissky, "Ups and Downs: Violin Bowing as Gesture," 2.

¹⁹ Nelson, "From Practitioner to Practitioner-Researcher," 45.

lack thereof, in these concert halls,²⁰ and defining what a “successful performance” is, leads me to narrative-based compositions and performance practices. The know-what also encompasses the interplay of practice-led research, research-led practice, and academic research.²¹ This interplay has reconceptualized bow arm gestures in many ways, including the implementation of motion sensors and employing narratives or specific scenic characteristics to drive new compositional thematic material, such as a frog’s leaping motion inspiring musical parameters that structurally mandate specific physical gestures from the violinist.

The “soundist” and “gesturist” approaches to violin performance discussed in Spissky’s work further explore the capacity of a narrative violin performance. The soundist mentally imagines what the music sounds like so that the intention of producing an expressive sound triggers expressive sound-producing movements, which can be visually perceived as expressive in themselves.²² This approach to music making represents the basic model of classical music technique, to refine body gestures to efficiently and accurately produce a clean, resonant sound. On the other hand, the gesturist will “[devise] the movements first, directly from the score, with various external inspiration sources, and letting the sound happen as a result of these movements.”²³ Dance forms, particularly from the Baroque Era, serve as a “natural source of inspiration for a violinist’s body movement.”²⁴ Blending a gesturist approach to performance with Kagel’s work on instrumental theatrics, the perception of body movement as a visual element to enhance the performance holds equal importance to the musicking. Furthermore, a gesturist performance is “highly communicative within the ensemble and also the audience,”

²⁰ Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*, Music Culture (Wesleyan University Press, 2011), 16.

²¹ Nelson, “From Practitioner to Practitioner-Researcher,” 45.

²² Spissky, “Ups and Downs: Violin Bowing as Gesture.”

²³ Spissky, “Ups and Downs: Violin Bowing as Gesture.”

²⁴ Spissky, “Ups and Downs: Violin Bowing as Gesture.”

because patterns of sonic gesture evoke bodily gestures that are culturally meaningful to an individual ... because our imagination is embodied.”²⁵ In this way, music is projected in the same manner as other social interactions, which is also noted in the practice of musicking: “the fundamental nature and meaning of music lie not in objects, not in musical works at all, but in action, in what people do.”²⁶

As bow arm gestures are a form of inquiry in itself, we must reflect on what gesture is and what it informs. Spissky also discusses the word “gesture” as an important problematic feature in music-related movement studies, where gesture and movement are used interchangeably.²⁷ In his dissertation, he offers several definitions from multiple scholars, but the one that resonates the strongest in both our research is Robert Hatten’s: gesture’s role to manifest the “evolutionarily refined capacity to interpret significant energetic shaping through time,” and particularly “human gesture’s links to music’s potential expressive meaning.”²⁸ Gesture, as detailed in Spissky’s gesturalist approaches to performance, is a vital element that can serve as continuity or discontinuity across rests or articulated silence.²⁹ The role of gesture in connecting musical phrases, such as following a cadential moment in a J.S. Bach unaccompanied sonata, is not a new concept. However, whereas transitions are meticulously rehearsed and notated in narrative-driven performance forms such as opera and theatre, in violin performance, the bow arm functions as the primary gesture that sustains the audience’s engagement through non-sonic and silent transitions. Furthermore, how the bow arm moves through space not only affects the

²⁵ Stefan Östersjö, “Go To Hell : Towards a Gesture-Based Compositional Practice,” *Contemporary Music Review* 35, nos. 4–5 (2016): 481, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07494467.2016.1257625>.

²⁶ Small, *Musicking*, 8.

²⁷ Spissky, “Ups and Downs: Violin Bowing as Gesture.”

²⁸ Robert S. Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert* (Indiana University press, 2004), 2.

²⁹ Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics and Tropes*, 3.

violin's initial sound and resonance when released, but the nuanced motions of speed, height, force, and manner aid the violinist's role as a narrator.

Know-That

Finally, the "know-that" praxis refers to "the knowledge gained through the experiencing of practices intrinsic to any specific research inquiry."³⁰ By recontextualizing violin performance in and through various disciplines, a new practice of multimedia narrative performance emerges. Specifically, using bow gestures to recompose with a theatrical, technological, and kinesthetic lens transposes bodily experiences into a perception of new meanings.³¹ Because "know-that" encompasses knowledge that is gained through practice, the activity of musicking becomes a vital framework for the practitioner-researcher. This activity of musicking involves not only the performer, but the shared responsibility of the performance's "nature and quality, success or failure" among all who are present.³² Therefore, the audience's understanding, perception, and positive or negative resonance with the performance also shape the compositional process.

Using bodily gestures, and specifically for my creative research, the bow arm serves as a real-time embodied knowledge that exceeds a passive act simply for visual pleasure. The *humanness* of performance is observed and reflexively embodied for the audience. Bow arm gestures thus serve as a dialogue, transcending language, cultural, theoretical, and genre barriers. Ultimately, this comes from a performer's desire to connect deeply with a diverse audience and to share a narrative with varying degrees of relatability, using bow arm gestures as a form of inquiry to bring a stronger and successful act of musicking in narrative multimedia performances.

³⁰ Nelson, "From Practitioner to Practitioner-Researcher," 46.

³¹ Nelson, "From Practitioner to Practitioner-Researcher," 46.

³² Small, *Musicking*, 10.

1.2 The Classical Violin Bow Arm

Referring back to Nelson’s “Know-How,” the classical violin bow arm is the foundational mode of inquiry for this research. Bow technique study and artistry are essential to mastering the violin.³³ Because much of the sound on the instrument originates from the bow’s contact with the strings, producing a diverse range of timbres requires an intricate understanding of weight distribution shifts across the bow arm. In this way, the bow is an extension of your right arm – a concept my formative teacher, William Fitzpatrick, emphasized often. Rethinking the right arm *as* bow technique foregrounds the violinist’s cognitive and tactile body movements as integral to the music-making. Violin pedagogue Paul Stoeving notes that the violinist must have a relaxed bow arm to be able to “move [their hand] on the stick, yield in its joints, bend and stretch, but permit being individually sensitized” to create the desired sound.³⁴ As the right hand is the first contact with the bow, building a flexible bow hand and arm allows “mind impulses” of “brain and heart of the player” to be effectively emulated in performance.³⁵ This flexible bow arm allows both conscious muscle movement to alter the sound effectively, and also intuitive, unconscious adjustments that exemplify the conjoined network of mind to body to sound. Understanding the causal relationship of the bow arm to the sound of the violin lays the foundation of my research.

The bow arm comprises four primary components: the upper arm, forearm, hand, and fingers.³⁶ Thus, the violinist hinges movement from four principal joints: the shoulder, elbow, wrist, and knuckles. Any minute movement from the joints directly affects the sound of the

³³ My formative classical violin studies were with William Fitzpatrick, who was a pupil of the legendary American pedagogue, Dorothy DeLay. Therefore, my perspective on bow technique stem from this lineage.

³⁴ Paul Stoeving, *The Mastery of the Bow and Bowing Subtleties* (Carl Fischer, 1920), 2, Google Books, https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Mastery_of_the_Bow_and_Bowing_Subtle.html?id=zysuAAAAYAAJ.

³⁵ Stoeving, *The Mastery of the Bow and Bowing Subtleties*, 2.

³⁶ Stoeving, *The Mastery of the Bow and Bowing Subtleties*, 19.

violin, as variations in arm weight and distribution are transmitted through the bow to the string. It is also important to illustrate that the natural movement of the joints within their sockets follows a circular pattern, generating a rotary motion at the elbow that channels into the hand.³⁷ An example of this is twisting the forearm towards the body, creating pronation of the index finger. This pronation facilitates a direct transfer of weight into the bow for a heavier sound; a technique often used in *martelé* (accented) stroke. Training flexibility and cognitive intuition of these joints allows the violinist to have a variety of sounds at their disposal. Such mastery is essential not only for executing various bow techniques such as *legato* and *spiccato*, but also for building a diverse timbral palette through a single bow arm, a single person. The violinist must, of course, be able to manipulate their joints while on the string, yet equally significant are the bow arm gestures that occur before and after contact with the string.



Figure 2: Diagram illustrating the violin bow's pathway, a figure 8-pattern, integrating horizontal down-bow and up-bow motion with rotary joint actions that trace the arc of the four strings.

³⁷ Stoeving, *The Mastery of the Bow and Bowing Subtleties*, 42.

The progression through the three stages of the violin bow – *before* contact with the string, *during* contact with the string, and *after* contact with the string – creates the kinetic cycle of a violinist. These three stages all follow a pathway that Prof. Fitzpatrick described as a figure-eight pattern (Figure 2).³⁸

This figure-eight pattern depicts the pathway a bow hand travels, which combines Paul Stoeving's note of the arm's rotary joints creating circular patterns, the arc of the bridge suspending the four strings, and the bow's horizontal down-bow and up-bow motions. This bow pathway is valuable in connecting the three stages of the bow hand because the violinist approaches the string in the same manner as the desired bow stroke and sound. Thus, the preparatory bow gesture is important in the sound when the bow glides or bounces off the string, due to how the energy transferred from the body into the bow *directly* influences the sound. Elements such as the speed of the approaching bow, amount of bow hair through the tilt of the stick, location of point of contact (near the fingerboard or near the bridge), which part of the bow to start the note (tip, middle, or frog of the bow), and the amount of arm weight being transferred all should be detailed and executed in the preparatory gesture, before contact onto the string. The figure-eight pathway allows the violinist to follow a predetermined trajectory to map spatial coordination of preparatory bow gestures to ensure placing the note on time, and more importantly, consistent reproduction of the timbre crafted in the practice room. Therefore, every gesture of the bow arm begins in the mind and formulates an intended sound mediated through a visualized body motion. The same principles apply to the way the bow departs the strings, much like the follow-through of a tennis player's racket arm.³⁹ How the bow is released directly

³⁸ William Fitzpatrick, "What I Teach: Getting Your Bow to the String – Violin Video Lesson by William Fitzpatrick," Virtual Sheet Music, May 7, 2025, <https://www.virtualsheetmusic.com/experts/william/bow-to-the-string/?srsltid=AfmBOorw30oXcApnJLqQ2OrOLMznKRorP52SvOCU9P3DXrts5zY80js8&utm>.

³⁹ A metaphor Prof. Fitzpatrick often introduced to his students.

influences the resonance of the violin, which extends the sound beyond the contact on the strings.

Such choreographed bow-arm gestures possess a visual element that is naturally linked to the sonic output. Observing myself in the practice room mirror to memorize the bow motions for executing them the same way in my lessons or on the stage shifted my perspective to that of the audience. The audience views the performing violinist's body as the primary site of expression, rather than the instrument itself. Much like how an orchestra follows a conductor's gesture and interprets that into sound, the violin bow arm gestures have the potential to carry expression beyond their surface-level functions of sound production and visual flair. In this research and collection of creative activity, I expand bow arm gestures into five praxes to build new epistemologies and compositions: communication, kinesthetic expression, motif, motion data, and gestural dramaturgy. As described in my INTRODUCTION, my Japanese upbringing and ethnic background heavily shape my creative process and presentation, particularly Japanese narrative arts. The three main Japanese narrative art forms discussed in this dissertation, Haiku, Nihon-buyō, and Kamishibai, will be described in the following section. These will be woven into the writing through exploring the five praxes of bow arm gestures: as communication, kinesthetic expression, motif, motion data, and gestural dramaturgy.

1.3 Japanese Narrative Art Forms

1.3.1 Haiku (俳句)

Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry, characterized by its three-line structure of five, seven, and five syllables per line. The five and seven-syllable structure is very intuitive for the Japanese language, as most words are two or three syllables. Haiku is practiced across a wide range of age groups and even worldwide as an accessible introduction to poetry due to its short structure. A mark of a well-written Haiku is minimalist yet powerfully evocative of a scene's imagery, or a moment in time. This evocative imagery also has a sense of immediacy, through the present tense language and the characteristic of "capturing a moment in time."⁴⁰ In essence, Haiku highlights the appreciation of "smallness," "gentleness with other living beings," and "a sacred handling of the things we normally do not think [of] as living."⁴¹

Kigo (季語), or a poetic device used to denote a season⁴², and *ginkō* (吟行), a purposeful walk into nature to seek inspiration and materials to compose a haiku, influence my musical practice. Most of my compositions feature audio or visual field recordings, which effectively help the performance allude to historical, spiritual, or environmental references. This allusion stems from the similar phenomenon of kigo, where specific words such as snow, butterfly, or ginkgo leaves allude not only to particular seasons but also to the temperature, mood, and colors associated with those words. Through field recordings, the audience is immediately transported into a setting, while triggering other senses, such as taste and smell, after watching freshly cooked rice mixed on the screen (in my composition *Eat Every Grain of Rice*), or the touch of a

⁴⁰ Zach Hudson, "Haiku in the Classroom: More Than Counting Syllables," *English Journal* 102, no. 6 (2013): 55, <https://doi.org/10.58680/ej201324041>.

⁴¹ Hudson, "Haiku in the Classroom," 55.

⁴² Julie Bloss Kelsey, "New to Haiku: What Is a Kigo?," The Haiku Foundation, February 25, 2024, <https://thehaikufoundation.org/new-to-haiku-what-is-a-kigo/>.

cool breeze after hearing a recording of several frogs with crickets (in my composition *Kero Kero Choir*). Furthermore, field recordings create an immediate intimacy among a diverse audience. When possible, I take a *Ginkō* and record my own field recordings. This helps contextualize the field recording better, so when I sit at my desk to compose, I can reimagine the scenery of the captured field recording or a moment in time. Through *Ginkō* for field recording purposes, my compositions become personalized, and the autoethnographic element of my performance is strengthened.

1.3.2 Nihon-Buyō (日本舞踊)



Figure 3: *Sensu (fan) movements inspired by nature. From left to right: “falling flowers,” and “trailing mist.” Reproduced from Nidaime Hanayagi Juō, Miseru Nihon Buyō (2020).*

Nihon-Buyō is one of the traditional dance forms that is still widely practiced in modern Japan. This dance genre stems from Nō, Kyōgen, and Kabuki, and was more widely practiced in the early twentieth century, around the Taisho period (1912-1926). Nihon-Buyō is characterized by simpler clothing compared to Nō or Kabuki, and features greater freedom in the expression of scenery and narrative through movement. Most of the choreographic elements are based on expressing the four seasons (春夏秋冬) and the beauties of nature (花鳥風月), similar in

principle to *kigo* in haiku.⁴³ Annotated photographs from Hanayagi Juō’s book *Miseru Nihon Buyō* depict some common *kata*, or “movement vocabulary” inspired by those found in nature (Figure 3). This figure only lists a very short list of *sensu* (fan) movement vocabularies, but using other props such as the long kimono sleeve (振袖, *furisode*), a Japanese umbrella (舞傘, *mai-gasa*), or simply the hand obtains a large library of these nature-inspired movement vocabularies. These arm gestures, accompanied by music and precise body movements, function as narrative devices. The beauty of Nihon-Buyō’s arm-movement vocabulary lies in its semiotic richness, producing meaning that exceeds the physical motions themselves. The audience engages by imagining the scenery through these arm gestures that combine a core aspect of Japanese cultural attunement to the seasons.

Inspired by the narrative arm gestures endemic to Nihon-Buyō, I’ve reimagined violin bow gestures as both an auditory and visual storytelling device. With violin bow arm gesture, there is a sound that follows the motion, which adds another layer to these movement vocabularies. One of the clearest allusions to utilizing this nature-inspired movement vocabulary is my Kero Kero project, which currently consists of two pieces: the premiere for nine violinists titled *Kero Kero Violin Choir* (2023), and the second, *Kero Kero Choir* (2025) for violin, percussion, organ, electronics, and projection.⁴⁴ “Kero Kero” is the onomatopoeia for a frog’s croak in Japanese. The first iteration from 2023 was inspired by the frog choir I heard in

⁴³ “Bando Itsuo,” Bando Itsuo, 2021, <https://www.bando-itsuo.com/>. 春夏秋冬 (“shunka-shūtō”) and 花鳥風月 (“kachō fūgetsu”) are both four-word-phrases (四字熟語, “yoji-jyukugo”) that carry meaning or message beyond the literal translations of the Kanji characters used. Shunka-shūtō’s Kanji characters use the four kanji’s of the four seasons, but this yoji-jyukugo also denotes the cyclical nature of the seasons. Kachō fūgetsu’s kanji comprise of “flower”, “bird”, “wind”, and “moon”, which render nature’s elegance of the seasons. As seen in haiku, being in tune with the seasons is a core aspect of Japanese cultural, which expands beyond the arts into areas such as in cuisine, gardens (庭園), and daily life.

⁴⁴ For the purposes of this dissertation, *Kero Kero Choir* (2025) will be further discussed in Chapter 3, as part of the Dissertation Concert.

Nakajima Park in Sapporo, Japan, on my nightly commute adjacent to the large pond during my month-long orchestra management work. When I listened closely to the frog choir, I could distinguish that each frog had their own unique song, but they all morph together to create a sound mass that lurks among the fog of the humid July nights. Since these frogs croak in large numbers only on summer nights, their calls mark the arrival of summer for Sapporo residents. As a musician, this otherworldly frog choir was material I kept revisiting, both sonically as a sound source and conceptually through the principles of *kigo* with its connection to summer nights in Nakajima Park.

