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ISBN

9798193289715

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Publication Date

2026-10-12

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Emanations and Echoes: Modes of Interaction, Instrumental Multivocality, and
Post-Improvisatory Composition

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

by

Boris Ernesto Acosta Jaramillo

Committee in charge:

Professor Sarah Hankins, Co-Chair
Professor Wilfrido Terrazas, Co-Chair
Professor Anthony Burr
Professor Brian Cross
Professor Kamau Kenyatta

2026

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University of California San Diego

2026

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my dissertation committee for their guidance, patience, and generosity throughout this process. My chair, Professor Sarah Hankins, has been an invaluable source of mentorship and critical insight, helping me sharpen both the theoretical framework and the practical grounding of this work. I am equally grateful to my co-chair, Professor Wilfrido Terrazas, whose perspective as a performer and scholar shaped the way I approached the relationship between improvisation and analysis throughout this dissertation. I would also like to thank my committee members, Professor Kamau Kenyatta, Professor Anthony Burr, and Professor Brian Cross, for their thoughtful feedback, encouragement, and the many conversations that pushed this project to become sharper and more rigorous than I could have achieved alone.

I am grateful as well to the faculty of the UC San Diego Department of Music, whose support in ways large and small carried me through this process. The list of names is too long to include here, but their collective generosity shaped this dissertation more than any single paragraph could reflect. I also want to thank my fellow doctoral students, whose companionship, insight, and shared late nights in the trenches of this program taught me as much as any seminar. Their presence kept me inspired, especially when the work felt hardest to see clearly.

I would also like to thank everyone who contributed to the creation of *Echoes of Origin* and *Emanations*, the musical works central to this dissertation. To the musicians who lent their artistry, listening, and creative risk-taking to these recordings, and to the staff and collaborators who supported their production, thank you for helping bring this music into the world. This dissertation would not exist in its present form without your contributions.

Finally, and most importantly, I want to thank my family. To my parents and my brother, thank you for a lifetime of support that made this path possible in the first place. To my wife, Leng Min, thank you for your patience, strength, and belief in me through every stage of this process — this dissertation is as much a product of your support as it is of my own effort. To my children, Teo and Laia, thank you for reminding me every day what all of this work is ultimately for.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Emanations and Echoes: Modes of Interaction, Instrumental
Multivocality, and Post-Improvisatory Composition

by

Boris Ernesto Acosta Jaramillo

Doctor of Philosophy in Music

University of California San Diego, 2026

Professor Sarah Hankins, Co-Chair

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This dissertation examines improvisation as a site of continuously negotiated agency, drawing on three original recordings — *Echoes of Origin*, *Emanations*, and *Misterio Entre Tú y Yo* — as primary objects of analysis. Taking an autoethnographic approach grounded in two decades of performance experience, the project argues that musical initiative in ensemble improvisation is not held by a single performer but redistributed moment to moment through a relay of proposal, ratification, withholding, and seizure. To trace this relay, the dissertation develops the Interaction Map, a symbolic notation system designed to capture the transfer of initiative in ways standard notation cannot, applying it through close analysis of an extended passage from *Emanations* and a comparative passage from *Echoes of Origin*. Extending this relay

inward, the dissertation then asks what happens to musical initiative when only one performer occupies every position within it. Drawing on Bakhtin's account of unmerged consciousness and Cavarero's theory of voice as constituted only in address to another, and building on Katherine Meizel's concept of multivocality, the dissertation develops *solitary multivocality* through a self-interview analysis of the solo piano recording *Misterio Entre Tú y Yo*, arguing that the absence of a second performer does not produce a unified voice but reveals a plurality already latent within a single performing body.

Finally, the dissertation argues that studio post-production functions not as a technical phase applied to a finished performance, but as a direct continuation of the same improvisatory logic that shaped the original recording session. Drawing on the dual position of performer and producer occupied during the making of *Emanations*, and taking Teo Macero's editing work with Miles Davis as a methodological precedent, the dissertation develops the concept of reflexive production, tracing through diary and session-file evidence how editing, mixing, and sequencing continue rather than conclude the improvisatory process.

Together, these three claims trace a single relay relocated across three axes — interpersonal, intrapersonal, and temporal — resisting any binary opposition between improvisatory process and recorded product. The dissertation contributes a new analytical tool for tracing initiative in real time, extends theories of vocal identity to solo instrumental performance, and offers a practitioner's documented account of how recorded improvisation continues to take shape long after the performance ends

Chapter 1 — Introduction

1.1 — Positioning the Practitioner

In the study of improvised music, the ways in which musicians negotiate meaning, construct their instrumental voices, and shape their sound are often analyzed from the outside looking in. This dissertation reverses that lens. By taking my own work as the primary object of study, specifically through the production and analysis of two recent recordings, *Echoes of Origin* and *Emanations*, this project explores the continuous act of developing a musical practice as a means of self-articulation. These recordings serve not merely as final outputs, but as active sites of inquiry. They provide a framework to examine how the deeply personal effort to articulate one's voice through improvisation and production reflects universal dynamics of interaction, identity, and listening.

To engage in this kind of autoethnographic inquiry requires acknowledging the reservoir of experience from which this practice emerges. The insights developed in this dissertation are not derived solely from formal academic study, but from two decades of lived experience as a working musician, performer, and most recently, researcher and producer. Operating across diverse contexts — from self-directed exploration to conservatory training, and from local residencies to international tours — demands a specific kind of situational intelligence. It requires a mentality of adaptation, of reading a room, and of finding a way to carve out space for one's own voice within the margins of demanding professional environments. This dissertation represents a moment of stepping back from the mechanics of that daily practice to ask what it all means: what this voice is, how it interacts with others, and how it is ultimately shaped.

Long before I understood the term improvisation, I recognized its territory instinctively. My earliest encounters with the piano were not lessons in repertoire but explorations of possibility, what Christopher Small would later give me language for as musicking — music not as a fixed object but as an act one does.¹ Across three decades spent working within the margins of stylized practices, including Western classical performance, I returned again and again to whatever space allowed the music to simply go somewhere unplanned. This instinct found its clearest articulation in jazz, reinforced through teachers and workshops, including Barry Harris, who insisted that concept supersedes precision — that musicians practice concepts rather than repeat passages for the sake of flawless execution.² Brian Eno's phrase "disciplined self-indulgence" names something I recognized immediately once I began recording my own work: the freedom to direct music exactly where it wanted to go, tempered by the discipline of knowing what one is listening for.³ I have, over the years, claimed many titles — composer, arranger, performer — yet rarely felt entitled to the title improviser. And still, improvisation remains the only space in which I locate my voice without mediation.

1.2 — From Puzzle to Claims

This dissertation began, however, not as an abstract theoretical inquiry but as a very practical puzzle. While producing *Echoes of Origin*, I found myself, in the editing room, listening back to passages I had played only weeks earlier and asking a question I could not immediately answer: how did this happen? Certain moments in the recordings — a phrase passed seamlessly between instruments, a silence that seemed to open space rather than simply mark its

¹ Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 208.

² These remarks are drawn from Barry Harris's jazz workshops, which I attended in 2013–2014 at the Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center, 250 West 65th Street, New York, NY.