In the first version with the nine violinists,⁴⁵ my primary goal was to recreate the lurking, spatial, and mysterious scenery of my nightly commute. With nine violin bow arms, I took the imagery of frog motions as the kinesthetic motif for compositional material. For example, the leaping frog action was mimicked by string crossings across the four strings, and another section featured sforzando tremolos to mimic frogs jumping from one lily pad to another. The effect of random timings from each individual violinist painted the frogs' erratic leaping motions on stage, and the resulting sonic outcome was more of a causal, denser harmonic structure that highlighted these frog-inspired bow motions. The piece also began with half of the violinists playing within and behind the audience to create a spatial sonic field, and featured frog-like croaking sounds through the overpressure of the bow. These sonic and visual frog-inspired motifs built a scenery, solely through the sound and motions of the nine violinists. In this piece, the end features a frog choir with a clear meter and synchronized down-up bow directions. Through these audio-visual bow-arm gestures, the audience is drawn into the narrative arc: first croaking sparsely at their

⁴⁵ The premiere was written for the violin studio participants of the 2023 Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt in Darmstadt, Germany. I am thankful to my studio mates for experimenting with frog sounds and motions, and especially to our tutor, Hae-Sun Kang for encouraging me to compose a new work for the group.

own discretion, then ripples of the leaping bow arm motions in varied rhythms, culminating in a final chorale where a shared tempo and synchronized bows create a powerful sense of unification.

1.3.3 Kamishibai (紙芝居)



Figure 4: From *Kamishibai Man* by Allen Say. Houghton Mifflin, 2005.

The techniques and principles used in Kamishibai inform my practice as a performer, tying in storytelling through visual and sonic mediums to present as an experience. Kamishibai is a street-performance art invented in Japan in the late 1920s.⁴⁶ The literal translation of the word breaks down to “paper” and “theater.” Kamishibai features illustrated art cards through a wooden frame, which are dramatically revealed consecutively by the narrator, or *kamishibai-ya*. The mark of a great kamishibai-ya is in their technique to create dynamic movement from one card to the next, “so that the images could play an active role in narrating the events.”⁴⁷ For example, a slow, trembling card reveal can build tension to introduce the villain, or fast card switches build

⁴⁶ “Kamishibai Discussion Group,” National Storytelling Network, <https://storynet.org/groups/kamishibai/kamishibai-discussion-group/>.

⁴⁷ Tara McGowan, *The Kamishibai Classroom: Engaging Multiple Literacies Through the Art of Paper Theater*, 1st ed (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2010), 5.

excitement and vigor for fight scenes. Some techniques include only showing a portion of the next card and then pulling it rapidly to reveal a surprising turn of events.⁴⁸ These street art performances took place in parks and other public areas, providing multi-generational, accessible communal entertainment. Selling candy such as *Mizu-ame* (“water-candy,” 水飴), and using small props such as wooden blocks accompanied these stories and the totality of the Kamishibai experience. Though with the rise of television in the 1950s, kamishibai became a very minor form of entertainment, and is now considered a traditional form of Japanese storytelling art.⁴⁹

The elements of sound, visuals, and body movements of the kamishibai-ya all support the delivery of the story. The kamishibai-ya must “constantly negotiate the balance between aural (oral) and visual information,” to complement each other and “create an overall effect that is greater than the sum of its parts.”⁵⁰ This innate element of kamishibai informs my practice of storytelling violin performance, and how to effectively *perform* a narrative. Particularly for my visual elements in performances, I incorporate kamishibai-inspired techniques to enhance the storytelling performance. The speed and manner in which the kamishibai cards are drawn shape the delivery of the story. Therefore, the kamishibai cards serve as the action in this paper theatre art form and are not simply illustrations of the story. These techniques and principles that make a great kamishibai-ya, I refer to as kamishibai-ya methodologies. These methodologies are similar to the violin bow arm gestures, becoming the visible *action* that draws audiences into a performance. In classical violin performance, this concept is similar to continuing the motion of the bow arm through space to connect phrases across the violin lines’ rests, versus relaxing the bow arm down for longer orchestral interludes. The primary purpose here is to assert that a

⁴⁸ McGowan, *The Kamishibai Classroom*, 18.

⁴⁹ National Storytelling Network, “Kamishibai Discussion Group.”

⁵⁰ McGowan, *The Kamishibai Classroom*, 9.

musical phrase has not ended, and the silence in the violin part is part of the phrase. In my creative work of narrative violin performance, bow arm gestures are notated and improvised as performative actions that produce and transmit narrative meaning.

The video projections that accompany my violin performance take the most direct influence from my study of *kamishibai*, where the transitions between images or video clips are carefully crafted to embellish, and not disrupt, the violin performance on stage. In the digital film editing realm, crossfades and jump cuts between clips provide different levels of buoyancy in the speed of the unfolding narrative. In effect, the music that accompanies these transitions also reflects the same pacing, ranging from gradual shifts in sonic landscapes, or rhythmic and perhaps synchronized sounds with the image cuts. This coordination of momentum in the visual and aural domains is essential in encapsulating the audience into the presented narrative. The totality of the *kamishibai-ya*'s body movements, vocal inflections, and manner of drawing the cards constitutes a fragile, human-scale field in which narrative unfolds through the visible effort and vulnerability of a single performing body. This "humanness" innately found in *kamishibai* translates strongly to performing narrative, autoethnographic works as a violinist.

In performing my memories of family, cultural values, and Japanese folklore, the authenticity of these narratives is stronger through incorporating principles found in Japanese narrative art forms such as *haiku*, *nihon-buyō*, and *kamishibai*. It is essential in my practice as a composer-performer and practice-centered researcher to reexamine the narratives I engaged with in my childhood, which inevitably shape my current values and aesthetics. Drawing on the Japanese narrative art forms I grew up with, together with my training in classical violin performance and music technology, I identified five refined epistemologies of bow-arm gesture,

which I categorize as: communication, kinesthetic expression, motif, motion data, and gestural dramaturgy.

1.4 Bow Arm Gestures as Communication

In Classical music, cueing is an act musicians employ to communicate amongst themselves before starting a piece or passage. Cueing is practiced and rehearsed, such as in a string quartet setting; a successful cue is indicated by the uniformity of the ensemble's resulting sound. Each violinist also had their own distinct method of cueing, ranging in degrees of body movements, amplitude of audible breath, and preparatory bow gesture mannerisms. Learning how to read various players' cues illustrates the myriad methods to signal an entrance. The act of cueing displays the natural act of spatio-temporal beat positions, similar to a conductor's baton pattern.⁵¹ The tempo of the piece is translated through position, velocity, and acceleration of the preparatory bow arm gesture, often in a very short amount of time, such as just the anacrusis, suggesting classical musicians entrain to visual rhythms quickly.⁵² Furthermore, cues simply do not display the tempo or when the sound will occur, but other musical parameters such as dynamics, bow stroke, bow location (tip, middle, or frog), point of contact (range between the fingerboard and bridge), bow speed, and style. Successfully communicating these parameters of sound production through largely non-sound-producing gestures (excluding audible breath) is critical for effective ensemble performance.

Prof. Fitzpatrick shared an anecdote of when he first noticed the correlation of the preparatory bow motion before touching the string, and its importance on sound production. He was at a performance of violinist Shlomo Mintz playing the Sibelius Violin Concerto, and Prof.

⁵¹ Laura Bishop and Werner Goebel, "Beating Time: How Ensemble Musicians' Cueing Gestures Communicate Beat Position and Tempo," *Psychology of Music* 46, no. 1 (2018): 102, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735617702971>.

⁵² Bishop and Goebel, "Beating Time," 103.

Fitzpatrick observed the “superficial” and almost exaggerated preparatory bow before playing the first “D” in the opening theme of the finale.⁵³ As Shlomo always repeated this gesture every time the opening theme came back in the piece, Prof. Fitzpatrick was curious as to why Mintz was so committed to doing the same large preparatory bow motion. He decided to experiment by employing the preparatory bow gesture with his quartet members during a rehearsal of the Ravel String Quartet, and wanted to see if he could cue his quartet without lifting his scroll as he previously did. He simply approached the string with purpose, and to his surprise the quartet members were able to analyze the tempo, dynamics, energy, and timing miraculously in that single preparatory bow gesture. This anecdote and his accompanying teachings made it clear the importance of every engagement of the violinist’s bow arm with the string, whether from silence or from another note. How a violinist approaches the string, plays the string, and leaves the string are all intricately connected to the sound it produces. Regardless of musical training, this correlation of bow gestures and sound can be visually interpreted by others. For example, big down bow gestures for the final chord at the end of a long concerto are crowd-pleasing moments that show a burst of energy concluding the performance; the audience of broad-ranging musical abilities connects to the sound visually through the motions of the violinist.

Whether cueing a string quartet or adding exaggerated motion to amplify the energy of a passage, bow arm gestures communicate a plethora of information non-verbally. In the traditional classical performance realm, the information in bow arm gestures focuses more on synchronization of time and energy, but at the same time, these bow technique-informed gestures can function as a site of artistic expression.

⁵³ Fitzpatrick, “What I Teach: Getting Your Bow to the String – Violin Video Lesson by William Fitzpatrick.”

1.5 Bow Arm Gestures as Kinesthetic Expression

In essence, the bow arm gestures of the violinist visually communicate the labor of sound. This visual representation of labor is rather entertaining, which resonates with concepts of Mauricio Kagel's instrumental theatrics. In Kagel's *Dressur* (1977), a three-person percussion ensemble work, the performers' bodily gestures are precisely notated and deliberately amplified, transforming them into the central expressive element of the composition. Similar to techniques in preparatory bow arm gestures, a percussionist's mallet approaches the skin of the timpani in a nuanced manner informed by meticulous training and mastery to produce numerous dynamics and timbres. Kagel's works and writings on instrumental theatrics ultimately tie into his agenda of wanting to bring the audience back to an enjoyment of music with all the senses because music is also a scenic event.⁵⁴ The principles of instrumental theatrics allow the performer to seamlessly interpret a storyteller role, as all of their body motions become part of the music-making scenic event. Much like a storyteller or actor, the purpose thus becomes effectively expressing the narrative and its emotional nuances to the audience.

Through classical violin training and revisiting *nihon-buyō* dance, the bow, *sensu* (fan), *kasa* (umbrella), and *furisode* (long sleeve of the kimono) are essentially all extensions of the right arm – a concept Mr. Fitzpatrick retold in violin studio classes. In turn, classical violin bow techniques and *nihon-buyō* arm gesture forms can also inform arm movement without these props. This concept was solidified in my art film project with filmmaker Taso Papadakis, in a collaborative project titled “Ri Sa Hi” (2018). In the final scene of the film, Taso asked me to put my instrument away and move my body as if I were still playing the violin, allowing my left arm to be guided by right-arm techniques drawn from both classical violin and *nihon-buyō*. As a non-

⁵⁴ Björn Heile, *The Music of Mauricio Kagel* (2006; Routledge, 2007), 14:40.

dancer, this initially felt daunting, but the exercise revealed that I had, over time, cultivated a rich vocabulary from these two art practices, which I could now articulate intuitively to convey expressive meaning.

1.6 Bow Arm Gestures as Motif

For string players, the right hand plays a pivotal role in both performance and composition, as the bow arm gestures directly shape the resulting sound. Jonathan De Souza's Chapter on *The Violin as a Compositional Instrument* illustrates this point through motion-capture tracings of bow hand movements from J.S. Bach's Partita No. 3 in E Major, I. Prelude.⁵⁵

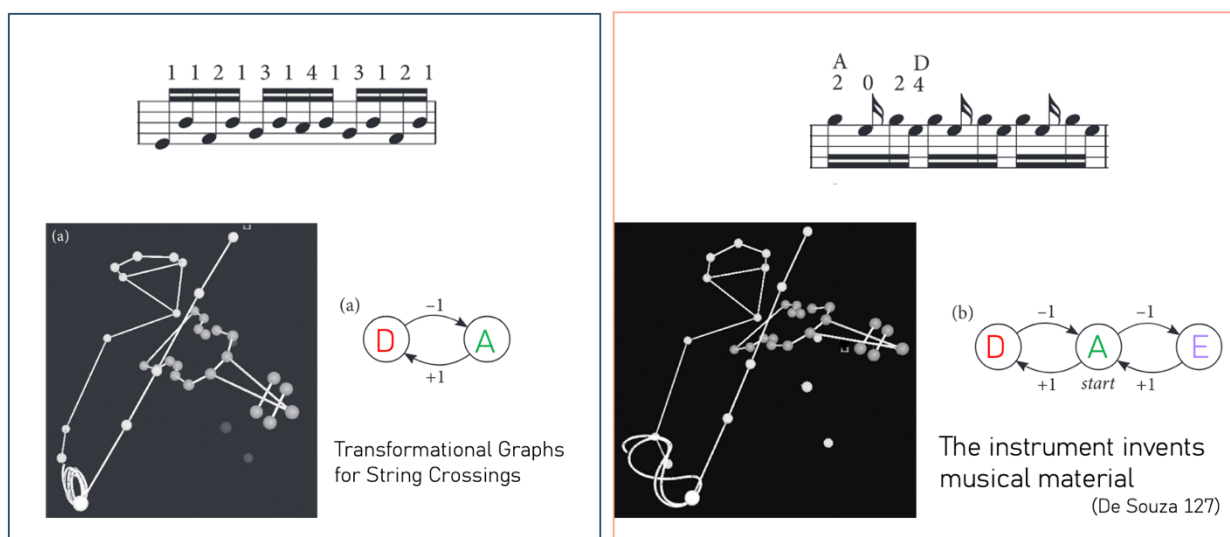


Figure 5: Excerpts from J.S. Bach's Partita No. 3 in E Major, I. Prelude, and accompanying transformational graphs. Adapted from De Souza *Music at Hand*, 2017, pg. 127.

According to the notation and long tradition and documentation of performances of this movement, the violinist will perform with these two-string or three-string crossing patterns. De Souza's transformation graphs, as seen in Figure 5, prompt a reconsideration of how the desired bow hand gestures themselves inform the composition. This Prelude from J.S. Bach's Partita No.

⁵⁵ Jonathan De Souza, *Music at Hand: Instruments, Bodies, and Cognition*, Oxford Studies in Music Theory (Oxford University Press, 2017).

3 in E Major is a masterful work that displays the virtuosity of the performing violinist. Effortlessly executing these string crossings serves as one of the challenges of this movement, which is also an iconic feature of the performing violinist. Figure 5 shows the two bow motions, one circular motion across two strings, and another figure eight motion across three strings (*bariolage*), that occur multiple times in the piece, often transposed. The layout of the four strings and the arc of the bridge invent these bow arm gestures, which Bach treats as a motif. The audience also familiarizes itself with these repeating bow arm gestures, where the transposed pitch material and shifting harmonic language blur the familiar visual gestures with new aural harmony.

Utilizing the visual aspect of bow arm gestures to evoke familiarity with musical material or mimicking animal motions has become an integral aspect of my creative work. By reframing performance through a storytelling perspective, effectively painting a scene becomes one of the primary goals in the compositional process and intended performance of the piece. Through my practice of *ginkō* in Nakajima Park in Sapporo, Japan, I was engulfed in the croaking of frogs whenever I passed by the large pond. The residents of Sapporo during my month-long work there told me that these frogs only croak in mass on summer nights, so hearing these frogs denoted summer. This phenomenon and sound, therefore, serve as a *kigo* for the residents of Sapporo. However, because these frogs only croak in mass at night and are therefore not visible in the dark, the lack of visual cognition of the sonic object adds mystery to this phenomenon. As a composer, this leaves room to visualize how the frogs are oriented, their colors, textures, and sizes, and their motions.

In my piece for nine violinists, recreating this frog mating choir summer night scene was the primary purpose of *Kero Kero Violin Choir* (2023).⁵⁶ Two frogs and frog choir-inspired bow arm gestures are incorporated into this piece and serve as motifs throughout the piece: the leaping motion of frogs, and leaping across lily pads or rocks. This unique ensemble of nine-violinists forced me to consciously incorporate the very “violinistic” qualities of the violin architecture and understand how a violinist reads and converts notation into bow arm gestures, as detailed in De Souza’s writing. The leaping motion of frogs was achieved through string crossing passages that are most effectively done across the four strings, similar to the cadenza passage in Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto in E minor. Figure 6 shows the notation of this passage to draw out the desired bow arm gesture, and by adding the instruction of “at various speeds,” this motif of the bow arm jumping vertically is naturally diverse and staggered. The visual ripple of vertical bow arm gestures alludes to the frog choir in Sapporo, where each frog has a distinct croak due to their various sizes in vocal sacs. The frogs’ and violinists’ unique but collective bow arm gestures create an audio-visual sound mass.

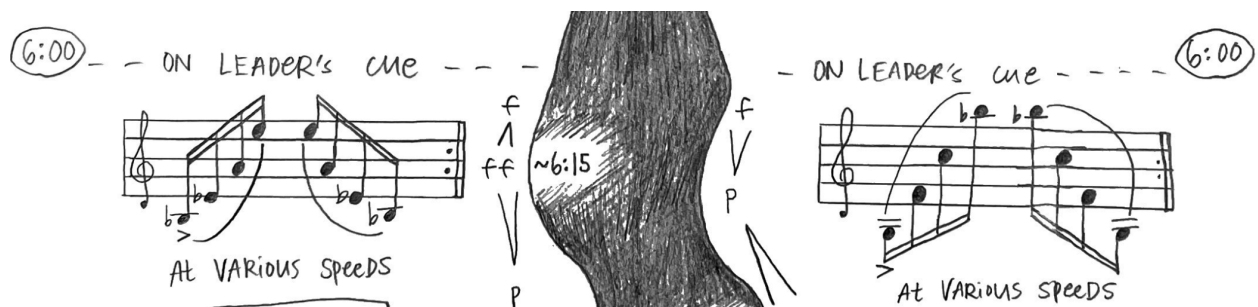


Figure 6: Excerpt from *Kero Kero Violin Choir* (2023) denoting a forced string crossing passage to mimic leaping frogs through bow arm gestures.

⁵⁶ “Kero Kero” is the onomatopoeia of a frog’s sound in Japanese.

Similar to the notated four-string crossing to draw out the intended bow arm gesture, another passage of a cell containing sforzando-tremolos with improvised pitch and timing provoked the violinists to rapidly change from the tip or frog (bottom) of the bow. This horizontal bow arm gesture successfully mimics frogs leaping across lily pads or rocks, thus serving as another visual motif that is minimized and augmented throughout the piece. Through repetition across the nine violin bow arms and varied across the piece, these bow arm gestures inspired by frogs become a gestural motif that the audience witnesses. These physical acts of performance that carry narrative meaning connect bow arm gestures to larger poetic or animalistic meanings. Using the musical, solely sonic meaning of motif in the visual realm and revisiting masterful violin repertoire provokes new compositional methods for narrative performance practices.

1.7 Bow Arm Gestures as Motion Data

Drawing on Nelson’s concept of “know-how” from the praxis triangle, specifically bow arm gestures, we can create audio-visual performances that remain aligned with the long traditions of violin performance practice. With the increasing use of various technologies in performance, finding the balance and seamlessness of technology in instrumental practice is a challenge that many artists explore. These technologies include gesture controllers, augmented instruments, and performing with mechatronic instruments (“instruments that produce sound using automatic mechanical parts, such as motors and gears.”)⁵⁷

Particularly for the violin, the subtle shifts in the bow arm constitute a rich site for motion capturing due to its innate continuous motions and expressive qualities. Some past examples of bow arm motion tracking devices include Keith McMillan’s K-Bow, a Bluetooth MIDI

⁵⁷ Sarah Reid et al., “Women Who Build Things: Gestural Controllers, Augmented Instruments, and Musical Mechatronics,” *New Interfaces for Musical Expression (NIME)*, 2018, 1.

controller that measures the bow hand's "bow position, acceleration, pressure and grip,"⁵⁸ or Diana Young's *Hyperbow*, a modified bow enhanced with a 2-axis accelerometer, "strain sensors, and a resistive strip used for position sensing."⁵⁹ The K-bow and Hyperbow yield "different capabilities than a traditional bow," which lead to "new bowing techniques," because the expressiveness of the bow arm has changed.⁶⁰ Of course, with weight and bow balance distribution differences, bow arm techniques will slightly differ from traditional bow techniques. In essence, augmented bows allow bow arm gestures to become real-time data, which can be used to seamlessly interact with MIDI data in real-time that would have otherwise not been possible without exerting another limb solely to control MIDI controllers. This seamless data extrapolation and transfer almost mystify the hidden wiring that connects the violinist's natural gestures for sound production into elements that expand their artistic expression. The welding of the body gestures and the tool into one entity aids the performer in luring the audience into the world-making and narrative performance.

With my advisor, Dr. Mari Kimura, I have the pleasure of experimenting and presenting⁶¹ the MUGIC® motion sensor throughout my doctorate studies. Founded by Dr. Kimura, who is also a violinist, the MUGIC® motion sensor is a small, lightweight, and wearable sensor capable of translating bow-arm gestures to real-time motion data.⁶² One of MUGIC®'s strong suits, particularly for my research, is its ability to translate non-sonic elements of my bow-arm motions, allowing the totality of my bodily gestures to contribute to storytelling onstage.

⁵⁸ Keith McMillen, "Project K-Bow," Keith McMillen KMI Labs, 2020, <https://www.keithmcmillen.com/labs/k-bow/>.

⁵⁹ Diana Young, *The Hyperbow: A Precision Violin Interface*, n.d., 3.

⁶⁰ Young, *The Hyperbow: A Precision Violin Interface*, 4.

⁶¹ Joint presentation for the "Technology and Music: A Short Symposium" at the Chamber Music America 2025 Conference in Houston, Texas.

⁶² Mari Kimura, "MUGIC MOTION About Us," MUGIC MOTION, accessed December 31, 2025, <https://www.mugicmotion.com/pages/about-us>.

Because of this new expressive parameter, I have discovered, like Dr. Kimura in the compositional process of her piece *VITESSIMO* (2006), that playing the violin and improvising with the incoming data was very effective in composing with this motion sensor.⁶³ In search for effective narrative violin performance, the MUGIC® is a strong tool for connecting the different media in my works, to effectively keep the audience engaged in the storytelling.

For example, in the fight scene of my work, *Peach Boy* (2024) for violin, narrator, and MUGIC® motion sensor, the rapid left-hand running up and down the fingerboard for the fast 16th notes of ascending and descending pitches creates a chaotic and anxious scenery. Visually, the violinist's bow is rapidly moving, at times accompanied by bow lifts. To keep the audience engaged with the Japanese folktale of *Momotaro*, electronic sounds of animal cries, sword clashing, and thunder are controlled by the MUGIC®, which is attached to the violinist's right hand. MUGIC®'s "jolt" parameter triggers an animal sound of a dog's bark, monkey's screech, or bird's flapping, with a sword contact sound. This creates an audio-visual image of the three companions aiding Peach Boy against the demons. As a more discreet effect, the "energy" parameter from the MUGIC® is mapped to the playback speed of the thunder sound file. By using the MUGIC®, the bow arm gestures' subtle yet perceivable parameters, such as "weight, mass, or stiffness," can be translated to similar "mass displacement: jerky, smooth, or periodic" visual responses.⁶⁴ Through the MUGIC®, playing on these modes of perceivable parameters and MIDI data parameters creates an "organic relation" between the artist and the computer.⁶⁵ This seamless, almost unnoticeable translation of energy helps keep the audience immersed in

⁶³ Mari Kimura, "Making of VITESSIMO for Augmented Violin: Compositional Process and Performance," *Proceedings of the International Conference on New Interfaces for Musical Expression* (Genova, Italy), 2008, 2.

⁶⁴ Mari Kimura et al., "Extracting Human Expression For Interactive Composition with the Augmented Violin," *Proceedings of the International Conference on New Interfaces for Musical Expression* (Michigan), 2012, 3, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1178305>.

⁶⁵ Kimura et al., "Extracting Human Expression For Interactive Composition with the Augmented Violin," 3.

the narrative of the performance. Any disjuncture or lag in the interaction of body gesture, sound, and visual imagery can deem an unsuccessful narration because it distracts the audience from the artistic presentation back into reality. Furthermore, the motion of the music-making is synchronized to the sonic descriptions of the narrative, making the violinist a storyteller, much like a *kamishibai-ya*.

1.8 Bow Arm Gestures as Gestural Dramaturgy

The above four epistemologies of analyzing bow arm gestures converge into a larger, synthesizing framework known as dramaturgy. Dramaturgy, a term often associated with theatre, encompasses the concept of a play (historical, cultural, and social) and the play itself (composition, structure, and fabric).⁶⁶ Dramaturgy also implies an “observation of the play in production, the entire context of the performance event,” and “the structuring of the artwork in all its elements (words, images, sound...).”⁶⁷ Given my engagement with multimedia and interdisciplinary performance contexts, a dramaturgical framework considers the audience’s perspective in narrative violin, emphasizing the unfolding spectacle and temporal structure of the performance.

Author Philip Auslander introduces the concept of “musical personae,” which refers to a performer presenting an identity in a social context.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the performing musician is an entity that mediates between themselves and the act of performance.⁶⁹ In narrative performances, the violinist becomes the storyteller and can also mediate as the protagonist or antagonist, depending on the piece’s narrative and interaction with multimedia elements. The

⁶⁶ Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrndt, *Dramaturgy and Performance*, Revised edition, Theatre and Performance Practices (Palgrave, 2016), 4.

⁶⁷ Turner and Behrndt, *Dramaturgy and Performance*, 5.

⁶⁸ Auslander, “Musical Personae,” 102.

⁶⁹ Auslander, “Musical Personae,” 102.

violinist takes on different “personas” to best serve the delivery of the narrative. Stan Sodlovitch’s idea of “personalism,” where the “person-centered particularities of performance and manner,” including the musician’s technique, facial expression, gestures, and attitudes, reminds us that performance is a way of communicating, not especially a work or a composer’s notions, but a person, the performer, through music.”⁷⁰ As Auslander’s “self-presentation” approach, as opposed to a performer’s “self-expression” through their music, also supports narrative performance, similar to an actor who can warp their bodily gestures to best represent their roles.⁷¹

Especially in the modern world, videos of the world’s top violinists are increasingly accessible at the fingertips through our smartphones. As vision is such a dominant sense,⁷² the audience *sees* the performer’s gestures as the overall dramaturgy; this concept is not foreign to the classical violin repertoire, especially those composed by violinists. A stellar example of composed dramaturgy of bow arm gestures can be found in Eugène Ysaÿe’s work, Sonata No. 3 “Ballade” for solo violin.⁷³ The “Tempo poco piu vivo e ben marcato” section towards the end of the piece that is based on the Dies Irae (Figure 7). The fingerings in the score force specific bow arm gestures to execute the passage across the four strings, depicting the gradual expansion from the lower two strings (G and D strings) to the final four-note chord that uses all four strings. The inclusion of inner open strings (the second and third notes of each four-note grouping) contributes to a perceptible growth of resonance, while simultaneously shaping the bow arm gestures and the Dies Irae’s dramaturgical trajectory, as the initially isolated open D string gradually expands to include both the D and A strings by the third measure.

⁷⁰ Auslander, “Musical Personae,” 103.

⁷¹ Auslander, “Musical Personae,” 103.

⁷² Chloe Cutts, “Sight over Sound,” *Strad* 124, no. 1482 (2013): 27.

⁷³ Eugène Ysaÿe, *Ballade*, No. 3, Six Sonates Pour Violon Seul, Op. 27 (Schott Music, 1924).

Legend: G D A E



Figure 7: Excerpt from Eugène Ysaÿe's work, Sonata No. 3 "Ballade" for solo violin. The fingerings marked in the score imply a specific bowing pattern, which depicts a gradual expansion of the bow moving towards the higher strings, as well as multiple open strings to exert natural resonance.

Tempo poco piu vivo e ben marcato, gradual right hand string crossing expansion

Legend: x = fingered note melody, o = open strings				
	G	D	A	E
m. 1.1	xx	oo		
m. 1.2	xx	oo		
m. 1.3	x	oox		
m. 2.1		xoox		
m. 2.2		xoo	x	
m. 2.3		oo	xx	
m. 3.1		o	xox	
m. 3.2		o	xox	
m. 3.3		o	xox	
m. 4.1		o	xox	
m. 4.2		o	xo	x
m. 4.3		o	o	xx
m. 5.1		o	o	xx
m. 5.2		o	o	xx
m. 5.3		o	o	xx
m. 6.1		o	o	xx
m. 6.2		o	o	xx
m. 6.3		o	o	xx
m. 7.1	o	o	x	x

Figure 8: A summarized table with the four-note groupings and strings used. The expansion of using two open strings and gradual movements towards the higher strings is evident here.

Seeing these morphing bow arm gestures in Ysaÿe's work, there are similarities in J.S. Bach's Prelude as analyzed by Jonathan De Souza. De Souza focuses on the string technique called *bariolage*, which combines open and fingered strings in the Prelude of Partita No. 3.⁷⁴ Through the gradual expansion and rise of the strings and pitches, Ysaÿe creates a haunting variation of the Dies Irae that is also visually dramatic through the forced bow arm gestures. In Ysaÿe's passage there, the *bariolage* pattern does not stay consistent for too long, but the open D string stays constant with the mostly semitone movement in the fingered melodic line. The addition of the open A string helps boost the amplitude because there are two resonating open strings against

⁷⁴ De Souza, *Music at Hand*, 129.

the melody rising on the E string. De Souza describes how Bach achieves these polyphonic textures with a single violin using “open strings, multiple stops, and string crossing,”⁷⁵ which perfectly describes how Ysaÿe is achieving this as well, through interlacing resonant open strings to build tension and large intervallic leaps as the pitch rises. This well-crafted passage for the right-hand is further impressive to the audience because the violinist’s bow arm movement increases gradually with the phrase. As a violinist-composer, Ysaÿe composed the passage with a clear awareness of the performer’s physical gesture, allowing these bow arm gestures to build the dramaturgical meaning. The violin’s architecture and performance practice “functions as a conceptual tool and a source of material; it becomes a compositional instrument.”⁷⁶

Reframing bow arm gestures as dramaturgy allows for not only new analysis of the violinist, but new compositional material, and thus new practitioner-centered performance practices. The influence of Japanese narrative art forms on my performer-composer craft provides a very personal and original approach to classical violin bow techniques and performance practices. These ideas are certainly not created in a vacuum and are also influenced by modern composer-performers whom I’ve had the privilege of watching perform live, talking about their work, and performing on stage with. In the following Chapter, I will discuss five composer-performers who specifically have shaped my research and craft during my PhD, and thus the pieces presented in the dissertation recital.

⁷⁵ De Souza, *Music at Hand*, 126.

⁷⁶ De Souza, *Music at Hand*, 133.

CHAPTER 2: Field Survey: Modern Composer-Performers Expanding the Art of Performance

This chapter details the work and craft of five composers who have influenced my craft as a performer-composer: Natacha Diels, Simon Steen-Andersen, Mari Kimura, Kishi Bashi, and Jennifer Walshe. Some, specifically Kishi Bashi and Jennifer Walshe, also exemplify the integration of cultural narratives and lived experiences into beautifully realized works and performances. As each composer's body of works is prodigious, I have selected one piece per composer that illuminates important aspects in my practice-based research for this dissertation. These five composers share a throughline of immersing their audiences into their "worldmaking" performances that are immersive, evocative, and at times, hypnotic.

These five composers are also innovative in defining the 21st-century growing craft of the "composer-performer," where each craft is inseparable from the other. Whether it is the use of the performer's body, cutting-edge technological uses in a performance setting, or telling personal, new narratives, one can see the nuanced personalization of the composition through each of their highly skilled craft as performers. In other words, these composer's works are truly experienced to their full potential through their performances. With increasing accessibility to technology, the craft of the modern performer is constantly changing. The idea of composition and performance simply as a "division of labor" as described by German-American composer and pianist Lukas Foss, seems less viable in contemporary practice.⁷⁷ The performer or performing role of the composer is that of an "active creator, shaping and molding the abstract scheme furnished him by the composer," as described by musicologist and composer Leonard B.

⁷⁷ Lukas Foss, "The Changing Composer-Performer Relationship: A Monologue and a Dialogue," *Perspectives of New Music* 1, no. 2 (1963): 46, <https://doi.org/10.2307/832102>.

Meyer.⁷⁸ This modern performer-composer craft also changes the way these composers compose, and the image of themselves performing is already considered in the creation process. The symbiotic and collaborative relationship between the performer and composer thus begins to shift in incorporating the performer's body, life, mind, and personal stories.

2.1 The Performing Body as Multimedia Expression

2.1.1 Natacha Diels - *Nightmare for JACK* (2013)

Natacha Diels' work *Nightmare for JACK* amplifies the motions of the string player, in this case, the four members of the JACK String Quartet. This piece features an innovative collaboration between instrumental theatrics and electronics, Diels herself referencing influences from Kagel's instrumental theatrics.⁷⁹ Diels challenges conventional expectations of what a string quartet sounds and looks like, creating a distinctive notational system that is both clear to performers and true to her worldmaking. Through the implementation of the uncanny valley, a diagram developed by Masahiro Mori used to compare human likeness with affinity, as a "positive artistic tool," Diels "temporarily suspends and exploits one's sense of reality within the visual, aural, and written contexts."⁸⁰

A string player's cues are natural motions that produce a sonic effect but also are a vehicle for the micro-interactions that occur while playing. Cueing is also a practical necessity: the bow's preparatory motion precedes sound, which is a principle mirrored in the origin of the conductor's baton. While motions like cueing and eye contact themselves don't create sound, they are vital components that affect the resulting sound and synchronization of the ensemble. A

⁷⁸ Auslander, "Musical Personae," 56.

⁷⁹ Natacha Diels, "Music and the Uncanny Valley. Nightmares: Three Compositions for Instruments, Gestures, and Electronic Sounds" (D.M.A., Columbia University, 2016), 34.

⁸⁰ Natacha Diels, "Art and the Uncanny: Tapping the Potential," *Leonardo Music Journal* 24 (2014): 75.

musician can cue another through eye contact, body and facial movements, and the right hand's bow gestures. The cue conveys important information through a combination of these body movements, including timing, tempo, style, dynamics, and bow direction. While the primary function of a cue is temporal synchronization among performers, body gestures and facial expressions additionally operate as semiotic devices that communicate phrasing and emotion, shaping collective sonic alignment. The audience also observes these non-verbal communicative body motions as a deep and intricate connection across the ensemble.

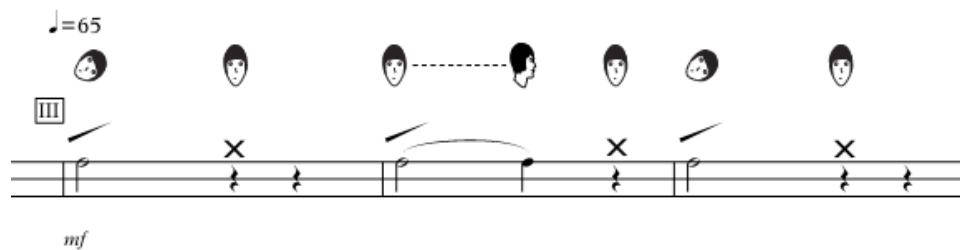


Figure 9: Excerpt from Natasha Diels *Nightmare for JACK*, 1st violin part, mm. 28-30. Here we can see Diels' unique notation system for head movements and bow angle movements.