³ Eno, Brian, and Peter Schmidt. *Oblique Strategies*. 5th ed. London: Opal, 2001.

absence, a moment where leadership shifted without any visible cue — resisted the vocabulary I had available to describe them. They were not accidents, and they were not fully planned; something else was occurring in real time between the musicians in the room, something I recognized instinctively as a performer but could not yet name as a researcher.

That gap between instinctive recognition and analytical language is the starting point of this dissertation, and it generates the questions that organize the chapters that follow. How does musical initiative move between improvisers moment to moment — who proposes it, who ratifies it, who withholds it, who seizes it, who rejects it? How do the identities and histories that musicians bring to their instruments shape the voice that emerges from these exchanges? And once a performance is captured, how does the work of shaping it in post-production continue — rather than conclude — the improvisatory process that produced it?

In response to these questions, this dissertation advances three interconnected claims. Initiative in ensemble improvisation, I argue, is not a fixed property held by a single player but a continuously redistributed form of agency — proposed, ratified, withheld, and seized in a relay that can be traced and mapped, even though no comprehensive tool previously existed to do so. The instrumental voice that emerges from these exchanges is itself multivocal: a convergence of technique, tradition, and internal negotiation rather than a single, unified signal. And the compositional decisions made after a performance is recorded — in editing, mixing, and sequencing — are not a separate technical phase applied to a finished artifact, but a direct continuation of the same improvisatory logic that shaped the original performance. Each of these claims responds directly to one of the questions above, and each anchors one of the three thematic pillars structuring this dissertation.

In articulating these claims, it is necessary to draw a theoretical distinction between two concepts that are often conflated: voice and sound. Building on Cavarero's insistence that voice is irreducibly relational and tied to the uniqueness of the one who speaks,⁴ and on Dolar's account of voice as something that exceeds both linguistic meaning and mere acoustic event,⁵ I define voice, within the context of this research, as something fundamentally collective and relational. It is a gathering of experience, a convergence of elements that inform an approach to the instrument. It encompasses the interactions with the musicians in the room, the historical traditions one carries, and the internal conversations that guide spontaneous decision-making. Voice deals with experience, with negotiation, and with friction. Sound, on the other hand, is the physical result of that process — the acoustic manifestation of the voice's interaction with the world

1.3 — Two Recordings, Two Lineages

For much of my career, my practice was shaped by the expectations of traditional jazz performance. However, through the development of the projects analyzed here, I have found that free improvisation offers a unique platform for this voice to emerge unconstrained. By moving away from the strictures of conventional idioms, free improvisation allows for a deeper engagement with the sonic possibilities of the instrument, relying on intuition and interaction rather than existing templates alone.⁶ The sensibility behind this shift did not emerge from abstraction alone; it was shaped by specific musical lineages I had internalized over years of

⁴ Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*, 179

⁵ Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 4-5

⁶ I use “free improvisation” here in the broader, American-jazz-inflected sense — improvisation liberated from fixed harmonic or formal templates, but not necessarily severed from jazz's rhythmic and melodic vocabulary — rather than in the stricter European tradition associated with Derek Bailey, where improvisation is typically idiom-agnostic from the outset. See Derek Bailey, *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993); and George E. Lewis, “Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives,” *Black Music Research Journal* 16, no. 1 (1996): 91–122, for the foundational distinction between these traditions.

listening before I ever fully understood why. *Echoes of Origin* in particular draws much of its harmonic and textural instinct from a constellation of artists whose work exists at the border of jazz tradition and its dissolution — Paul Motian, Ornette Coleman, Don Cherry, Paul Bley, Keith Jarrett, Herbie Hancock and Sonny Rollins among them. None of these musicians share a single style; what I hear uniting them, filtered through my own years of listening, is a shared willingness to treat space, silence, and harmonic ambiguity as expressive material in their own right. And yet, the resulting recording does not resemble any of them in any way a listener could point to directly. This was not a deliberate obscuring of influence, nor was it, I suspect, simply a matter of technical limitation — an inability to fully replicate their vocabularies. It was that what transferred was never the vocabulary itself, but the sensibility beneath it: a way of listening, of waiting, of trusting silence, absorbed and refracted through whatever musical universe I had already built for myself over two decades of playing music that reaches well beyond this list. It is within this expansive territory that the friction of the voice is most clearly translated into sound.

This dynamic is further complicated when the improviser also assumes the role of the producer. Where *Echoes of Origin* found its sensibility in the harmonic openness of Motian, Ornette, and their contemporaries, *Emanations* drew from a different lineage entirely — the rock and fusion period of Miles Davis, and specifically his collaboration with producer Teo Macero. *Bitches Brew* served as a provocative point of reference, not primarily for its sound, which this recording does not attempt to replicate, but for what it modeled methodologically: Macero's editing process famously involved splicing, looping, and reassembling improvised material after the fact, treating the tape itself as a compositional instrument rather than a neutral record of a finished performance.⁷ This precedent, more than any sonic resemblance, shaped how I

⁷ Paul Tingen, *Miles Beyond: The Electric Explorations of Miles Davis, 1967–1991* (New York: Billboard Books, 2001), 104.

approached the editing table during *Emanations* — not as a technician cleaning up a finished document, but as a participant still shaping a conversation that had only paused, not ended, when the musicians left the room. During the creation of this recording, occupying dual roles — as performer and bandleader in the studio, and as editor and mixing engineer afterward — created a unique tension. It required navigating the project simultaneously as the "driver" generating the music in real time, and the "passenger" observing and shaping the recorded artifacts after the fact. Precisely because of this tension, this dual position yielded a firsthand insight into how post-production functions not as a separate technical phase, but as a direct continuation of the improvisatory process.

1.4 — Audience, Studio, and Emergent Method

Both *Echoes of Origin* and *Emanations* were not confined to the recording studio; each was also presented in live performance, and this dual presentation became an unexpected methodological asset rather than a mere performance requirement. Christopher Small's concept of musicking, introduced earlier in this chapter, insists that music is not a fixed object but an event — one in which every participant present, including the listener, plays an active role in shaping what the music becomes.⁸ Taking this idea seriously means recognizing that a live audience is not a passive backdrop to improvisation but an active party within the conversation, one whose attention, energy, and even silence exert real pressure on the choices a performer makes in real time. This is a dynamic every improviser recognizes intuitively — the audience that leans forward changes the music differently than the audience that grows restless — yet it is

⁸ Small, *Musicking*, 3

rarely named as a form of participation in its own right, rather than mere reception. The recording studio, by contrast, largely removes this participant from the room, and something else takes its place. In the absence of a public, other figures in the room absorb that function: the musicians' listening, their reactions, and their unspoken cues, alongside the engineer's and producer's more explicit forms of attention — a raised eyebrow through the glass, a hand hovering over a fader, a comment through the talkback mic — become the primary audience an improviser plays toward and against, even in an ostensibly non-public setting. This substitution matters because it changes the nature of the conversation itself. A live audience responds but does not converse in the musical language of the ensemble; a fellow musician in the studio does. Working across both formats — the room with a public, and the room without one — gave me an unusual vantage point on this distinction and became a genuine turning point in the development of this dissertation's methodology. It was in the studio during the making of *Emanations*, listening back to takes with only the other musicians present as audience, that I began to notice how much more clearly the relay of initiative could be traced when the public's presence was removed from the equation, sharpening the very observations that eventually became the Interaction Map developed in Chapter 2.