Through Diels' unique notation system (Figure 9) to indicate unconventional bow and head movements in *Nightmare for JACK*, she aims to "choreograph and heighten the peculiar movements of classical instrumental technique."⁸¹ The metric head turns from the neck, erratic bow angle changes, and repeatedly putting their instruments into and out of playing position collectively create an uncanny expression. Thus, the performing human body itself becomes an instrument by disembodiment of human movement through robotic actions and electronic sounds.⁸² Diels' carefully notated physical movements of the performer's body can be traced back to Kagel's revolutionary works with "instrumental theatrics," a genre of contemporary music that

⁸¹ Diels, "Art and the Uncanny," 76.

⁸² Diels, "Art and the Uncanny," 76.

adds theatrics to the “expected role” of a performing musician. Instrumental theatrics primarily aim to displace the movements and sounds of the “protagonist” from their original environment of theater in a new context (i.e., in the Concert Hall), allowing “performers to interact with each other, as well as to be in close communication with the audience.”⁸³ In other words, instrumental music is observed differently through instrumental theatrical techniques because of the consideration for the performer’s body. The idea of a “performing body” is not unusual in other arts genres such as dance, theatre, and even opera, but classical instrumentalists don’t necessarily prioritize practicing how they are visually present onstage. In Diels’ case, she combines these physical gestures with electronics to further lure the audience into her fantasy world of the uncanny.

Nightmare for JACK also considers the interplay between the musicians and audience. As this work requires the quartet members to perform unnatural and jerky motions with their heads and instruments, the audience’s expectation of what a string quartet sounds and looks like is subverted, creating a “humorous and unsettling” experience to rope the audience into her “fantasy world of nightmare.”⁸⁴ Furthermore, as these quick body gestures are synchronized across the ensemble and to accidental noise or electronics, the audience’s attention is shifted to the strong visual element of the piece. As the audience’s expectation of this classic string quartet concert is twisted, they are entrapped in this audio-visual work, trying to make sense of or relate to what is unfolding onstage. However, through repetition, this rather uncanny performance turns into a groove, something familiar and even comfortable.⁸⁵ Diels skillfully alternates between

⁸³ Neda Nikolić, “INSTRUMENTAL THEATER IN THE WORKS OF MAURICIO KAGEL, GEORGES APERGHIS AND HEINER GOEBBELS,” *Facta Universitatis, Series: Visual Arts and Music*, July 31, 2020, 47, <https://doi.org/10.22190/FUVAM2001033N>.

⁸⁴ Diels, “Diels, ‘Music and the Uncanny Valley,’” 31.

⁸⁵ Diels, “Diels, ‘Music and the Uncanny Valley,’” 19.

these uncanny sections, which turn into familiar material and motif, and then back into uncanny material; the audience is engaged through the cascading tensions between the unknown and the comfort of familiarity. *Nightmare for JACK* strongly illustrates how audience engagement heightens when the pre-analyzed audience expectation is the object at play, especially through visual elements such as lighting, video, or gestures.

2.2 Utilizing Technology to Enhance the String Player's Gestures

2.2.1 Simon Steen-Andersen – Study for String Instruments #3

The motion of the bow arm equating to immediate sound is a fundamental concept that many composers have expanded on. Simon Steen-Andersen's three pieces in *Study for String Instruments* is an exemplary work that illuminates the "choreographic aspects" of a string player.⁸⁶ Steen-Andersen describes this trilogy as works that take the string player's natural performance gestures, where each piece develops from "movement of the sound" (causal performance gestures to create a sound) to "sound of the movement" (the causal sounds created from choreographed performance gestures) (Steen-Andersen).⁸⁷

The last work in the trilogy, *Study for String Instrument #3* features a pre-recorded video of the same cellist on stage. The "doubled" cellist in the video is projected and overlapped exactly onto itself, so at the beginning of the piece, there is almost no disjunction with its alter-ego. The music reflects this too, as the bow direction of up bow and down bow is the same as the video. After 30 seconds, the two cellists start to phase out of each other, which is a rather disturbing visual phenomenon that forces the audience to try to merge the "two" cellists back

⁸⁶ Simon Steen-Andersen, *Study for String Instruments #3*, n.d., <https://www.simonsteenandersen.com/projects/study-for-string-instrument-3>.

⁸⁷ Steen-Andersen, *Study for String Instruments #3*.

together. A similar response happens when our eyes are out of focus with each other, and to understand what we are seeing, the brain automatically attempts to refocus the blurry image. Because this phenomenon of the phasing images of the same cellist is rather distracting to the audience, it forces the visual element of the piece to the forefront. This phenomenon is further stretched; as the piece continues, more mirror imaging occurs, such as the cello getting turned upside down, or placed on its right or left like a guitar, and at the latter end of the piece, always in the opposite direction of the alter-ego cellist. This constant mirroring effect of the opposing bow, cello placement, and left-hand glissando motions makes for quite a “polyphony of sensations,” as Stefan Dress writes regarding Steen-Andersen’s compositions.⁸⁸ This image-driven contemporary composition can “exploit new artistic perspectives;”⁸⁹ in *Study for String Instrument #3*, the distorted image of the cellist(s) onstage showcases a new way of what a performing cellist could *look* like.

Looking at Steen-Andersen’s score in *Study for String Instrument #3*, the detailed bow notations uncover carefully planned choreographic elements that help create a distorted façade of a cellist. Traditional bow markings of up bow and down bow, and a unique notation showing how much bow to use per stroke, such as 1/1 bow or ½ bow can be seen in the score.

⁸⁸ Stefan Drees, “Expanded Music : The Technological Extension of Body and Instrument in Simon Steen-Andersen’s Piano Concerto (2013/14),” *Nuove Musiche*, no. 5 (2021): 96, <https://doi.org/10.12871/9788833395375>.

⁸⁹ Drees, “Expanded Music.”

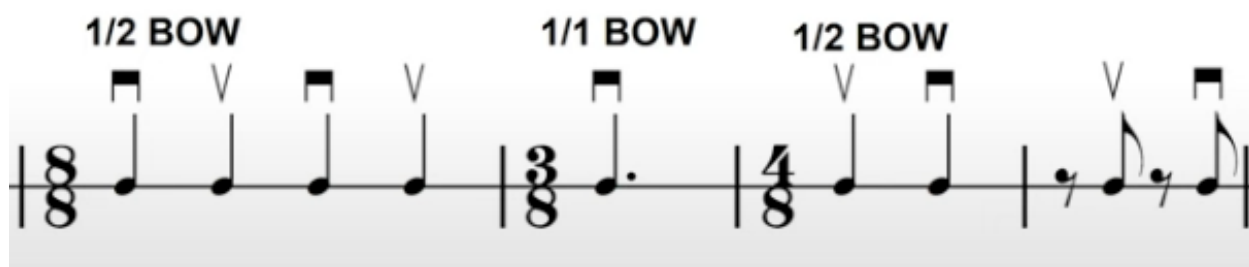


Figure 10: Excerpt from Simon Steen-Andersen's *Study for String Instrument #3*, mm. 17-20, displaying up and down bows for every note with 1/1 bow and 1/2 bow indications.

By expanding traditional bow markings indicating the amount of bow to use, Steen-Andersen can successfully choreograph the movements of the cellist, as opposed to leaving some bowings up to the performer, which is the standard for classical/classical contemporary repertoire. Furthermore, in this Third String Study, Steen-Andersen provides a prepared cello bow, which processes the sounds electronically when in contact with the strings. This is one way to engage the bow gestures with electronics, but some composers take these gestures and convert them into data, to then be reinterpreted in various software.

2.2.2 Mari Kimura – the MUGIC® Motion Sensor and *Eigenspace*

I'd like to re-illuminate the works of my advisor, violinist and composer Dr. Mari Kimura, as an innovator in accessible datafication of the bow hand's gestures. The MUGIC® is a small, lightweight, and wireless motion sensor that can be worn via a glove on the violinist's right hand.⁹⁰ This motion sensor can interpret motion parameters such as height, rotation, energy accumulation, and sudden jolt movements. These real-time data can be mapped in software such

⁹⁰ The MUGIC® motion sensor can be worn anywhere on the body or objects, but for this discussion here I will focus MUGIC®'s function on the violinist's right hand.

as MaxMSP and further customized to trigger or manipulate a variety of media, including audio, video, and mechanical movements such as robots.

Kimura's work, *Eigenspace* (2011) for Augmented Violin and Interactive Graphics, presents the intuitive violin bow-arm gestures becoming the system that connects the acoustic violin sound to the real-time audio and video effects. *Eigenspace* contains two meanings: "own" space, and an *eigenvalue*, "a mathematical function used in analyzing the bowing movement."⁹¹ The graphics created by Japanese movie director Tomoyuki Kato interact with the retake motion of the bow, which is the inertia-packed, non-sonic "spring" motion found in violin performance to reset the bow at the desired location on the strings.⁹² Other parameters interpreted by MUGIC® include the bow-sustaining motion ("sustain" parameter) and the tremolo motion, which calculates the cumulative intensity of rapid bow arm oscillations (Figure 11). The audience witnesses the gestural–sonic–visual relationships aided by the MUGIC®, as the bow arm's physical behavior materializes into electronic sound and projected video imagery. The MUGIC® allows for a more expressive and interactive interface to create a dynamic feedback

⁹¹ Mari Kimura, *Eigenspace for Augmented Violin and Interactive Graphics* (Mari Kimura, 2011).

⁹² Kimura et al., "Extracting Human Expression For Interactive Composition with the Augmented Violin," 3.

loop between bodily gesture, sound, and image. The dramaturgy of the violin bow arm gestures negotiates with these multimedia elements, which inevitably create new performance practices.

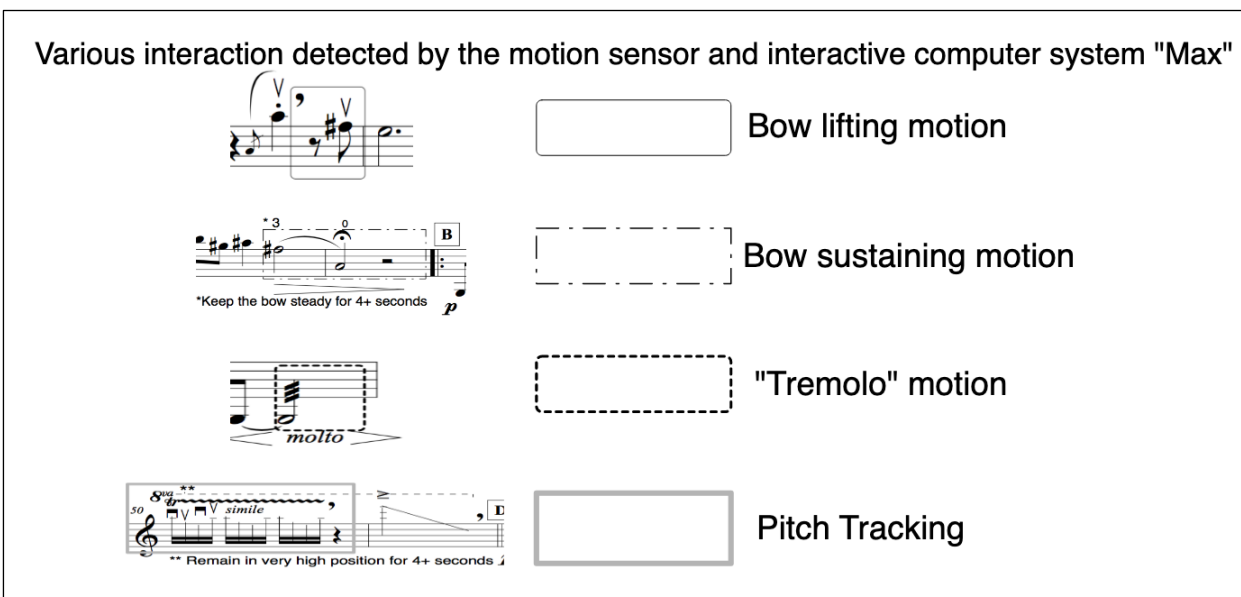


Figure 11: Performance Instructions from Mari Kimura's *Eigenspace* (2011).

The audience also observes the performing violinist taking on a new role once a motion sensor is introduced to control real-time multimedia parameters. In *Eigenspace*, as Dr. Kimura performs, the right bow arm functions not only as a sound-producing mechanism but also as a narrative and gestural interface. Through this dual role, physical movement mirrors the electronic sonic effects, creating a perceptual feedback loop in which the motion appears to shape the multimedia, while the multimedia, in turn, reshapes the performer's motion.

MUGIC® further emphasizes the “before” and “after” of each gesture,⁹³ much like a delay in sound or video. However, rather than isolating only the most visible or intentional motions, the sensor allows every physical gesture to be considered part of the performance. This expanded gestural awareness allows the body to be perceived as a continuous flow of musical and visual meaning, rather than a mechanism that merely activates the technologies. In this way,

⁹³ Kimura et al., “Extracting Human Expression For Interactive Composition with the Augmented Violin,” 4.

the MUGIC® has the capacity to blur the on/off logic that music technology often adopts. Composer George Lewis describes this computer-to-improvisor relationship as a “negotiation,” of “improvisational, nonhierarchical, subject-subject model of discourse, rather than a stimulus/response setup.”⁹⁴ Instead of functioning as a switch-based system, it can subtly support and extend the performer’s natural motions and acoustic violin sounds with multimedia elements, creating an integrated, responsive performance *ecology*. This ecology in the performance elevates the violinist to become a storyteller who can create scenes and immerse audiences into a narrative through the performance duration.

2.3 Performing Autobiographical Narratives via Multimedia Presentations

2.3.1 Kishi Bashi – *Omoiyari* (2022)

Kishi Bashi is a Japanese American singer-songwriter, violinist, and composer, and his “song film” and album titled *Omoiyari* (2022) have served as a powerful project, combining lived experiences and research into tangible artwork that transcends cultures and generations.

Omoiyari is a Japanese word that means to have sympathy or compassion towards others, and Kishi Bashi explores how empathy and the lack thereof have played key roles in “our modern quests for social equality.”⁹⁵ In this section of the chapter, I will first discuss the documentary, and then a song from the album, “Summer of ’42” and “Theme from Jerome.”

The documentary, *Omoiyari*, combines Kishi Bashi’s field research, archival studies, and his search for identity as a modern Asian American, accompanied by his music from the album. The film has powerful images of Kishi Bashi visiting the internment camps and

⁹⁴ George E. Lewis, “Interacting with Latter-Day Musical Automata,” *Contemporary Music Review* 18, no. 3 (1999): 104, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07494469900640381>.

⁹⁵ Kaoru Ishibashi and Justin Taylor Smith, “Omoiyari (Official Film Website),” *Omoiyari Song Film*, 2022, <https://www.omoiyarisongfilm.com>.

interviews from survivors, and footage of Kishi Bashi with his own family members in Japan, which make this film highly empathetic and accessible. These contrasts in the internment camp footage, interwoven with home-video, spontaneous family gatherings at the dinner table, invite the audience to insert their own “homes” into what seems to be a distant historical or ethnographic documentary. In my dissertation concert at UCI, inspired by the effect of empathy and accessibility Kishi Bashi employed in *Omoiyari*, I included footage of my time in Japan at my grandma’s house in Yokohama. The footage shows signs or *kigo* of summer: handheld fireworks, *Kō-shien* High School Baseball on TV, and a slightly messy dinner table with a bowl of edamame for the family to share. This footage surrounded two pieces that take place in Japan, so this interlude footage was successful in not only transporting the audience into my house in Japan, but also reminding them of their own sense of extended families and stories from their childhood.

Kishi Bashi’s parents are immigrants from Japan and not directly related to the Japanese Internment Camp. In a panel,⁹⁶ Kishi Bashi discussed his inner dilemma with *Omoiyari*: he did not know *how* to talk about the Internment Camps, or whether he “even deserve[s] to be telling the story”⁹⁷ as a non-relative. At the same time, he recognizes that his identity as a Japanese American, and his upbringing in an immigrant household, has shaped his sense of self and his relationship to this history. Even without direct inheritance, a broader sense of shared history and community remains significant. Kishi Bashi’s perspective offers a clear model for engaging with this kind of positional complexity. Rather than avoiding the topic, he acknowledges his distance

⁹⁶ The panel took place at Chapman University on February 27th, 2019 hosted through the Center for American War Letters Archives. Kishi Bashi and sociologist Dr. Stephanie Takaragawa discussed Japanese American incarceration, identity, and the creative project *Omoiyari*, interspersed with live musical performance. More information about the panel can be found here: <https://blogs.chapman.edu/library/2019/03/13/kishi-bashi-and-dr-stephanie-takaragawa/>

⁹⁷ B. A. Parker, “Japanese American Musicians across Generations Draw Identity from Incarceration,” *Code Switch*, NPR, February 28, 2024, 31 minutes, <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/1197955841>.

from it while still allowing it to inform his work. This approach affirms that personal experience of multi-cultural and multi-lingual background can serve as a valid and meaningful source for artistic and scholarly inquiry. In my creative practice and research, I interweave my unique experience of studying in the Western academic and musical conservatory while engaging with Japanese culture and art through my family. This was a critical step in developing a violin performance practice that is deeply authentic yet transmissible across diverse audiences.

As the topic of Japanese Internment Camps overshadows a very dark time in history, Kishi Bashi approaches this subject not through direct representation of trauma, but by foregrounding the interior lives and emotional resilience of those who endured it. His song “Summer of ’42,” constructed around a fictional love story, functions as a narrative device through which the humanity of incarcerated individuals can be reimagined within, and despite, inhumane conditions. In the panel, Kishi Bashi noted that his aim was not to retell the traumatic experiences, but rather to evoke affective states such as love, longing, and connection to render these histories legible and relatable to audiences across diverse backgrounds. Precisely because of his indirect familial relationship to the incarceration experience, his work operates from a position of reflective distance. Through a methodology that combines artistic storytelling with archival and field research, he offers a distinct interpretive lens that transforms marginalized historical narratives into intimate, affective encounters. Themes of love, family, generational, and ethnic community connections allow listeners to be immersed in the feelings of this history.

“Theme from Jerome” is another beautiful song, most notable for its segment with Japanese lyrics, based on Kishi Bashi’s visit to the Jerome War Relocation Center in Arkansas. Kishi Bashi describes the song as one’s experience of remembering a melody but having forgotten the words, like a “ghost of your ancestors that you still remember and feel, but you just can’t connect

with them.”⁹⁸ This dual-language song introduces another concept important in my artistic research, which is the *translation* element of words, gestures, scales, and principles from Japanese narrative arts to the violin, and in a Western classical and Jazz performance context. Kishi Bashi’s integration of Japanese reinforces that the preserved meaning and authenticity are more important to the artistry than the audience’s understanding of each lyric. It reaffirms his philosophy of inviting the audience to feel the emotions of the Japanese Americans in the camps rather than retelling the history.

These histories come to artistic life because of Kishi Bashi’s experience growing up as an immigrant. Kishi Bashi, growing up in Virginia in the 1980’s, “didn’t really have a Japanese American community growing up” and “at school, he learned to ignore that part of himself.”⁹⁹ Particularly through the *Omoiyari* project, Kishi Bashi’s art serves as a social practice through which “particular views of the world are constructed, reproduced, and even redefined” while framing the audience in conditions to awaken them about these histories.¹⁰⁰ Emerging from my study and performance¹⁰¹ with Kishi Bashi’s music, composition, and violin performance became a tool to express the suppressed emotions and Japanese identity I suppressed during my elementary school years to assimilate. My composition, *I Pledge Allegiance?* (2023) draws on the experience of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in grade school without fully comprehending its language or pronunciation. Such experiences are not uncommon among children raised in bilingual and bicultural contexts, where a “home language,” often maintained within the family, coexists with the dominant language of educational and social institutions. These environments,

⁹⁸ Parker, “Japanese American Musicians across Generations Draw Identity from Incarceration.”

⁹⁹ Parker, “Japanese American Musicians across Generations Draw Identity from Incarceration.”

¹⁰⁰ Hwa Young Choi Caruso, “Art as a Political Act: Expression of Cultural Identity, Self-Identity, and Gender by Suk Nam Yun and Yong Soon Min,” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 39, no. 3 (2005): 77, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jae.2005.0028>.

¹⁰¹ I had the pleasure of performing in Kishi Bashi’s string orchestra for a concert at the Musco Center for the Arts in October, 2021.

where a child juggles multiple languages and cultures, affect first language attrition, or cross-linguistic influence in bilingual development. While Schmid's research focuses primarily on linguistic processes, I extend the concept of cross-linguistic influence to encompass the shaping of lived experience itself and thus influences for artistic practice and aesthetics.

2.3.2 Jennifer Walshe – *Minor Characters* (2023)

Jennifer Walshe is an Irish composer and vocalist who has an impressive list of works that are multimedia and operatic in the sense of their length and scale. Some works, such as *SELF-CARE* (2017) and *Minor Characters* (2023), serve as a saga of sensory stimuli; packed with flashy projection, sudden vulgar language, awkward untrained dancing, and squirting citrus onto the audience. Walshe's works also encompass modern social technology, such as social media and human experiences with the integration of AI in our daily lives. Scholar Fabian Czolbe describes her art as "staging technology," as her works critically reflect phenomena of our digitally intertwined quotidian life.¹⁰² Staging technology brings the modern human experience of everyday technology as part of the dramaturgy of her pieces, reflecting the narratives of everyday life.¹⁰³ In essence, the wide range of audiences can relate to her avant-garde artwork because they can oscillate between the sphere of everyday life and the performance; her works create a subsystem of art within life by negotiating technologies, concepts, and the hidden structures of our digitized communication tools.¹⁰⁴ Walshe's multimedia works blur the distinction between concert performance and everyday life by placing

¹⁰² Fabian Czolbe, "Staging Technology : Composing with and within Digital Everyday Life," *Nuove Musiche*, no. 5 (2021): 143, <https://doi.org/10.12871/9788833395377>.

¹⁰³ Czolbe, "Staging Technology," 161.

¹⁰⁴ Czolbe, "Staging Technology," 161.

highly virtuosic musical material alongside spoken language, casual conversation, and deliberately nonsensical vocal gestures.

Walshe's eccentric and comical pieces also bring forth new performance practices or new disciplines in the creation, rehearsal, production, performance, and reception of these types of works. One work that exemplifies this aesthetic orientation is *Minor Characters*, which premiered at the Darmstadt Summer Course for New Music in 2023. Experiencing the performance live revealed the extent to which the piece operates as a fully integrated multimedia environment rather than a conventional concert work. A projection screen displayed white text and emojis against a black background, while Jennifer Walshe delivered a continuous stream of vocal material that alternated between singing, speaking, whispering, and shouting. The text—at times syntactically fragmented or semantically ambiguous—functioned both as projected visual content and as a script for the performer's vocal delivery. Four accompanying instrumentalists contributed an additional sonic layer, while carefully coordinated lighting cues aligned with the projected text and the performer's vocal gestures.

Walshe's work, such as *Minor Characters*, redefines how interdisciplinary elements of multimedia performance can assist one another to exponentially engulf the audience into her performances. The consideration of the audience's perception of the piece's constant flow of stimuli to create hypnotic performances is a key element of her practice. For the audience attending the concerts (or watching via a screen), the performance serves as “a paradigmatically social activity, and its effects and meaning derive in large measure from that social dimension.”¹⁰⁵ This, of course, means the connection between the musicians, production staff, and audience, but for Walshe's works, it also considers social media references or embarrassing

¹⁰⁵ Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 250.

anecdotes that most of the audience can relate to. Furthermore, Walshe's musical scores, often organized by elapsed time and a mixture of graphics, texts, and five staff notation, reflect this notion of scripting social action and interaction, as musicologist Nicholas Cook emphasizes.¹⁰⁶

The New Conceptualist and The New Discipline

Composer Johannes Kridler's "New Conceptualist" approach in multimedia art is often discussed in Walshe's writings.¹⁰⁷ The concept in musical performances has shifted greatly since the 1960s, with pieces such as Steve Reich's *Pendulum Music*, John Cage's *4:33*, and György Ligeti's *Poème symphonique*, to name a few historical pieces that let undetermined sonic events unfold. As Manos Tsangaris notes, music is the oldest multimedia art; it balances graphic and textual notation with spatial elements that audiences directly experience, such as the staging, the presence of the musicians, and the reverberation of the hall or space.¹⁰⁸ The media revolution also helped conceptual music to gain a new presence, where the accessibility of technology not only changed the performance but the audience's experience as well. Notably, the internet has introduced a new method of art perception, prompting composers to consider how to "exhibit" their music.¹⁰⁹ Kridler's analysis of the New Conceptualist connects with Walshe's compositions, as her multimedia works have a concept, or a strong overarching narrative that becomes the vehicle of unfolding events. In *Minor Characters*, the rapid succession of textual fragments, emojis, and vocalized language foregrounds the conceptual framework of the work, which is an over-saturation of contemporary communication by digital discourse (namely, Reddit

¹⁰⁶ Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 250.

¹⁰⁷ Jennifer Walshe, "(Some Other) Notes on Conceptualisms," Milker Corporation, May 2015, <http://milker.org/conceptualisms>.

¹⁰⁸ Johannes Kridler, "New Conceptualism," Unit 7: New Conceptualism, Music Technology Online Repository, June 2021, <https://mutor-2.github.io/HistoryAndPracticeOfMultimedia/units/07/>.

¹⁰⁹ Kridler, "New Conceptualism."

quotes). Rather than presenting a narrative that unfolds through traditional musical development, the piece constructs meaning through the juxtaposition and accumulation of semiotic texts drawn from everyday digital culture.

For Walshe, the term “The New Discipline” functions to connect multimedia works that concern the physical, theatrical, visual, and musical elements.¹¹⁰ In essence, these “extra-musical” works concern various art disciplines, which forces the composer to become a director and choreographer in their composition and rehearsal. The New Discipline primarily serves as a way of working, or a larger framework that encompasses the creation, rehearsal process, and performance practice that is unique to these types of extra-musical works. For example, from the rehearsal stage, the composer’s role expands to that of a *director* by merging the two traditionally distinct roles of the composer and performer, and sonic-centered rehearsal processes. By borrowing techniques and workflow from interdisciplinary artistic practices, such as musical theatre, The New Discipline “[dissolves] the normal concept of what a composition is.”¹¹¹ In fact, Walshe elaborates the larger social relations of this practice to the modern world:

Maybe what is at stake for the New Discipline is the fact that these pieces, these modes of thinking about the world, these compositional techniques - they are not “music theatre”, they *are* music. Or from a different perspective, maybe what is at stake is the idea that all music is music theatre. Perhaps we are finally willing to accept that the bodies playing the music are part of the music, that they’re present, they’re valid, and they inform our listening whether subconsciously or consciously. That it’s not too late for us to have bodies.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Jennifer Walshe, “The New Discipline,” Milker Corporation, January 2016.

¹¹¹ Walshe, “The New Discipline.”

¹¹² Walshe, “The New Discipline.”

Here, Walshe's analysis of the role of the performer's body advances the craft, tying in concepts of Auslander's "Musical Personae," Kondo's "worldmaking," Kagel's "instrumental theatrics," and Cook's claim that musical scores script the social interactions onstage. In *Minor Characters*, the performer's body becomes a central site of meaning-making, mediating between text, sound, and visual imagery. Walshe's performance and artistic approach present a subsystem of oscillating between the marked and unmarked space, or the divide "between everyday life and staged or processed everyday life in art."¹¹³ She also very rapidly, but on multiple occasions, references Ireland, which personalizes this performer's role even more strongly in *Minor Characters*. The mixture of her reference to her heritage, real quotes from everyday digital life, and an hour-long multimedia experience all create the sense that she is telling a personal, lived narrative. This is one of the key elements to her immersive performances, as this element is not as strong with someone other than Walshe performs her music. Therefore, Walshe exemplifies the expanded artistic role envisioned by The New Discipline, in which the composer becomes not only the creator of musical material but also the primary agent through which the work's conceptual and theatrical dimensions are realized.

¹¹³ Czolbe, "Staging Technology," 146.

CHAPTER 3: Performing Autoethnographic Narrative Compositions

Multimedia serves as an ideal medium for presenting works that tell a narrative. Opera and Musical Theatre have long employed multimedia elements, as Wagner described it: *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a unified work of art that combines various artistic forms. Performing in the pit orchestra of operas and musicals guided my research in performing autoethnographic, narrative-driven compositions where the violinist is positioned as the “main protagonist.” With various technologies, I can expand the range, delay, or timbre of my instrument, which allows me to perform as multiple voices and characters. The inclusion of projection enhances the audience’s ability to situate themselves within the context of my piece, encouraging them to draw connections to their own experiences (for instance, "I've eaten white rice before, but raw egg over rice?"). I believe that when engaging with a performance, audiences actively listen for elements they recognize or find relatable, allowing them to connect more deeply with the work. As a performer, one of my primary goals is to engage the audience through various elements of my performance, including my violin playing, projected images, scales and chord structures, rhythms, and sounds from nature, like rivers or animal calls.

This Final Chapter will also describe my PhD dissertation recital.¹¹⁴ The overall theme of the recital is my childhood and my present, through the violinist as a storytelling performer-composer, and the pieces are in a loose chronological order of childhood development and memories. This theme serves as an autoethnographic narrative, as each piece zooms into a specific time period, experience, or environment.

¹¹⁴ My PhD Dissertation Recital took place on April 4th, 2026 at 2pm in Winifred Smith Hall, at the Claire Trevor School of the Arts, University of California Irvine campus.

Table 1. PhD Capstone Concert Program Overview

Title	Year	Instrumentation	Multimedia	Japanese Narrative Art Influences
<i>Eat Every Grain of Rice</i>	2024	vn, s.sax, perc	Video, Quad Audio, Live Audio Processing in MaxMSP	Kigo, Kamishibai
<i>Peach Boy</i>	2024	vn, narrator	MUGIC motion sensor, MaxMSP	Folktale, Japanese onomatopoeia, Kamishibai-ya methodologies
<i>I Pledge Allegiance?</i>	2024	vn	MaxMSP, Quad Audio	Kamishibai-ya methodologies
<i>Kero Kero Choir</i>	2025	vn, perc, organ	Video, manipulated field recording, Harmony pedal	Field recordings from Sapporo, Kigo, Kamishibai
<i>Hibiscus</i>	2023	vn, pf, open ens.	Live electronics performer	Kigo, Kamishibai-ya methodologies,
<i>Mai 舞: Variations on Bow Arm Gestures</i>	2026	vn/vc, va/vc, vc, pf, drumset	Video, Fabric Installation	Haiku, Kigo, Kamishibai, Japanese language, Nihon- Buyō gestures

3.1 Narrative Theory as Compositional Framework

In my creative research, narratives function across a variety of modalities, such as informing both the structure and contents in my compositions, as well as a conceptual framework for engagement within my multimedia violin performance practice. Through this narrative approach of multimedia performance, where the audience expects an audio-visual experience, my performance practice significantly differs from a more sonically prioritized classical violin performance. Thus, my role as a violinist on stage shifts, and who the violinist can become is reimagined in this narrative multimedia performance format. First, through the integration of non-sonic elements, such as video, lighting, and staging, the violinist and their gestures acquire an expanded performative role, necessitating their consideration as visually significant components. The violinist operates not only as a sound-producing mechanism, but as a visual vehicle for constructing and projecting a musical persona – a concept articulated by Philip Auslander as “the identity projected by the musician in performance.”¹¹⁵ I combine this concept and connect deeply to my inner emotions to become a musical persona that is unique to the piece, space, and audience. This reimagination of the violinist in a narrative-based multimedia stage is at the core of my research.

As a creator, I engage with the idea of “narrative” in several ways, as the word and concept are attractive and malleable. The word “narrative” is both a noun and an adjective – either an account of a series of events that is spoken or written, or as describing a medium that is in the form, character, or concerned with narration (such as “a narrative poem”). As an adjective, “narrative” performance, paintings, or dance is used to describe these art forms as “representing

¹¹⁵ Auslander, “Musical Personae.”

a story.”¹¹⁶ It also should be noted that in narratives, the purpose is to “represent” a story, not simply “retell.” Regardless of the medium of delivery, a narrative is inherently imaginative, spontaneous, and variable, qualities that align closely with the improvisatory nature of live performances.

As a composer working with autoethnographic memories, a narrative approach to my craft as a performer-composer has proven to be an effective and conceptually coherent methodology. It allows me to remain faithful to my narrative and its unique cultural or ancestral nuances, electronically develop the sonic and visual components necessary for engaging communication for an audience of a myriad of backgrounds, and cultivates a shared temporal experience among myself, the ensemble, and the audience.¹¹⁷ Narrative itself also has a reflexive dimension that articulates morals and cultural meanings beyond the basic layer of the unfolding of events. James Phelan, an American writer who has researched extensively on narrative theory, draws several factors about what narratives do at their core, which extends to my craft as a violinist and composer. First, Phelan claims two principles on the theoretical definition of narrative: “narrative is ultimately not a structure but an action,” and “the presence and the activity of the somebody else in the narrative action is integral to its shape.”¹¹⁸ In essence, the audience is not just reacting to the “teller’s” communication, but the audience’s unfolding responses influence how the teller constructs the tale.¹¹⁹ There is a symbiotic relationship that is naturally created between the musician(s) and the audience, through the engaging qualities of a

¹¹⁶ “Narrative,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2025, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/narrative_adj?tab=meaning_and_use#35345862.

¹¹⁷ For the purposes of the Qualifying Exam, I will discuss performer-audience relationships in a separate question response.

¹¹⁸ James Phelan et al., “Authors, Resources, Audiences: Toward a Rhetorical Poetics of Narrative .,” *Style* 52 (2018), 2.

¹¹⁹ Phelan et al., “Authors, Resources, Audiences: Toward a Rhetorical Poetics of Narrative.”

narrative – digesting the unfolding events, relating and following the development of the characters, and extrapolating the morals of the story.



Figure 12: Performance of Peach Boy (2024) with Spencer Pepke (narrator)

In composition, narrative provides a compelling foundation for shaping the structural framework of a piece, as its inherent temporal progression and scenic shifts can be effectively translated into various musical parameters, most notably timbre, acoustic and electronic instrumentation, and pacing. For example, my composition *Peach Boy*, based on the Japanese folktale *Momotaro*, exemplifies the various modalities of narrative that informed my process from composition to performance. On the surface, this piece chronologically follows the popular Japanese children's folktale about a baby boy born out of a peach that gathers three animal companions to defeat demons that threaten the safety of his adoptive parents' hometown. However, as cultural nuances can get lost in translation, as the script for the narrator is rewritten in English, I kept two important elements that uphold the uniqueness of *Momotaro*. The first element was deciding to keep a *Giongo*, an onomatopoeia depicting a large object (in this story, a large peach) bobbing up and down in water. *Giongo* is commonly found in the Japanese

language, and in particular, *Donburako-Donburako* is a *Giongo* uniquely found in this folktale of *Momotaro*. Onomatopoeic expressions play a significant role in narratives, as the sonic qualities of the words themselves facilitate a deeper sensory immersion for the reader or listener.

Although the phrase *Donburako-Donburako* may be unfamiliar to most audience members, I directed the narrator to squint their eyes looking into the distance and gesture with his arm to bob up and down. The river sound file is also playing at this moment, thus helping non-Japanese speakers infer the implied imagery while also stimulating imaginative engagement. Even if the audience cannot comprehend the *Giongo*, this was not fatal to their understanding of the story.