1.5 — Situating the Argument: Literature and Gaps

This project is necessary because, although scholars such as Ingrid Monson, Paul Berliner, George Lewis, and Paul Steinbeck have richly documented improvisation as a social and relational practice, none has offered a tool capable of tracing, moment to moment, how initiative itself circulates among performers within a single passage. Nor has the specific continuity between live improvisation and studio post-production — a continuity I experienced directly as both performer and producer on *Emanations* — received sustained theoretical

attention. This dissertation builds on that existing scholarship while addressing what it leaves unresolved.

Answering these questions required more than existing frameworks could offer. The categories I developed during my qualifying examination — role-based, motivic, and temporal modes of interaction, among others — provided an initial taxonomy for describing how improvisers relate to one another. But this classification, however useful as a starting point, could only describe which type of interaction was present at a given moment; it could not capture how initiative itself moved between players in real time. I began by transcribing key passages using traditional notation, but quickly found this insufficient: standard notation is built to represent pitch and rhythm, not the passing of initiative, the choice to withhold, or the moment a performer's silence becomes an active compositional decision rather than an absence. This limitation led me to develop a new analytical tool — the Interaction Map — a symbolic notation system designed specifically to track the relay of musical initiative across a passage, moment by moment. This tool, along with the broader analytical framework I call Modes of Interaction, forms one of this dissertation's central methodological contributions and is developed in full in Chapter 2.

This inquiry is in conversation with a body of scholarship that has long treated improvisation as a social and cognitive practice. Paul Berliner's *Thinking in Jazz* (1994) and Ingrid Monson's *Saying Something* (1996) illuminate the shared cultural knowledge and non-verbal cues through which improvisers communicate, establishing improvisation not as spontaneous invention from nothing, but as a deeply learned, socially embedded practice built on internalized vocabularies and mutual listening.⁹ George E. Lewis and Benjamin Piekut's Oxford

⁹ Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 101; Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 68.

Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies (2016) extends this social framing into a broader disciplinary reckoning, reframing the field's central task as examining improvisation's effects and ethical stakes rather than fixing its definition — a move that directly informs this dissertation's refusal to resolve the process/product binary in favor of one term over the other, discussed further below.¹⁰ Paul Steinbeck's *Message to Our Folks* (2017) grounds these theoretical concerns in sustained ethnographic detail, tracing how a single collective — the Art Ensemble of Chicago — negotiated interaction, leadership, and collective identity across decades of performance, offering a methodological model for the kind of close, group-specific analysis this dissertation undertakes in Chapter 2.¹¹

Where these scholars illuminate the social and interactional dimensions of improvisation, Katherine Meizel's concept of multivocality provides the vocabulary this dissertation needs for its later inquiry into instrumental identity. In *Multivocality: Singing on the Borders of Identity* (2020), Meizel describes multivocality as an act of border crossing — a way of understanding how a single voice can hold, move between, and negotiate multiple identities simultaneously, rather than expressing one fixed, unified self.¹² Although Meizel's work centers on the singing voice specifically, her framework translates productively to instrumental performance, where a pianist's touch, phrasing, and harmonic choices likewise carry layered histories — technical training, stylistic lineage, and in-the-moment negotiation — that converge without fully resolving into a single signal. This dissertation extends Meizel's framework beyond the vocal repertoire for which it was developed, testing whether "border crossing" adequately describes

¹⁰ George E. Lewis and Benjamin Piekut, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies*, vol. 1, ed. George E. Lewis and Benjamin Piekut (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 23.

¹¹ Paul Steinbeck, *Message to Our Folks: The Art Ensemble of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 183.

¹² Katherine Meizel, *Multivocality: Singing on the Borders of Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 14

what happens when an instrumentalist moves between multiple simultaneous musical roles within a single improvised passage, a question taken up directly in Chapter 3.¹³

1.6 — Overview of the Dissertation

With this contextual and methodological groundwork laid, the organizational logic of the dissertation moves through three interconnected thematic pillars, addressed across Chapters 2 through 4, each emerging from this practice-based inquiry and finding its analytical grounding in the two primary case studies. The first and arguably most central theme is modes of interaction in improvised music, forming the theoretical and analytical core of the dissertation. Drawing primarily from Paul Steinbeck's *Message to Our Folks*, Chapter 2 examines the different modes of interaction that emerge across both recordings — the ways in which musicians communicate, respond, lead, follow, and collectively negotiate meaning in real time — placed in conversation with a broader body of scholarship, including the work of George Lewis, Derek Bailey, Ingrid Monson, and Paul Berliner, to understand improvisation as a deeply social and relational practice.

From this foundation, the dissertation turns toward questions of identity and the instrument itself as a site of negotiation. Drawing substantially from Katherine Meizel's concept of multivocality, Chapter 3 explores the layered identities, influences, and sonic histories that converge in a single musical voice, asking what it means for an instrumentalist to speak through their instrument, and how those multiple, overlapping histories manifest in the context of collective improvisation. From there, the inquiry moves toward the studio and post-production as a creative act in its own right. Focused primarily on *Emanations*, Chapter 4 reflects on how the

¹³ Katherine Meizel, *Multivocality: Singing on the Borders of Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 14.

editing and mixing process functions as an extension of the improvisatory work that began in the live room, connecting the previous two themes by asking how the compositional decisions made after the performance is captured continue to shape the music's voice, its internal interactions, and its final narrative arc.

If there is a single claim uniting the chapters that follow, it is that improvisation cannot be adequately understood through a binary opposition between process and product. George E. Lewis and Benjamin Piekut identify this opposition as a recurring topic within critical improvisation studies, one frequently mapped onto related hierarchies — improvisation against composition, or low culture against high.¹⁴ Rather than resolving this opposition by privileging process over product, as much of the literature they survey tends to do, this dissertation follows a method modeled elsewhere in their own Introduction, where freedom and structure are treated not as opposing forces but as terms that "become emergent in improvisative interaction."¹⁵ Applied here, this means the dissertation does not favor any one process over another — neither the live performance over the editing session, nor one musician's initiative over another's, nor one instrumental voice over the ensemble's collective sound. Read through this lens, the three thematic pillars that follow are not separate concerns but three facets of a single argument: if authority within an improvisatory process is never fixed in advance, then the interactions, identities, and compositional decisions examined across these chapters are themselves acts of continuous, unresolved becoming rather than steps toward a predetermined end. Together, these three themes — modes of interaction, instrumental multivocality, and post-improvisatory composition — form a framework that is at once analytical and deeply personal. They are the lenses through which I make sense of my own artistic development, and through which this

¹⁴ Lewis and Piekut, "Introduction," 16

¹⁵ Lewis and Piekut, "Introduction," 14

dissertation contributes a practitioner's perspective to the broader scholarly conversation about improvisation, identity, and compositional process.

Chapter 2 — Modes of Interaction in Improvised Music

2.1 — Theoretical Framework

The categories developed during my qualifying examination — role-based, motivic, and temporal modes of interaction, among others — provided an initial taxonomy for describing how improvisers relate to one another moment to moment. The analysis that follows extends that taxonomy into a processual account: rather than asking which category of interaction is present at a given moment, I ask how musical initiative itself moves between players — who proposes, who ratifies, who withholds, who seizes. This shift from classification to relay reflects both a methodological refinement and a substantive claim: that interaction in improvised ensembles is best understood not as a stable set of relational types, but as a continuously redistributed form of agency.

The study of improvisation has long occupied a central place in musicology, ethnomusicology, and performance studies, yet the specific question of how improvisers interact — the dynamic, real-time processes through which musical relationships are negotiated, sustained, rejected and transformed — has remained curiously undertheorized as a primary object of inquiry. This is perhaps unsurprising given that, as George E. Lewis and Benjamin Piekut observe, critical improvisation studies itself emerged largely from music scholarship, with "music scholars and practitioner-scholars" taking "important leadership roles in the field."¹⁶ Yet even within that tradition, the study of improvisation has struggled with a foundational problem:

¹⁶ George E. Lewis and Benjamin Piekut, "Introduction: On Critical Improvisation Studies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies, Vol. 1* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1.

what improvisation actually *is*. Rather than resolving this question, Lewis and Piekut deliberately resist offering a single overarching definition, framing the field's task instead as one of examining "improvisation's effects, interrogat[ing] its discourses, interpret[ing] narratives and histories related to it, discover[ing] implications of those narratives and histories, and uncover[ing] its ideologies."¹⁷ This chapter follows that orientation — less concerned with defining improvisation than with examining what improvisers do, and specifically, how they do it together.

Scholars have approached this question from a range of disciplinary angles: Paul Berliner's *Thinking in Jazz* (1994) documents the cognitive strategies and shared cultural knowledge that enable jazz musicians to communicate in performance; Ingrid Monson's *Saying Something* (1996) illuminates the non-verbal cues and cultural fluency through which meaning and emotion are conveyed between players; and Jeff Pressing (1988) offers foundational insights into the mental frameworks that allow improvisers to navigate spontaneous performance in real time. Underlying each of these contributions is a shared theoretical concern: the question of what improvisers draw upon in relation to one another in the moment of performance. This is what the broader literature has come to frame as the knowledge base debate — the problem of identifying the reservoir of learned material, cultural idiom, and embodied habit from which improvised interaction proceeds. Berliner himself, anticipating Bourdieu's notion of the habitus as a "durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations,"¹⁸ suggests that jazz musicians work by reworking precomposed material under the pressures of live performance — material that is only meaningful because it is culturally shared and mutually legible among co-performers. R. Keith Sawyer pushes this collective dimension further still, emphasizing culturally shared

¹⁷ Lewis and Piekut, "Introduction," 3.

¹⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 78.

emblems and interactional frames, rather than individual formulas, as the operative unit of improvisational knowledge.¹⁹ Collectively, these contributions have deepened our understanding of improvisation as a social and cognitive practice, yet they address modes of interaction as a secondary concern — a dimension of improvisation rather than its central subject.

This chapter argues that modes of interaction deserve sustained and systematic attention in their own right. Sawyer's subsequent work on emergent group creativity (2003) extends this same interest in distributed knowledge to the level of the ensemble as a whole; drawing on this line of thinking, alongside Paul Steinbeck's analysis of ensemble negotiation in *Message to Our Folks* (2017) and more recent methodological interventions by Walton et al. (2015) and Doffman (2013) on self-organization and temporal negotiation, it proposes a framework for understanding the diverse relational configurations that arise in ensemble improvisatory practice. These configurations unfold through role negotiation, cueing, and the collective management of pulse, harmony, density, and dynamics — a set of processes examined here specifically in the context of collective, ensemble-based improvisation. Solo improvisation, where interaction persists in a different register — as a negotiation with embodied habit, instrumental affordance, memory, and silence — raises related but distinct questions that lie outside the scope of this chapter. Crucially, this framework attends not only to moments of engagement and convergence but also to the productive dimensions of withholding: silence, non-response, and deliberate independence as active musical choices that preserve space and sustain multiplicity.

Having situated this inquiry within the broader literature on improvisational knowledge and interaction, the remainder of this chapter turns from theoretical framing to close analysis.

¹⁹R. Keith Sawyer, *Group Creativity: Music, Theater, Collaboration* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), 38.

The two recordings at the center of this dissertation, *Echoes of Origin* and *Emanations*, offer complementary vantage points on the same underlying question: how does musical initiative move between improvisers in real time, and what recurring mechanisms govern that movement? Rather than surveying both recordings broadly, this chapter concentrates on two extended passages, one drawn from each project, that reward the kind of granular, moment-to-moment attention this framework requires. These passages were not selected because they are exceptional or unrepresentative; on the contrary, they were chosen because each exemplifies, with unusual clarity, the interactional logic that runs throughout both recordings as a whole.

Before turning to these passages in detail, however, it is worth pausing on the listening practice that made this analysis possible in the first place. The framework developed below, including the symbolic vocabulary introduced in Table 2.1, did not precede the music; it emerged from repeated, careful listening back to material I had recorded, and from a growing dissatisfaction with the descriptive limits of the taxonomy developed earlier in my research. Returning again and again to the same few seconds of audio, I noticed something the taxonomy could not register on its own: an improviser rarely has the luxury of evaluating a phrase in real time. Dwelling on what has just been played — judging its success, weighing whether it worked — costs the very attention that forward motion requires. Surrendering that evaluative impulse, I came to realize, is precisely what allows something unanticipated to emerge.

2.2 — Emanations: Modes of Interaction

This principle — that forward motion and evaluation are held in continuous negotiation, rather than one being sacrificed to the other — underlies the analysis that follows. Judgment does

not disappear in these passages; it recedes into the background, available to the performer as a resource (what Pressing describes as a referential and evaluative process running beneath real-time decision-making) without arresting the music's momentum. Moments of apparent restraint or waiting in the passages below are therefore not read as hesitation, nor as evaluation suspended, but as evidence of that negotiation itself — the audible trace of a performer weighing what has just happened against the need to keep the music moving forward.²⁰

Emanations contains several extended passages that reward close listening, but this five-minute span — together with a comparable moment in *LaCar*, from *Echoes of Origin* — is representative of the album's underlying logic. Both passages mark a personal turning point, though the *Emanations* excerpt reveals it most plainly. Here, the ensemble behaves almost cinematically: each instrument seems to inhabit a role — leading, supporting, receding into the background — and these roles are not fixed in advance but assigned, moment to moment, largely at the piano's initiative. The piano proposes a direction; the ensemble complements, echoes, or redirects it. As the pianist present in these moments, I recall sensing the weight of that role directly: "I understood that I was, in some way, guiding and moderating the conversation, and I felt when it was necessary to step back and let someone else take it forward. Some of those decisions were conscious choices. Others were closer to reflex — responses to what was already happening in the room, made before I had time to think them through." This dual mode of leadership — part decision, part instinct — is what gives the passage its particular lyrical and

²⁰ Jeff Pressing describes improvisation as governed by continuous referential and evaluative processes operating beneath the performer's real-time decision-making — a feedback loop that allows judgment to remain active even while forward motion is prioritized. See Jeff Pressing, "Improvisation: Methods and Models," in *Generative Processes in Music: The Psychology of Performance, Improvisation, and Composition**, ed. John A. Sloboda (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 36.

harmonic character: a conversation carried by attentive listening rather than by any predetermined script.