The second element to stay true to the essence of *Momotaro*, was to incorporate the overarching connections of my personal exposure to the folktale, this folktale's generational significance in the Japanese culture, and as a violinist, what I intended my audience to experience. As the folktale of *Momotaro* is not a storyline from my lived experience, this piece represents Phelan's narrative theory of narratives being an "action" that connects to my research of reimagining the violinist. Folktales are passed down from generation to generation, are retold multiple times, and each representation is innately unique. For example, my mother read a picture book of *Momotaro* to me when I was a child, but the style of illustrations, the medium of a picture book, and perhaps the warmth and tone of my mom's reading voice, all contribute to my childhood experience engaging with this folktale. Another child's exposure may have been an animation on a tablet of the folktale, or my grandparents may have first seen it in their local park with their other neighbors through *Kamishibai*, a traditional form of storytelling using paper slides, a communal event usually followed by buying snacks from the narrator's cart. Phelan's claim of narrative as an action is exemplified by these various presentation modes of the same folktale across generations.

In composing *Peach Boy*, it was essential to maintain and communicate the rather odd storyline for my audience, who is mostly non-Japanese, but an equally significant challenge lay in effectively conveying the underlying moral that is not necessarily written. This story has a heroic protagonist who defeats demons to save his hometown from further threat, but the story does not necessarily resolve with the victory of the battle. Through various representations of the folktale in Japanese children's books or animations, the scene of the protagonist going back home, to his adoptive parents, and the elderly parents acknowledging his safe return home is the true victory at the heart of the folktale. In my representation of this narrative for these two scenes, the demon island fight scene music concludes with a weaker cadence followed by immediate silence, and the embrace of relief from the protagonist's elderly adoptive parents is accompanied by a very strong, authentic cadence. The visual element of my bow gestures also aids this progression, as the weaker cadence is led into with fast notes and tremolos denoting anxiety and chaos, while the phrase leading into the strong cadence is led in by a lyrical and tonally major rising line. This also helps the audience, who is largely unfamiliar with the Japanese folktale, to shift their sense of conclusion and the narrative's ultimate moral to the protagonist's safe return home. In this way, Phelan's second claim of the presence and activity of somebody else, an audience largely unfamiliar with *Momotaro*, was integral to the successful delivery of the folktale without delivering a false sense of closure. Therefore, *Peach Boy* not only serves as an entertaining multimedia representation of the folktale, but by keeping the essence of narratives and their theories, my musical material and performance gestures and interaction are shaped.

The creation of an entertaining imaginary space, as discussed in my use of *Giongo*, is an inherent element in a performance environment. The augmented reality in a performance

environment, or “interpretive ‘frame’ wherein different rules apply,” is detailed in Deborah A. Kapchan’s *Performance*.¹²⁰ Through repetition of lines, gestures, or discourses, performances also create social communities of “nationalism, ethnicity, class status, or gender”, and I will add, communal memory and narratives.¹²¹ Indeed, a performance that is merely quotidian or overly predictable risks being perceived as uninspiring. Within the context of multimedia performance such predictability becomes even more problematic, as audience expectations increasingly lean toward multi-sensory, extra-musical, and immersive experiences. If the disinterested audience is no longer anticipating the next scene or how the character in the narrative will overcome their hardship, they are no longer engaged with the narrative and thus disengage with the performance. Therefore, invoking curiosity, which is an essential component of narrative engagement, becomes a crucial factor in my multimedia performance practice. To sustain this curiosity and successfully depict a narrative through my violin performance, my compositional process constantly balances elements of the familiar and the unknown.

Across novels, films, or even an acquaintance recounting their latest hearsay, our memorable and favorite narratives introduce, sustain, and satisfy our curiosities in a reasonable ratio of time. American literary theorist Peter Brooks’s “narrative desire” concept describes the inherent desire for understanding, meaning, and closure in narratives.¹²² In my composition, *I Pledge Allegiance?* these elements of narrative desire, or the elements that immerse the audience into the performance of the narrative, have guided my compositional, improvisational, and performance practices.

¹²⁰ Deborah A. Kapchan, “Performance,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 108, no. 430 (1995): 479–508, <https://doi.org/10.2307/541657>.

¹²¹ Kapchan, “Performance.”

¹²² Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, 7. print (Harvard Univ. Press, 2002).

I Pledge Allegiance? was originally composed for an eight-channel speaker setup, utilizing the sound trajectory mapping functions in the GALAXY GO iPad Application. The work incorporates a diverse range of sound sources, including randomized sine tones, field recordings of a seven-year-old child and me reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, and live violin performance. The goal of the piece was to immerse the audience in my personal experience as an immigrant child in an American elementary school classroom. Using the eight-channel surround sound speaker array allowed me to easily create the sense of being overwhelmed, which is what I associated this memory with: struggling to pronounce and find resonance in the long words used in the pledge. Using Brooks's "narrative desire" concept, I first laid out elements of familiarity or the definite "knowns" to draw the audience into the narrative. The opening sound of the piece is the seven-year-old's voice, reciting the pledge; his adorable and irregular pacing of taking time to pronounce the bigger words, and higher-pitched voice immediately signal the audience into the elementary classroom scene. Furthermore, the seven-year-old's recitation of the pledge is localized to Channel 4 within the GALAXY GO app and projected through that designated speaker, above which an American flag is placed. This spatial and visual alignment is intended to evoke the familiar ritual of facing the flag while reciting the pledge alongside classmates.

Once the scene is set in the first ten seconds of the piece through the familiar elements and clear "known" factors of the narrative, the sine tones suddenly emerge. The immediate sine tones mimic tinnitus, adding to an overwhelming feeling and perhaps entering an overstimulating environment. The sine tones are randomized in pitch and follow a mapped trajectory across the eight speakers, at times changed via OSC messages through MaxMSP. Although the piece lacks an elaborate visual component, such as a projection, the motion of the sound is intuitive — listeners can easily imagine the sine tones traveling in an oval from one speaker to the next. The

minimal visual medium also creates space for the audience to recall back to their elementary school experiences as well. The spatial “spread” of each speaker is minimal to reinforce the directional movement a listener can follow. After a few seconds of the spinning sine tones, the pledge is reintroduced, but this time, the pitch and playback speed are randomly altered. The most effective audio effect here is the reverse function, because this destabilizes linguistic comprehension while keeping the phonetic qualities of English, and effectively mimics what English sounds like to non-native English speakers. With the audio alternating unpredictably between forward and reversed playback, the audience is drawn into an augmented rendition of the Pledge of Allegiance, navigating a perceptual space that oscillates between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Finally, the live violin is added to this sonic landscape; the violin, which is performed by me, represents the inner changing emotions of the immigrant child navigating this experience. The violin part is improvised and largely responds to the pitches generated in MaxMSP. I also make careful decisions about vibrato – the first few notes I play do not use vibrato, to “assimilate” and blend into the sine tones. Therefore, in the beginning, the violin part is very minimal and almost unrecognizable if the audience closes their eyes and does not see my bow gliding across the string. As the beating patterns increase with additional sine waves and frequencies clashing with each other, the violin part slowly adds vibrato with a louder dynamic, to emerge out of this denser sonic texture. This focuses the audience’s attention on the violinist, as a protagonist figure that is now above the sine tones and augmented pledge, with more expressive melodic lines. Furthermore, the monodirectional violin part and the omnidirectional electronic sounds create a directional dimension of oscillating between the familiar and expected (the audience expects to hear a violin from where the violinist is standing) and the unfamiliar (the electronic sounds do not follow an expected speaker output sequence).

In reference to Brooks's final element in "narrative desire," the closure, *I Pledge Allegiance?* uses a pitch tracking function in MaxMSP (with the object fiddle~) so the violinist can seamlessly signal the Max patch to finish the piece. Additionally, I only use the notes on the G string after the pitch C4 triggers the "Coda" of the Max patch and follows the fade out of the electronics. This helps create a sense of closure and additionally illustrates a narrative using the range of pitches. The opening of the piece is monophonic with the lonely seven-year-old's voice, the middle section is very dense with frequencies beating against one another, the violin part takes a more soloistic role using the higher register and finally secedes back to a limited range and timbre of the G string. In composition and performance, effective closures, such as strong cadential structures typically found in tonal repertoire, signal the audience's turn to applaud. In my extensive practice performing contemporary classical or improvised music, the audience can sometimes get lost when the piece concludes. Unfortunately, this slight confusion weakens the narrative of the performance and storyline because the "narrative desire" of closure is not effectively fulfilled. If the sonic output or structure of harmony is not the cue for closure, visual cues can significantly help. "The End" screen, curtains closing, and lights dimming to black are all closure cues observed in other forms of narrative art. In my performances where the violinist serves the role of a protagonist, ending the "musical personae" outlined by Auslander is an effective cue to signal the audience out of the performance narrative and back into reality. A smile to the audience (violinist Irvine Arditti of the Arditti Quartet displayed this method after every piece in his highly complex contemporary program at Darmstadt Summer Courses) and swiftly lowering my violin and bow down out of sync with the pace of the previous musical material, effectively brings closure to the narrative and performance.

3.2 Improvisation as Narrative Engine

Improvisation as a practice serves as a vital mediator between composing and performing.

German American composer-pianist Lukas Foss describes composition and performance as “a division of labor.”¹²³ Separating these two domains as labor considers the constant engagement between the two during the compositional process. The notion of temporality also separates the composer from the performer; if the composition is occurring in real-time performance, that act will be considered as improvisation. Improvisation may also occur as a process of composition, for example, by notating or recording an improvised passage on my violin to reproduce it in a live performance. The performer’s co-authorship of the work¹²⁴, even in a fully notated score, demonstrates the performer’s expanded role as an “active creator, shaping and molding the abstract scheme furnished to him by the composer.”¹²⁵ The two domains remain even if they are enacted by the same person, such as myself. Performer-composer Ken Ueno describes his person-specific concertos as helping his “quotidian moment [turns] towards the sublime,” further describing the negotiation between the domains of composer to performer.¹²⁶

Furthermore, reflecting on improvisation’s larger historical trajectory in Western music, from Baroque-era figured bass, Concerto Cadenzas, Chopin’s *Impromptus*, jazz, and experimental music, the dynamic relationship between composer and performer is evident. This relationship and the practice of improvisation as an artistic expression shape the evolving language of musical notation; in other words, reconsidering what is implied in the score and expected for each unique performer to execute. As composer-performer Viola Yip writes after

¹²³ Foss, “The Changing Composer-Performer Relationship.”

¹²⁴ Terence J. O’Grady, “Interpretive Freedom and the Composer-Performer Relationship,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 14, no. 2 (1980): 56, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3332477>.

¹²⁵ Auslander, “Musical Personae,” 56.

¹²⁶ Ken Ueno, “Embodied Practice in Ken Ueno’s ‘Person-Specific’ Concertos,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Spectral Music*, 1st ed., ed. Amy Bauer et al. (Oxford University Press, 2022), 855, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190633547.013.47>.

her experience in the Summer Courses at Darmstadt in 2014, if we do not consider “composing and performing as two separate creative processes, it opens up more opportunities to develop new directions in music.”¹²⁷ My creative research alludes to Yip’s point regarding new directions in music by incorporating autoethnographic narratives through violin bow gestures transversing between the two creative processes of composition and performance, using improvisation not only as a mediator but as an effective theoretical and practical framework for emotional immediacy, cultural hybridity, and artistic responsiveness. In other words, improvisation is not simply spontaneous creation, but also a structure that is malleable and ideal for performing a narrative.

Studying how to improvise melodies over chord changes allowed me to deeply explore harmonic roles and agencies of pitches. This connection of harmonic agency was difficult to grasp in playing solely classical repertoire, because the composer largely predetermines the pitches. Having the pitch selection suddenly shift to the performer forced me to develop a new skill set of digesting harmonic languages and rapidly make informed decisions on the best pitches for the improvisation.

For example, in one of my first lessons with Professor Gary Matsuura at Chapman University, he instructed me to play the chord tones of a C7 chord. This consists of the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th notes of the C Major Scale, which are all equally “correct” in a C7 chord. However, when instructed by Professor Matsuura to contextualize what each of the chord tones’ roles and tendencies are, I started to categorize scale degrees into unique characteristics that helped me build a narrative to guide my improvisations. The root gives a sense of strong arrival or grounding, the 3rd and 7th will solidify the harmonic color as they are the most definitive parts of

¹²⁷ Yip Viola, “DARMSTADT 2014: THE COMPOSER-PERFORMER,” *Tempo* 69, no. 271 (2015): 71.

any chord, and the 5th can float above the chord or serve as a pivot note into various modes and scales.¹²⁸ Tendency tones and chords help propel harmonic progressions into alternating moments of tension and resolution, which is similar to narrative structures of balancing curiosity and resolution. This is a very basic overview of the infinitely deep harmonic language of jazz, but my first jazz improvisation lessons cultivated a new understanding and weight of pitches in a vertical context within a chord, and horizontally as a scale. Using tension and resolution in the context of jazz harmonies and improvisation takes shape in my creative research to intentionally choose pitches to drive or resolve the narrative in this creative research.

To exemplify this influence, the harmonic language of my piece *Hibiscus* for solo violin, piano, and improvising ensemble blends many of Professor Matsuura's teachings of jazz harmony and improvisation. It is important to situate the premiere of this work within the specific context of UCI's Contemporary Ensemble, whose members brought a diverse range of improvisational proficiencies. Of particular importance in composing this piece was the pianist, whose role was structurally and harmonically central due to both the instrument's chordal capacity and my vision to create a violin and piano sonata, with an accompanying open instrumentation ensemble. As our pianist's background was also in classical training,¹²⁹ I was compelled to devise a notational system that balanced structured pitch material to offer a degree of harmonic anchoring, while leaving sufficient openness to encourage real-time interaction (Figure 13). Composing a hybrid notated-and-graphic score that mediates between fixed and emergent musical elements successfully accommodated the ensemble's varied improvisational literacies.

¹²⁸ Gary Matsuura, *Essential Vocabularies in Jazz Improvisation* (Gary Matsuura, 1987), 24.

¹²⁹ From our premiere performance, through the UCI Contemporary Ensemble, Spring 2023 Quarter.

tonal center for this section, as about a minute into the piece, the violin part enters forcefully with the open E string and plays a cadenza using the following pitches: E F G# A B C D (and A# in the final build-up in measure 6). When arranged in alphabetical order, they reveal a synthetic scale that combines elements of the Phrygian dominant and the natural minor. My aim here was to use the bright, resonant open E string of the violin as both a tonal and timbral anchor – propulsive and energetic in character, floating on top of the E tonal center grounded by the ensemble. This asymmetrical scale, which includes three half steps, two whole steps, and an augmented second, generates a sense of instability that creates a destabilizing harmonic structure collapsing on E as a gravitational center. The solo line, built around this tonal center, floats on top of the ensemble's low, rumbling textures and improvised extended techniques that evoke gusts of wind and airborne debris, to immerse the audience in an aural simulation of an earthquake-like narrative environment.

The improvisation of pitch opens to the ensemble starting from the next section, The Thunderstorm and Tornado. I devised a piano part similar in concept to Baroque figured bass notation, where the notated pitches lay out an ostinato suggesting modulation to D minor. The solo piano part instructs to add any pitches on top of the ostinato, while keeping the slow half note rhythm, and restricting to pitches below C4. These dense chords in the lower end of the instrument represent violent lightning strikes. Maintaining clear parameters of meter, rhythm, pitch range, and imagery provided a productive framework for inviting the classically trained pianist to explore improvisation. These constraints not only offer accessible entry points into unfamiliar territory but also enable the ensemble to collectively anchor around timbral motifs. As a result, the performers can reconstruct the composed narrative and sonic environment with fidelity, while allowing for expressive variation and nuance in each performance.

A similar phenomenon occurs in the final section, “The Moonlight After the Rain,” where the rest of the ensemble treats each measure of the piano’s ostinato figure as pitch class sets and improvises (Figure 13). Referring to tendency tones in my jazz improvisation studies, the convex contour of the arpeggiating piano part shows which direction a pitch could resolve up or down, to guide the improvising ensemble. This guided improvisation using implied harmonies and imagery also helped the ensemble members of various improvisational practices co-create a narrative.

Hibiscus also features the use of vamps, which are commonly found in musical theatre scores. Vamps primarily serve the purpose of bridging transitions, allowing for temporal flexibility to accommodate onstage action or backstage logistical needs. In the musical theatre context, the pit orchestra performs a notated, looped passage, where the variability lies in the actor’s timing of action or singing entrance, which cues the pit orchestra to “exit” out of the vamp. Although somewhat of a fixed loop, this temporal suspension enables performers to manipulate nuanced emotional responses and pacing, without disturbing narrative immersion. In *Hibiscus*, I blend the theatrical use of vamps that allow narrative time to ‘breathe,’ and the open-ended solo forms with fixed meter and harmony in jazz, to create an improvising space placed on a groove and loose tonal direction. This framework of utilizing a vamp structure in instrumental improvisational pieces and encouraging ornamentation or variance found in jazz traditions of “comping” the soloist, effectively allows the ensemble to co-create a scenery. Here in “The Moonlight after the Rain” section, the violin part once again steps into the foreground with the high pizzicato line to “exit” out of the vamp, taking on a protagonist role. The temporal fluidity in performance, as determined by the performers themselves, while maintaining structural clarity, builds an effective narrative performance.