LaCar demonstrates a related but markedly different dynamic. Where the *Emanations* passage unfolds through harmonic relay and lyrical continuity, the solo section of *LaCar* is driven by rhythmic velocity and productive divergence. The musicians there move quickly from call-and-response into a mode of deliberate independence, each carving out an individual sonic space — the drummer shifting from an even subdivision into swing without consulting the bassist, who continues unmoved in slower rhythms; the pianist introducing dissonant, quartal harmonies against the saxophone's chromatic lines, contrast answering contrast rather than resolving into agreement. If the *Emanations* excerpt shows leadership as a baton passed gently from hand to hand, *LaCar* shows leadership dissolving into something closer to four simultaneous, competing proposals, reconciled only by the ensemble's shared sense of when to release the tension they have built.

Read together, the two passages demonstrate, more clearly than anywhere else across either record, how a group of musicians without a predetermined social model can nonetheless arrive at one, live, in the studio, one phrase at a time — sometimes through gentle handoff, sometimes through productive collision. Examining the *Emanations* passage closely, then, is not simply an exercise in transcription. It is an attempt to trace, moment by moment, how attentive listening and momentary leadership — some of it deliberate, some of it reflexive — assembled themselves into a coherent musical direction that no one had decided upon in advance.

Two structural questions recur throughout this passage: how does each section begin — through a single voice's initiative or several voices converging at once — and how does it end? The following overview distinguishes between collective and unilateral openings and closings, a

distinction that becomes significant later in this chapter when considering how rarely, and how deliberately, any single instrument claims sole authority.

To ensure consistent interpretation across the figures that follow, Table 2.1 defines the complete symbolic vocabulary used throughout this chapter's Interaction Maps. Each symbol marks a distinct type of interactional event rather than a specific pitch or rhythm; the table below defines not only what each symbol depicts, but why that distinction matters analytically.

Individual figures retain an abbreviated legend for ease of reference, but Table 2.1 serves as the authoritative source for all symbol definitions used in this dissertation.

Table 2.1: *Taxonomy of interaction symbols used in the Interaction Maps (Figures 2.1–2.6). Each symbol denotes a distinct category of interactional behavior, independent of specific pitch or harmonic content. Compound symbols (e.g., *↔) combine two base categories to mark hybrid events. See Figures 2.1–2.6 for symbol usage in context.*

Symbol	Term	Definition	Theoretical Function
●	Strong Presence	A performer holding melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic authority, regardless of whether that authority will be retained	Marks audible foreground activity; not equivalent to “solo,” since it includes moments of disguised retreat (see 7:02, 7:48, 9:18)
○	Weak / Receding Presence	An audible but subordinate contribution, typically preceding a handoff	Marks the decline phase of authority, distinguishing gradual withdrawal from abrupt cessation
—	Sustained Drone	A continuous tone without rhythmic articulation	Denotes textural ground that is typically non-competing for initiative
♪	Articulated Pulse	A rhythmically discrete, repeated statement	Distinguished from drone by temporal structure rather than harmonic content; signals offered material rather than demanded participation
=	Active Entrance	A performer's audible initiation of new melodic or harmonic material	Marks the moment a new voice enters the relay, as opposed to continuing prior material
▲	Handoff Point	The moment initiative passes from one performer to another, typically marked by the receiving's entrance	Distinguishes delegated leadership from unilateral assertion; the central unit of analysis for the “relay” concept
*	Punctual Accent	A brief, isolated articulation without sustained continuation	Marks structural punctuation (e.g., seam-marking) rather than pulse or melodic statement
≈	Textural Murmur	Low-density, non-foregrounded activity	Denotes the “listening” register: audible presence without claim to initiative
↔	Rapid Relay	Two or more performers completing each other's phrases in quick alternation	Evidence of real-time listening rather than pre-arranged material
*↔	Note-for-Note Echo	A rapid relay in which the responding performer repeats the exact pitch content offered	The strongest available evidence of active, pitch-specific listening, as opposed to coincidental harmonic alignment
·	Tacet	A performer's deliberate silence or non-participation during the passage	Marks absence as a compositional choice, not mere inactivity

Figure 2.1

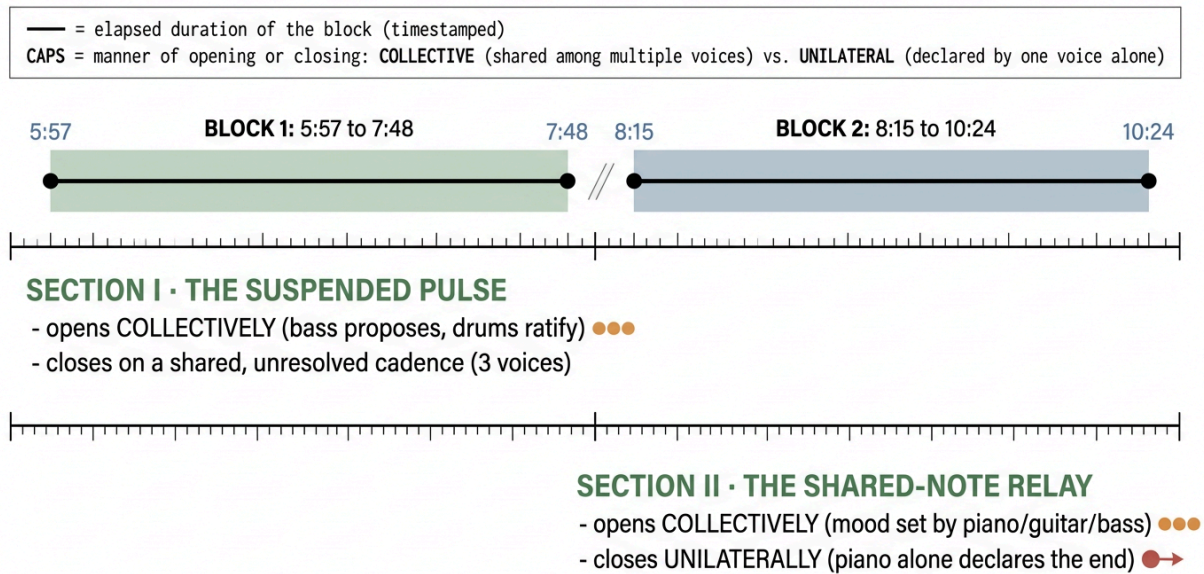


Figure 2.1: Formal overview of the passage, showing the two-part division between the suspended pulse (Section I) and the shared-note relay (Section II). Both sections open collectively, but their closings diverge: Section I ends on a cadence distributed across three voices, while Section II ends unilaterally, with the piano alone declaring closure.

Before the moment-by-moment analysis begins, Figure 2.1 maps the passage's larger shape: two sections, each opening collectively but closing by different means. Section I ends on a cadence distributed across three voices; Section II ends with the piano alone. This distinction — between an ending several voices share and an ending one voice claims — is not incidental bookkeeping. It is the first appearance of a pattern the chapter returns to directly in its closing discussion: that unilateral authority, however rare, is reserved for a specific structural function rather than treated as a default state.