A quote I recall from Professor Albert Alva's¹³⁰ teachings is "we are improvising in everyday life," emphasizing that improvisation is not merely a musical technique but a fundamental aspect of human consciousness and social behavior. Improvisation operates as a largely unconscious mode of response to unforeseen or unplanned events, while utilizing readily available technical, physical, and contextual materials. Within musical contexts, pianist and scholar Vijay Iyer confines musical improvisation as the "in-time, temporally extended exploratory interaction with the structure of one's acoustic, musical-formal, cultural, embodied, and situated environment," and "draws attention to the experiential aspect of real-time music-making."¹³¹ Because improvisation readily references diverse cultural, personal, and situational elements, it offers a powerful framework for performing autoethnographic narratives. Specifically coming from a classical music background, improvisation allows for adaptive ideologies on musical parameters and autoethnographic narratives, while using the skillset of classical technique and the violin. Such performances informed by this larger implication of improvisation become a dialogic encounter shaped by the interplay between the story, the storyteller (performer), and the audience.

This extra-musical analysis of improvisational practice is also most notably alluded to Pauline Oliveros' work on Deep Listening. For Oliveros, Deep Listening is "a lifelong practice" of "exploring the relationships among any and all sounds whether natural or technological, intended or unintended, real, remembered or imaginary."¹³² Concerning my practice of narrative multimedia violin performance, Deep Listening allows for all aspects of the music-making

¹³⁰ Jazz Lecturer at Chapman University

¹³¹ Vijay Iyer, "Improvisation, Temporality and Embodied Experience," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* (United Kingdom) 11, no. No. 3-4 (2018): 165.

¹³² Pauline Oliveros, *Quantum Listening: From Practice to Theory (To Practice Practice)* (SoundArtArchive, 1999), <https://www.deeplisting.rpi.edu/deep-listening/>.

process: the physical body movements and bow gestures of the violinist, and their resulting sonic output and visual interaction with the ensemble and audience, and the imaginary storyline that permeates through the musicians to unify the improvisational contours. This openness into the extra-musical realm and deep listening invites interactions between the performer and text, electronics, audience, and story; anything that is not inherently a sonic entity but greatly informs the music.

Deep Listening also allows musicians to prioritize responsiveness, risk, and real-time collaboration; elements of human and social interactions that build strong narratives to represent character and spontaneous and interactive storytelling. Through improvisation, the musician forms an “individual musical personality” and “harmonization of one’s musical personality with social environments, both actual and possible.”¹³³ Composer George Lewis investigates the Afrological and Eurological concepts of music making and their combined aesthetics in contemporary improvisation. Afrological improvisation stresses the “importance of personal narrative, of “telling your own story,” and these “notions of personhood are transmitted via sounds, and sounds become signs for deeper levels of meaning beyond pitches and intervals.”¹³⁴ Coming from a classical upbringing, this concept of jazz was shocking to me at first, as it invited me to conceptualize and crystallize my personal narratives through my familiar violin. This shift in rethinking *what* to improvise helps shape how to conceive creative work. Alluding to James Phelan’s writing on narrative theory,¹³⁵ improvisation and improvisational practices transform the performer into a narrator.

¹³³ George E. Lewis, “Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives,” *Black Music Research Journal* 16, no. 1 (1996): 110–11, <https://doi.org/10.2307/779379>.

¹³⁴ Lewis, “Improvised Music after 1950,” 117.

¹³⁵ For the purpose of the PhD Qualifying Exam, my description of James Phelan is detailed in another response about narrative theory.

Storytelling becomes significantly more effective with improvisation. *Peach Boy*, for violin, narrator, MUGIC® sensor, and electronics, exemplifies this approach by extending traditional violin performance techniques into the realm of interactive media. Based on the Japanese folktale *Momotaro*, in which a boy born from a peach gathers three animal companions to defeat demons threatening his village, the work utilizes the MUGIC® sensor to convert kinetic bow gestures into real-time data via MaxMSP software. This data triggers field recordings, such as the sounds of thunder or running water, thereby situating the audience within vivid, contextually specific scenes. The MUGIC® sensor not only activates pre-recorded materials but also enables nuanced manipulation of these sounds during performance. By allowing the performer to modulate environmental soundscapes based on gesture dynamics, the system introduces an improvisatory dimension that prevents the audio elements from becoming static or predictable. As a result, each performance of *Peach Boy* is inherently unique, with sonic details emerging organically from the interaction between performer and technology. This improvisational layer deepens audience engagement and enhances the storytelling experience by ensuring that the narrative unfolds with immediacy and spontaneity rather than mechanical repetition. In this context, improvisation is not merely an embellishment of the narrative but an essential structural element that animates and sustains it.

3.3 Aesthetic Lineages: *Ma* (間) and *Shosa* (所作) in Improvisation

Interacting with Japanese folktales is an aspect of sharing my own stories, rooted in my identity, culture, and memories. The folktale, such as *Momotaro*, is not my personal story, but my childhood memories of my mother reading a picture book to retain my Japanese language is an integral concept in my overall practice of narrative performance. In studying folktales and reconnecting with my family's immigrant experiences and growing up in a bicultural

environment, I bring traditional Japanese music traditions, *haiku*, and Buddhist notions of time and space into my creative practice. As a musician, these unique concepts of time and space evoke alternate senses of time or pacing in my performance practice. I will discuss my large capstone piece here, *Mai 舞: Variations on Bow Arm Gestures* (2026), for violin, viola, cello, piano, and drumset, detailing aesthetic lineages of *ma* (間), “space,” and *shosa* (所作), “gesture.”



Figure 14: Performance of *Mai 舞: Variations on Bow Arm Gestures* (2026).

Afrological/Eurological practices of improvisation, discussed by George Lewis,¹³⁶ best execute and communicate these Japanese frameworks of time and space. The notation system of Western classical music, based on meter and strict ratio relationships of quarter notes, eighth notes, and so forth, does not translate well with these Japanese senses of time and pacing. For example, *ma* is a concept that originated in traditional Japanese architecture, referring to a unit of space, but in temporal arts, *ma* is a silence that “enhances the sound” and does not disturb the musical flow.¹³⁷ In a wind instrument such as the shakuhachi, *ma* “keeps the musical

¹³⁶ Lewis, “Improvised Music after 1950.”

¹³⁷ Christopher Y. Blasdel and Yūkō Kamisangō, *The Shakuhachi: A Manual for Learning* (Ongaku no Tomo Sha, 1988), 61.

consciousness alive with meaningful silence during rests, pauses, and breaths.”¹³⁸ While I use the concept of time and pacing in *ma* in most of my compositions, it can also extend to the violinist’s “breath,” which is the approach of the bow hand to the string for contact, tying into this Japanese temporal concept of negative space.¹³⁹ Under the influence of Zen Buddhism, the value and weight of one breath and the following action also correspond with the phrase structures of traditional Japanese music.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, the unit of a musical idea is partitioned by *Ma*, and this creates an alternate sense of phrasing not based on meter and harmony.

The exploration of *ma* also yields other terms in the Japanese language to denote “silence.” Kosuke Matsuda, percussionist-scholar, explores the seven Japanese terms used to describe silence, claiming each has different levels of quietness and tranquility, with unique contextual nuances. They include *ma* (間), *chin-moku* (沈黙), *mu-on* (無音), *sei-jaku* (静寂), *shin-kan* (森閑), *hei-on* (平穩), and *hei-sei* (平靜).¹⁴¹ For example, *mu-on* literally translates to “no sound,” and uses kanji characters that do not evoke other meanings, as opposed to *shin-kan*, where the first kanji (森), is the same for “forest,” and the second (閑) also denotes “leisure.” *Hei-on* (平穩) and *hei-sei* (平靜) both use the kanji “*hei*,” which also means “peace,” evoking a deeper emotional quality in the type of silence described. Japanese literature, arts, architecture, gardens, and spiritual practices all utilize these various modes of silence to describe emotional, temporal, and spatial subtleties. Multimedia performance, through its various sensory and spatial

¹³⁸ Blasdel and Kamisangō, *The Shakuhachi*, 61.

¹³⁹ For the purpose of the PhD Qualifying Exam, my description of bow gestures is detailed in another response.

¹⁴⁰ Minoru Miki and Marty Regan, *Composing for Japanese Instruments*, Eastman Studies in Music, v. 57 (University of Rochester Press, 2008), 4.

¹⁴¹ From Kosuke Matsuda’s Lightning Presentation at the UC SuperJam Conference, on April 11th, 2026 at University of California Irvine.

elements, allows for these various Japanese modes of silence to inform my narrative violin performances.

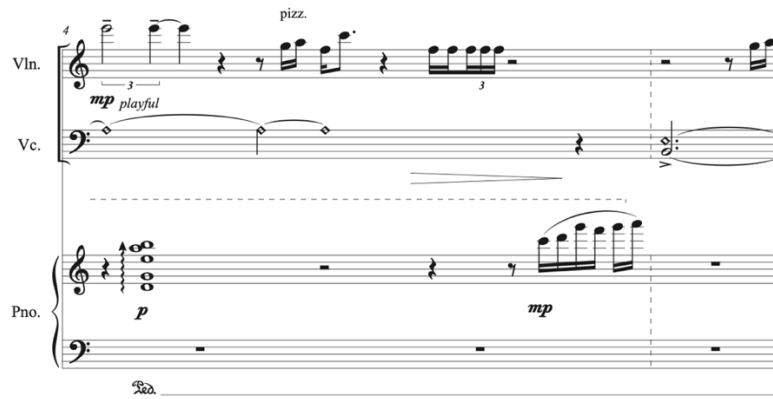


Figure 15: Excerpt from *Mai 舞: Variations on Bow Arm Gestures* (2026). This opening section utilizes *Ma* to symbolize the stillness of snow and the anticipation of spring.

The fundamental notions of temporal dimensions are into my composition, *Mai 舞: Variations on Bow Arm Gestures* (2026). This middle section (Figure 15), featuring the piano, violin, and cello, is notated with a traditional five-line music staff with notes plotted in rough relation to time, to give agency to the performers to co-create a live scenery. In this section, the trio depicts a scenery of a flat, white snow-covered ground, with young buds of the *fukinotou* plants peering from the earth to announce the arrival of spring (Figure 16). As *ma* can also describe the physical space between things, here it signifies the space between each *fukinotou*.



Figure 16: Fukinotou in Hokkaido, Japan. Photo by Nick Akers

Treating temporality as an improvisational parameter here compels the trio to listen closely to one another and align their short melodic figures with both individual and collective sense of *ma*. This section places the audience in an ethereal sense of temporal flow featuring stillness and gradual motivic expansion.

Breathing ♩ = 70
as spoken haiku poems

Figure 17: Various methods in notation used to translate to the pianist the temporal flow of *Ma* and Buddhist Chant Pacing. Excerpt from *Mai* 舞: Variations on Bow Arm Gestures (2026).

Following this *fukinotou* section, the pianist introduces the closing theme of the piece, constructed with the same number of “syllabus” as a haiku. These pulsing quarter notes are divided into three measures of 5/4, 7/4, and 5/4. Haiku is a poem constructed of three lines, with

five, seven, and five syllables respectively per line. Five and seven can be built with units of two or three syllables, which is intuitive for Japanese words and phrases. This piano part also features slight harmonic changes in groups of two and three, alluding to how a Haiku would sound if sonified. Furthermore, the slowly moving pulses mimic the trance-like rhythm of Buddhist Chants, specifically the one I heard at *Shio-fune Kanonji* with my family in Japan. Although these few measures are not explicitly designated as improvised, the presence of fermatas and breath marks encourages the pianist to approach the passage with an improvisatory sensibility—particularly concerning both tempo and *Ma*. To convey this temporal flexibility more effectively, I asked the pianist to listen to a recording of a Buddhist chant. This proved to be the most successful method of communicating the pacing, revealing the limitations of Western classical notation in representing the alternate temporal frameworks found in Japanese and Buddhist practices.



Figure 18: Screenshot from the video projection of *Mai 舞: Variations on Bow Arm Gestures* (2026), featuring the fabric installation of *Mai*, at Corona Del Mar Beach in California

A crucial element of *Mai 舞: Variations on Bow Arm Gestures (2026)*, is the large fabric installation, which is connected by the musician's wrists. The idea stemmed from my long experimentation with the MUGIC® sensor, through its ability to take the motion, or residual motion of the bow arm, to create new forms of sound or visual feedback. At the time composing this piece, I also saw an art installation where small motor-controlled drumsticks and wires fell and came back up, creating a self-sustaining sonic world.¹⁴² With these two influences, I visualized the musicians on stage as an art installation, where each of our motions to play our instruments contributed to the whole “artwork.” After performing the first version premiere of *Mai 舞: Variations on Bow Arm Gestures (2026)*, the rippling and flowing fabrics that followed the musicians' gestures transported me back to my childhood studies of *Nihon-Buyō*, and enjoying playing with the long *furisode* sleeves of my *yukata*. The *shosa*, or the methods and principles of the narrative arm movements translated into my violin performance practice through the movement of fabric.

In both my piece and *Nihon-Buyō*, fabric amplifies arm gestures by generating tactile responses to their movement and energy. The creation of this fabric involved gathering, cutting, tying, and international transporting, untangling, and washing.¹⁴³ For the PhD Capstone Concert performance of *Mai*, I also recorded footage of the fabric installation near the ocean, in Corona Del Mar, California. As the primary drive was to let the fabric installation breathe with the musicians and music, the whole process of the gathering to filming prioritized the fabric's natural flow. This idea parallels Tim Ingold's writing in *The textility of making*, where the “flows

¹⁴² The artwork was *Wave over Wave* (2000) by Nova Scotia born artist Rita Mckeough. Media installation with sounds, electronics and kinetic objects, observed at the Walter Phillips Gallery at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity on July 30, 2025.

¹⁴³ The fabric used for this installation were leftover scraps from the 2025 Summer Costume Design Program at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.

and transformations of materials” and their “processes of formation” become the model, instead of molding them into a final product.¹⁴⁴ Inherently, this process of making begs the creator to improvise with the materials or textiles, and follow the natural, itinerant movements. Because of the fabric’s origin in the Canadian Rockies, my footage of nature, and my research in Japanese narrative arts that heavily reference *kigo*, this quote from John Berger speaks to my creative process about becoming, rather than being: “You cannot *be* a mountain, or a buzzard soaring in the sky, or a tree in the forest. But you can *become* one, by aligning your own movements and gestures with those of the thing you wish to draw....”¹⁴⁵ Using narrative elements such as characters, scenery, and natural forces reframes the musicians to observe and respond for a collaborative storytelling performance.

The aesthetic of *ma* and *shosa* from Japanese art lineages of *haiku*, *nihon-buyō*, and *kamishibai*, influences my improvisation practice beyond Western definitions into a trans-cultural field of listening and temporal and gestural manipulations. Improvisation’s fluidity in context and parameters serves as a vital pillar through encouraging deep listening. Improvisation also mirrors emotional states, plot tension, and scenery to help keep the narrative fluid and constantly engaging with diverse audiences.

3.4 Gesture as Narrative Agent

Intermedial performance research and systems have demonstrated the reciprocal amplification of sonic, visual, and gestural elements of the performing body in my narrative compositions. In performance, rather than these elements unfolding in parallel, they actively

¹⁴⁴ Tim Ingold, “The Textility of Making,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34, no. 1 (2010): 92, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cje/bep042>.

¹⁴⁵ John Berger, quoted in Tim Ingold, *The textility of making* (Cambridge Journal of Economics, 2010), 99.

reshape one another in real time to produce a contingent narrative field onstage. Here, narrative agency is distributed across the violinist's bow-arm gestures and audio-visual elements onstage. Referencing back to the dramaturgy of the bow-arm gestures allows for a theatrical lens of narrative violin performance. This process aligns with theories of embodied music cognition, which suggest that listeners internally simulate observed musical gestures as part of their active perceptual engagement.¹⁴⁶



Figure 19: Performance of Eat Every Grain of Rice (2024).

My work, *Eat Every Grain of Rice* (2024) for violin, saxophone, percussion, and live electronics, is accompanied by a self-directed and edited home video, depicting my relationship with rice as a cultural, domestic, and generational food symbol. The title of the piece comes from my Japanese parents' teachings to eat every grain of rice. In Japan, rice has an important cultural and spiritual significance, such as being offered to ancestors on household altars (*butsudan*) as a gesture of symbolizing gratitude and connection to one's ancestry. The musicians accompanying

¹⁴⁶ Iyer, "Improvisation, Temporality and Embodied Experience," 159.

the video guide the audience into the narrative, which starts from pouring uncooked rice, serving freshly cooked rice, enjoying it *Tamagokake-Gohan* style (with raw egg and soy sauce), and finally finishing every grain of rice. Referring to musicking's concept of involving all who are present, my primary aim was to make the audience feel as if they were in the rice bowl, as a sole grain among the other audience members who are also grains. After deconstructing rice to its texture and granular characteristics when served in a bowl, I composed gestural and electronic material based on what rice *feels* like. In the opening section, the rice cooker is opened to reveal hundreds of glistening white ovals engulfed in steam. The violinist cues the ensemble in and leads an improvisation of fast, percussive sounds, which are further spatialized through granular synthesis and a duplicated stereo surround sound setup. The presence of the musicians, and specifically the violinist executing short, fast bow arm gestures, helps the audience mirror themselves onto these bodily gestures, to deeply connect with the sound, visuals, bodies, and narrative as a participatory space of collective energy. Thus, narrative effectiveness, or narrative intensity, is heightened through the co-presence of sonic and visual body gesture. Conversely, when musicians are removed from view (for example, placed in an orchestra pit beneath the stage), there is less connection and communication between the audience and the performance, diminishing the perceived experience of the narrative.