The following walkthrough proceeds section by section:

Section I — The Suspended Pulse (5:57–7:48)

SECTION I · THE SUSPENDED PULSE (5:57–7:48)

PIANO (states theme)



BASS (proposes pulse) → DRUMS (rapid uptake, ratifies)



PIANO (2nd theme, 6:35) → ensemble thins → BASS CLARINET (companionable shadow)



PIANO (7:02 · holds floor, yields) → BASS (7:26 · focal handoff, new center)



PIANO (7:37 · re-opens)



[OVERLAP 7:48: bass finishing × piano opening]



BASS CLARINET (completes phrase) → BASS (suspended cadence of invitation)

Figure 2.2: Initiative relay flow, Section I (5:57–7:48). Arrows indicate a handoff of musical initiative from one player to another.

Score

5:57

Piano

Soprano Sax

Bass Clarinet

Electric Guitar

Acoustic Bass

Drum Set

Example 2.1: Conventional notation transcription, 5:57–6:10: the piano's octave theme as stated at the passage's opening, the bass's steady $G \flat 4$ quarter-note pulse, and the drummer's rapid rhythmic uptake ratifying that pulse. Notated in standard staff notation to preserve exact pitch and rhythmic content; compare with the symbolic graphic score treatment of the same opening in **Example 2.2**.

At 5:57 the piano introduces the theme, a two-part melodic unit voiced in octaves. Beneath it, the bass proposes a repetitive pulse: a constant $G \flat 4$ articulated as steady quarter notes. This is the passage's first instance of a **suspended pulse**, a rhythmic layer that supplies recurrence without committing the music to a meter or groove, an offer of organization rather than a demand for one. The drummer captures the bass's idea almost immediately, joining the

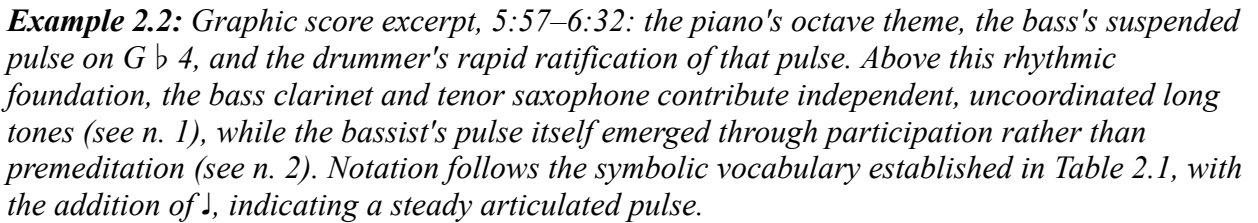
pulse, a **rapid uptake**, ratifying the gesture as a shared rhythmic foundation, though only through **ratification without transformation**: reinforcing the idea exactly as it was offered, without altering or developing it.

Above this exchange, the guitar sustains a textural drone, while the bass clarinet and tenor saxophone contribute long tones in the same register. The two wind players do not coordinate with one another — a **parallel drift**, two voices sharing space while pursuing independent paths, each accompanying the piano without accompanying each other. Asked about this layering directly, Taforo confirmed that no coordination took place in advance; the choice, in his account, arose in the moment, through listening and reacting rather than through any prior agreement, with no way to know for certain whether the other horn's entrances were noticed and adjusted to or arrived at independently.²¹

In the bassist's own account, the pulse itself was similarly undecided in advance — not a conscious proposal but something discovered live, a product of participation and musical reflex rather than premeditation, shaped by context and by an evolving sense of what the moment required.²²

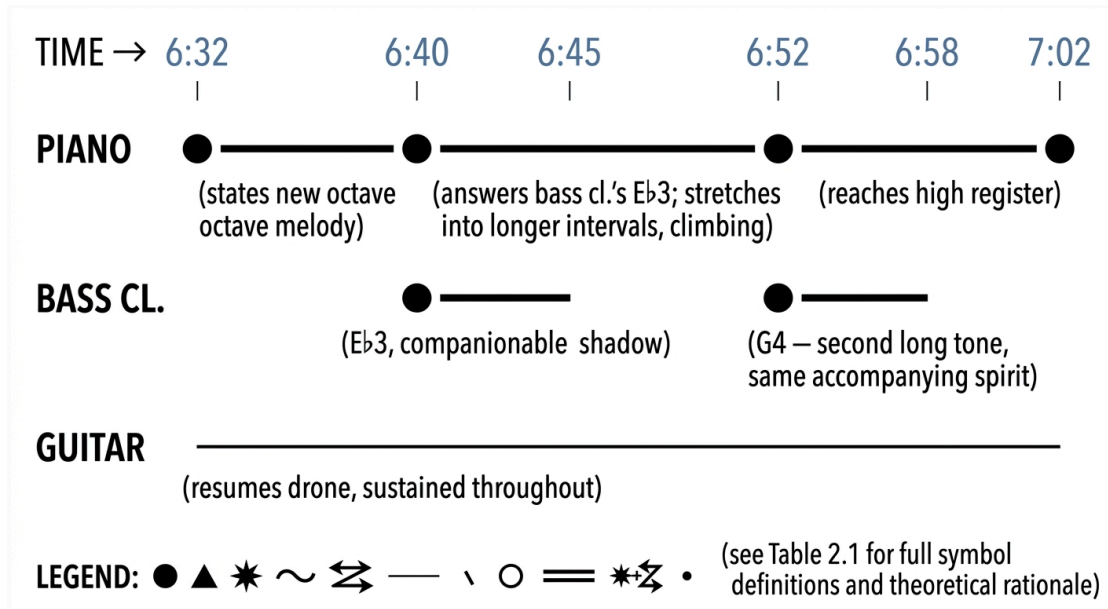
²¹ Taforo, interview by author, June 15, 2025.

²² Rob Thorsen, interview by author, August 26, 2025



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quality — a visual, imagistic unfolding, as though each entrance were tracking a camera move rather than simply answering a musical cue.