3.5 The Narrative Form Concert and Audience Engagement

In full-length concert production, transitions present a particular challenge, requiring the maintenance of narrative continuity while accommodating technical and staging demands. Because this dissertation treats narrative as a structuring principle, it considers not only individual works but also the audience's experience of the concert as a continuous form. Within

this framework, transitions function as integrative links between discrete narrative units, shaping a cohesive experiential arc. Drawing in part from musical theatre, I employ intermedial strategies such as the sustained resonance of a concluding musical or visual phrase, spoken text that introduces the next work, and the gradual activation and deactivation of technological elements, including projection and motion sensors. Musical parameters such as timbre and pitch also transform across boundaries, allowing one work to emerge from the residue of another rather than from silence. Although situated within the format of a conventional classical violin recital (traditionally very visually austere and relies on program notes for communication between the audience and performer about the piece),¹⁴⁷ this approach reconfigures the concert as a continuous narrative environment. It reflects a broader premise of my compositional practice, informed by narrative theory, that memory is not fixed, but continually revisited and reanimated through performance.

A Narrative Violin Concert

The first half of the concert, between *Eat Every Grain of Rice*, *Peach Boy*, *I Pledge of Allegiance?*, and *Kero Kero Choir*, was presented without applause in between to illustrate an overarching narrative of my childhood teachings, elementary school in a foreign country, and acknowledging my multicultural upbringing. The full-length concert footage¹⁴⁸ illustrates the various modalities used to connect with and guide the audience through the concert's narrative. The first transition, after *Eat Every Grain of Rice*, zoomed out from the final firework cut-scene footage to an extended shot of my cousins and me in Yokohama, Japan. This first interlude

¹⁴⁷ Wil Greckel, "Visualization in the Performance of Classical Music: A New Challenge," *The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning* 3, no. 4 (1992): 43.

¹⁴⁸ Please refer to the YouTube link in the Appendix to view my PhD Capstone Concert.

reaffirms the audience's setting in Japan, as the concert then featured *Peach Boy*, a popular Japanese children's folktale. Following *Peach Boy* was a field recording of kids playing in a playground, with a school bell to signal the students to line up in front of their classrooms. This placed the audience back into America, confirmed by the opening pledge by then 5-year-old Skylar Wang in *I Pledge of Allegiance?*. Continuing the childhood journey, the audience returns to the Japanese "house," where I feature a recording of the children's folksong *Kaeru-no Uta* (Frog Song) with my 6-year-old Japanese violin student. This also allows audience members who are not familiar with *Kaeru-no Uta* to recognize the quotation in the final piece of the first half, *Kero Kero Choir*. This narrative framework of connecting the story and placing the audience in a particular setting before indulging in the next piece is inspired by *hashi-yasume*, in Japanese cuisine. The concept of *hashi-yasume* is of a palette cleanser; often, a small side dish such as picked vegetables to contrast and prepare adequately to satisfy the previous dish, and enjoy the new, upcoming flavors.



Figure 20: Performance of Kero Kero Choir. The video projection utilizes the unique shape of the organ as the projection's surface.

This approach to presenting my violin recital, to disregard the traditional applause to silence to expectations with audiences reading printed program notes, speaks to Greckel's thesis of a visually dynamic concert to better communicate with audiences.¹⁴⁹ A modern recital flow for the modern audience is how my narrative form concert took fruition. This way, each piece is simply not a standalone act but becomes part of a larger arc that engages the audience. They become part of the narrative, with their unfolding responses influencing the teller's construction of their tale.¹⁵⁰ The transition into *Kero Kero Choir*, of the Japanese folksong unfamiliar to most in the audience, was vital not only for the quotation in the piece, but also to invite diverse audiences to engage with my composition. Mostly in virtuosic classical music performance, and certainly in experimental contemporary music, non-practitioners can often feel isolated from the activities onstage. In an effort to bridge this wall between the musicians and audience, taking from storyteller and *kamishibai-shi* methodologies, the key to building this structure is to feed the audience what a program notes does. This can be information through a speech, playing a field recording of frogs or a playground, or putting up visuals to evoke settings (*kigo*). In essence, the musician must *perform* their program notes to keep the continuity of the narrative concert form.

In this narrative concert framework, the question remains of how to engage a *diverse* range of audiences. For my program, my biggest concerns were addressing age (from my young violin students attending the concert to my university professors), practitioners of experimental music, and the Japanese heritage background (for understanding cultural references in my compositions). This concern of the author or presenter to the audience can be seen across various

¹⁴⁹ Greckel, "Greckel, 'Visualization in the Performance,'" 44.

¹⁵⁰ Phelan et al., "Authors, Resources, Audiences: Toward a Rhetorical Poetics of Narrative," 2.

art forms. In classical narratology, a narrative communication model proposed by Seymour Chatman includes intermediate agents between the author-audience relationship (Figure 21).¹⁵¹

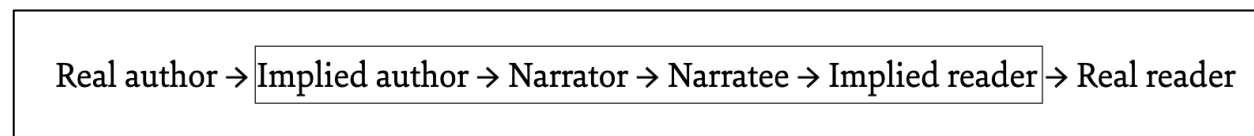


Figure 21: Narrative Communication Model proposed by Seymour Chatman from *Story and Discourse* (1978). Adapted figure by Phelan et al. from *Authors, Resources, Audiences: Toward a Rhetorical Poetics of Narrative* (2018).

Interpreting Chatman’s model into my own practice, the implied author becomes the “Musical Personae,” discussed in Auslander’s writing. Although I am both the composer and performer in my works, they have different roles in this narrative communication model, taking the shape of the “real author” and the “narrator,” respectively. The narratee is the fictional listener, in some cases, like *I Pledge Allegiance?* was to my younger self in elementary school, being overwhelmed learning a new language and culture different from home. Then comes the “implied reader” who is the audience who understands the cultural references either through the program notes or engaging with the interlude *hashi-yasume* moments of the concert. But of course, the author/performer cannot control how the audience engages or chooses to engage with the concert, so we have the “real reader.” This “real reader” also brings in their own cultural backgrounds and childhood memories as I provide a shared space and time to narrate my own.

Through this reshaping of a violin recital with a narrative concert form, audiences enjoy unique engagements with the music because the performance meets *them*, and not the reverse. Furthermore, through a narrative framework, multimedia elements become vital to the musicking

¹⁵¹ Phelan et al., “Authors, Resources, Audiences: Toward a Rhetorical Poetics of Narrative,” 2.

and narratology, and not an embellishment or a distraction. This is how to build a meaningful concert experience for our modern and diverse audience.

Toward a Relational Concert Experience

As a violinist, each performance yields different levels and expectations of audience engagement depending on the genre, piece, and performance space. The venue, hospitality, and events surrounding the performance also become a vital contribution to the overall experience, as the audience correlates these details with the music itself. Audience engagement widely varies among musical genres, from applause after jazz solos to prescribed chants by artists in K-Pop concerts, laughter in theaters, or creating respectful silence in a classical concert hall. Some musical genres invite voluntary body movement, even extending to the freedom for audiences to enter and exit the performance at their discretion, such as outdoor street performances. Therefore, the live performance is reflective of the audience's engagement, and the intended or desired audience interaction also shapes the compositional process.

With these various modes of audience engagement, the backgrounds of audience members will naturally vary across performances, and even from piece to piece. Particularly for my practice, which concerns my Japanese American immigrant narratives, there is a tension between specificity and relatability. As an initial approach, the performer and audience all have an underlying connection, whether it's an ethnic, bicultural, musical, personal, or simply the fact that we are in the same space at the same time, experiencing the performance, or "vibrations" together.¹⁵² This personal philosophy as a violinist is deeply influenced by the Japanese four-character idiom *ichi-go ichi-e* (一期一会), which translates loosely as "one lifetime, one

¹⁵² Nina Sun Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (Duke University Press, 2015), 155, <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822374695>.

meeting.” It expresses the idea that each encounter and moment is unique and unrepeatable, and therefore, should be fully cherished. While rooted in Japanese cultural sensibility, its resonance extends beyond cultural boundaries; regardless of background, we all inhabit the same human experience of time’s passage and impermanence. Impermanence, which is also a core concept in Buddhism, affirms the uniqueness of each musical moment, and when presented in succession, starts to develop a narrative. Performance also creates a space Dorinne Kondo describes as “worldmaking,” and the impossible nature of capturing a performance’s palimpsestic temporality.¹⁵³ If we reconceptualize violin performance as a form of “worldmaking,” the audience naturally becomes an entity within the fixed temporality and cohabited performance space.

A “worldmaking” performance is at its strongest potential when met with personal and cultural specificity. The more specific and authentic my Japanese-American narratives, sounds, and visuals become, the more their emotional truths resonate with the diverse audience. This seems paradoxical at first, but by presenting the audience with deeply personal and unique cultural (beyond ethnic) narratives, the performer invites empathic connections of human emotions to the audience. For example, *The Staircase*, a play by Native Hawaiian playwright Noa Gardner, details the story of a son and his aging mother’s relationship altered by dementia and grief. This play focuses on the family’s relentless connection despite unspoken traumas, loss, and grief, through the looming staircase in the middle of the stage.¹⁵⁴ These themes and the play’s setting serve as a point of resonance with the diverse audience. Because of the meticulously decorated set design and costume of a Hawaiian home full of family heirlooms,

¹⁵³ Dorinne Kondo, *Worldmaking: Race, Performance, and the Work of Creativity* (Duke University Press, 2018), 11, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11cw1w3>.

¹⁵⁴ Emma Richman, “The Staircase: The Touching Story of a Hawaiian Family,” KUCI 88.9 FM, May 16, 2025, <https://kuci.org/wp/05/16/review/the-staircase-the-touching-story-of-a-hawaiian-family/>.

with a percussionist performing on traditional Hawaiian drums such as the *ipu*, and the mother's bilingual script of Hawaiian and English, the authenticity and *rawness* of the narratives deeply resonances to the audience. This hyperrealism, framed through a defined cultural lens, immerses the audience within the narrative because it presents an undeniable truth. The audience is not simply observing the narrative but *living* it. This, of course, is not possible without the talented actors and precisely timed audio and lighting effects, to keep the audience engulfed in the storytelling and out of the real world. The authenticity becomes the thread that connects the author, narrator, narratee, and the audience's emotions. The actors and all those involved in the act of “theatreing” (to borrow Christopher Small’s idea of “musicking”) undergo a “worldmaking” process. Therefore, the broader emotional truths of family, loss, and grief that *The Staircase* presents transcend cultural boundaries through a very specific cultural and personal setting that is vividly real onstage.

My composition, *Eat Every Grain of Rice* (2024), details this phenomenon of a specific cultural and personal narrative, allowing diverse audience engagement. The fixed video narrates my personal memory with rice, through the lens of my childhood self being told by my parents to eat every grain of rice. Rice is a staple in Japanese households, not just as a food but also spiritually, as an offering to the altar. Rice is also highly versatile, and in this composition, I include footage of creating *Tamagokake-gohan*, or raw egg and soy sauce over rice.

Tamagokake-gohan is unique in this video because it is a way of eating rice that I only enjoy in Japan due to raw egg consumption. Therefore, I associate *Tamagokake-gohan* with my summers spent at my grandparents’ house, which was also where my sister and I were reminded to eat every grain of rice. The video was shot in my own home, with my family’s rice cooker, bowls, chopsticks, and ingredients, which immediately brought the audience sitting in a concert setting

into my house. Food not only satisfies our hunger, but every person in the audience has a food item or dish that carries a deeper memory or relationship with a specific person or place. As employed in *The Staircase*, a raw depiction of this Japanese-American immigrant narrative invites the audience to live through my memory of rice, and triggers micro-dialogues of what rice means to them, or any other food that holds the same value in their culture or home.

Another aspect of deeper audience engagement with my works is evoking the senses. Primarily, the audience will engage with a performance through sight and sound. *Eat Every Grain of Rice* strives to evoke the taste, smell, and touch senses indirectly. The audience, when presented with freshly cooked rice on the projection, will also associate their experiences of what rice tastes like, smells like, and feels like on their tongues. The video's familial and seasonal framing encourages audiences to project their own memories onto the scene, evoking personal associations with domestic rituals or, for immigrants, the cultural dissonance and adaptation found around the dinner table. The audience relates to my narrative work through their own experiences and inner dialogues, thus creating relational intimacy. Furthermore, the plot and these evoked intimacies are more memorable and serve as vessels for the audience to remember the performance and insert themselves into my narratives.

Thus, expanding on Chatman's narrative communication model, there is a feedback loop of the audience prompting the author to create. Of course, not every artist feels the need to feed their audience or perform for the sake of an audience's validation or satisfaction, but for my narrative multimedia performances, the creation and production cycle is not complete without them. It is not necessarily the autonomy of the audience creating the feedback loop, but the fictional "ideal audience" that promotes creating the space to perform. Therefore, the *concert design itself* cultivates this symbiotic relationship of author to audience, and community cultural

wealth flourishes. By reconfiguring the concert as a relational space, audience members are positioned not as passive recipients but as active contributors to the construction of meaning.

3.6 Autoethnographic Pedagogy and Community Cultural Wealth in Practice

In concluding this chapter, *Performing Autoethnographic Narrative*, I turn to pedagogy to carry on this performance practice to other students to enrich their lived narratives for storytelling performances. Through this dissertation and creative activity, I have displayed how autoethnographic narrative performance operates as both an artistic and analytical framework, shaping bow arm gestures, identity, and audience engagement. This final section extends that argument into the classroom, focusing on a course I designed and taught in which students engaged autoethnographic methods in their creative and critical work. Drawing on community cultural wealth, I examine how students' lived experiences operate as central sources of musical and interpretive knowledge. In this context, pedagogy becomes a site of emerging, personalized performance practice further materialized through music technology.

Community Cultural Wealth Theory (CCW), developed by Dr. Tara Yosso, reevaluates the concept of equity in pedagogy, specifically to challenge the notion that marginalized students lack resources or are defined by a “deficit” compared to privileged students.¹⁵⁵ The K-12 classroom, conservatory, and higher education are constantly evolving, and my upbringing as an immigrant and now teaching university-level courses with a self-created curriculum influence my artistic research.¹⁵⁶ Throughout my undergraduate studies in Classical Violin Performance, I

¹⁵⁵ Mary R. Moeller and Darla Bielfeldt, “Shaping Perceptions: Integrating Community Cultural Wealth Theory into Teacher Education,” *Journal of Applied Learning in Higher Education* 03, no. Fall (2011): 81, https://doi.org/10.57186/jalhe_2011_v3a5p81-94.

¹⁵⁶ At UCI for the Winter 2026 Quarter, I was Instructor of Record for MUS47: Music Technology for Performers, with a self-constructed curriculum advised by Dr. Michael Dessen.

strived to take classes outside of the outlined curriculum, such as New Music Ensemble, Jazz Combo, Improvisation Lessons, and even Pep Band (with the saxophone). I knew that only knowing how to perform in the Common-Practice-Period classical style was very limiting to my artistic expression. To connect my instrument to personal stories, I have arrived at this research, integrating classical violin bow arm gestures, improvisation, Japanese narrative art aesthetics, and innovative music technology. I would not have arrived at this point and creative research without the support from the faculty and the institution that encouraged this interdisciplinary research. The Community Cultural Wealth Theory holds across my PhD program, for Integrated Composition, Improvisation, and Technology. Each PhD candidate's project is like no other, but the unifying factor is that our unique interests and years of creative research influence and contribute to this growing craft of a performer-composer.

Through my MUS47 class, weaving Community Cultural Wealth Theory into my curriculum has yielded alternative approaches to student engagement and assessment. Grading in music classes, especially performance, will always be subjective, no matter how specific the grading criteria become. As an instructor, creating an equitable grading system across different instruments and different skill levels with music technology was challenging. There is also always an implicit bias with my ears, as well as all my professors and mentors who shaped my creative research. Nina Eidsheim's work in *The Micropolitics of Listening to Vocal Timbre* encourages critical listening and acknowledges that "listeners project intention and identity" onto timbers, where these "projected meaning and identities are derived from received value systems and contexts."¹⁵⁷ Eidsheim's research closely relates to my performance practice of connecting

¹⁵⁷ Nina Sun Eidsheim, "The Micropolitics of Listening to Vocal Timbre," *Postmodern Culture* 24, no. 3 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.1353/pmc.2014.0014>.

my personal narratives to diverse audiences, as well as teaching students *how* to perform in a manner informed by their own lived experiences.

Thus, my research, *The Narrative Bow Arm: Reimagining the Violinist through Japanese Storytelling Practices and Autoethnographic Multimedia Performance*, creates conditions for the recognition and exchange of community cultural wealth on stage and in the classroom. Centering the expressive violin bow arm as a site of creative agency and integrating narrative frameworks, multimedia practices, and Japanese storytelling principles, this work repositions performance as a space where lived experience functions as a critical source of knowledge. In doing so, this work invites reconsideration of who participates in classical violin practices and which forms of expression are recognized within it. Not only do performers' lived experiences and musical gestures shape narrative performance, but inclusive modes of engagement for both performers and audiences also expand interpretive possibilities beyond tradition, lineage, and culture.

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APPENDIX A: Audio and Video Documentation of Compositions

This appendix provides links to audio and video documentation for my PhD Capstone Concert and other compositions by Lisa Yoshida discussed in this dissertation. The recordings feature the author as one of the performers.

Lisa's PhD Capstone Concert

Winifred Smith Hall, University of California Irvine (April 2026)

Video documentation:

<https://youtu.be/AfJnohpLDLA>

Kero Kero Violin Choir (2023) for 9-11 violinists

Premiere performance Akademie für Tonkunst in Darmstadt, Germany (August 2023)

Video documentation:

https://youtu.be/Yzi6VBtvTjY?si=jRGdPQ6yU_UDqZyQ