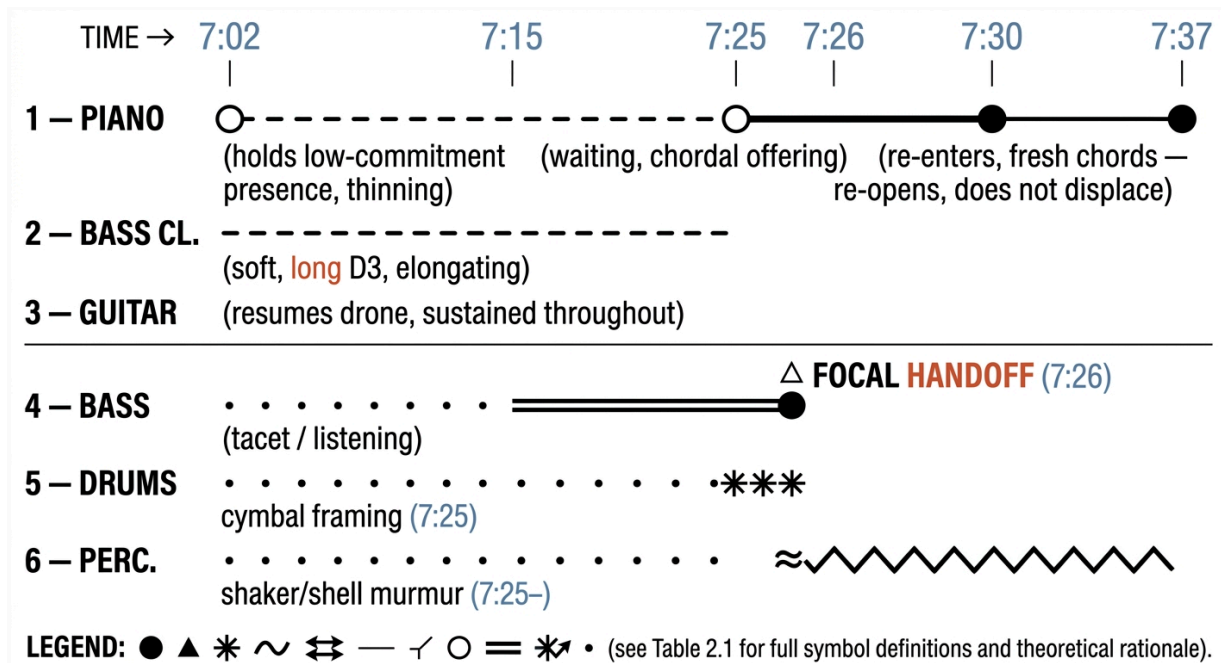


Example 2.3: Graphic score excerpt, 6:32–7:02: the piano's octave melody and subsequent climb into its high register, answered by the bass clarinet's two-part companionable shadow (E♭3, then G4).

At 7:02 the piano begins to relinquish its leading role. It abandons the octave melody, drifts through freer shapes, and settles into a chordal, rhythmic texture — no longer melody but a **rhythmic offering**, a chair pulled out for someone else to occupy. This is **holding the floor while surrendering it**: the piano keeps playing, keeps being present, but stops claiming the foreground. 7:25: the double bass reappears; the drummer frames the moment with cymbal strokes; the percussionist adds shakers and shells, an ambient murmur beneath the transition, while the bass clarinet elongates the moment with a soft and long D3.

The invitation is answered at 7:26, when the bass enters with rapid melodic shapes — a clean **focal handoff**, one instrument's retreat becoming another's entrance. At 7:37 the piano

returns with fresh chords, not competing with the bass but **re-opening the question**, proposing a new direction without displacing the one already in motion.



Example 2.4: Graphic score excerpt, 7:02–7:37: the piano's withdrawal into a low-commitment held texture, the ensemble's convergence around the 7:25 transition, the focal handoff to the bass at 7:26, and the piano's brief re-entrance at 7:37.

At 7:48 the piano offers a series of slow, steady, impressionistic chords tracing a clear melodic curve — an **open-ended gesture**, a phrase built to be finished by someone else. At 7:58, the soprano saxophone steps in, introducing a slow, long-tone mysterious melody, as though it is showing a new way, while the piano continues playing, accompanying the moment with the same chords offered at the beginning. At 8:12 the bass offers a soft murmur. The soprano completes the melodic sentence, but at 8:36 the piano interrupts the steady rhythm, in an attempt to dialogue with the saxophone. This becomes a genuine conversation; at 8:39, there is a moment of pause that is finished with a chord and the beginning of a new melody, while the guitar in the background continues to offer whale-like textures. At 8:53, there is a striking moment of the piano finishing the melody of the saxophone. The piano takes the last note and finishes the

melody at 8:55 (saxophone Bb3–G3, and the piano responding G–F–Ab). This is while the drummer is playing textural brushes in the background and the percussion is filling the texture with shells — a very delicate moment of intricate communication. The bass clarinet steps into the gap and finishes the piano's phrase with a simple, complementary melody, a **clean completion**, and the bass adds a closing tail that seals the exchange. Yet this tail leans forward rather than back: a **suspended cadence of invitation**, an ending shaped like a question mark, distributing a single musical thought across three players and closing the passage even as it points toward what follows.

Section II — The Shared-Note Relay (7:48–10:24)

SECTION II · THE SHARED-NOTE RELAY (7:48–10:24)

PIANO (7:48 · open-ended chordal phrase)
 ▼
 SOPRANO SAX (7:58 · enters; piano shadows as accompaniment)
 ▼
 BASS (8:12 · soft murmur, textural)
 ▼
 SOPRANO (completes sentence) ⇌ PIANO (8:36 · interrupts, initiates dialogue)
 ▼
 PAUSE (8:39 · chord close / new melody begins) → GUITAR (whale-tone textures, continuous)
 ▼
 PIANO (8:53–8:55 · completes soprano's phrase: Bb3–G3 → G–F–Ab)
 ▼
 GUITAR (9:07 · delayed entrance) → SOPRANO (takes up line)
 ▼
 PIANO (9:18 · variant echo) → BASS (9:22 · enters conversation)
 ▼
 SOPRANO/PIANO (9:27 · transitional chords) → BASS CLARINET (9:35 · ascending 3rd)
 ▼
 PIANO (pivot capture on F3)
 ▼
 COLLECTIVE (9:49 · rapid shadowing) ⇌ CLARINET ⇌ PIANO (echo exchange)
 ▼
 ALL VOICES (9:52 · collective ascent to convergence)
 ▼
 PIANO (10:24 · closing declaration — alone)

Figure 2.3: Initiative relay flow, Section II (7:48–10:24). Arrows indicate initiative handoffs; double-headed arrows (⇌) mark rapid back-and-forth relay.

At 7:48 the piano offers a series of slow, steady, impressionistic chords tracing a clear melodic curve — an open-ended gesture, a phrase built to be finished by someone else. At 7:58, the soprano saxophone accepts that invitation, introducing a slow, long-tone melody that feels

less like an answer than a new direction being proposed, while the piano remains present as a companionable shadow, repeating its opening chords beneath the saxophone's line. At 8:12 the bass adds a soft murmur, a textural undercurrent that thickens the space without competing for focus.

The soprano completes its melodic sentence, but at 8:36 the piano breaks from its accompanimental role and interrupts, initiating a direct dialogue with the saxophone — accompaniment becoming conversation. A brief pause at 8:39 closes this exchange with a single chord that simultaneously ends one thought and opens the next; underneath it, the guitar maintains its own parallel presence, offering long, whale-like textures that neither interrupt nor join the piano–saxophone dialogue directly, giving it ambient depth instead.

By 8:53 the exchange between soprano and piano has compressed into overlapping speech — each finishing the other's phrases almost before they land — and at 8:55 this reaches its most literal expression: the piano takes the saxophone's descending Bb3–G3 and answers it note for note with G–F–Ab, completing the phrase the piano itself had opened at 7:48. Throughout, the drums maintain a brushed, textural pattern and the percussionist colors the surface with shells — a delicate, low-density backdrop that keeps the two lead voices in sharp relief.

2 7:48

8va- 8va- 8va- 8va- 8va- 8va-

Pno. *tranquillo* *p*

S. Sx. *cantabile* *mf* *p*

Example 2.5: Conventional notation transcription, 7:48–8:18: the piano's opening chordal phrase, the soprano saxophone's entrance, and the soprano's completion of its melodic sentence. Notated in standard staff notation; compare with the fuller symbolic treatment of this exchange, including the piano's 8:55 note-for-note completion, in Figure 2.4.

At 9:07 the guitar — patient until now — steps forward with a melody that feels almost logical, as though it had been missing from the conversation: a **delayed entrance validated by patience**. The soprano takes up the line; the piano marks time with a single repeated note, a holding tone. At 9:18 the piano restates the guitar's melody with a small twist — a **variant echo** — and by 9:22 the bass has joined with small melodic gestures of its own, folded into the relay without disrupting it.

13 9:06

Pno. Like a dripping faucet, gradually accelerating

S. Sax. Lyrical and flowing

B. Cl.

E. Gtr.

Example 2.6: Conventional notation transcription, 9:06–9:22: the electric guitar's delayed-entrance melody, the soprano saxophone's lyrical uptake of that line, and the piano's rhythmic "dripping faucet" holding tone that accelerates into its own variant restatement of the melody. Diagonal lines trace shared pitches as the melodic material migrates between instruments across the relay. Notated in standard staff notation; compare with the symbolic graphic score treatment of the same passage in the accompanying Interaction Map.

At 9:27 the relay becomes an assembly line: the soprano sustains a long note, the piano turns it into a series of transitional chords, and the percussionist's wood blocks mark the seam. This opens the door for the bass clarinet's entrance at 9:35, an ascending minor third from D3 to F3. The piano seizes that F3 immediately — a **pivot capture**, taking another player's landing note and recontextualizing it as the foundation of new harmony — while the bass lays ascending, repeating figures beneath, and the guitar sustains its attentive textural presence.

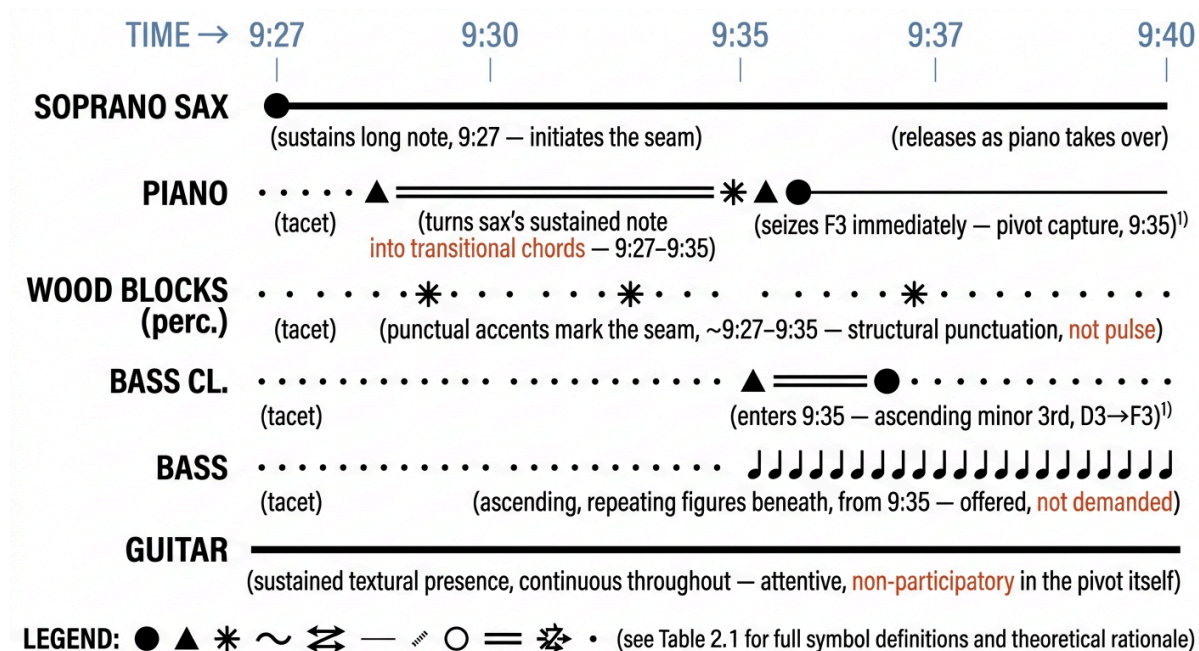
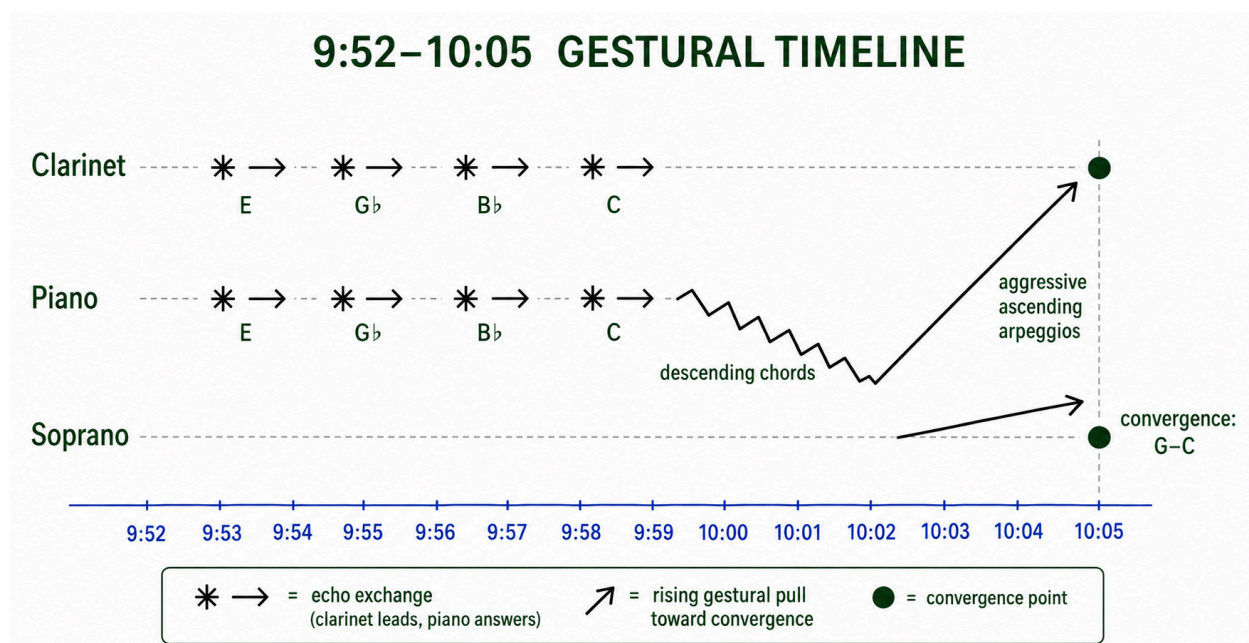


Figure 2.5: Gestural timeline, assembly-line relay and pivot capture (9:27–9:40). Horizontal position is proportional to elapsed time; symbols indicate activity type rather than pitch content (see legend). The three consecutive handoff points (▲) — soprano-to-piano at 9:27, wood blocks marking the seam, and piano's seizure of the bass clarinet's F3 at 9:35 — visualize the "assembly line" structure described in the accompanying text.



Example 2.7 Gestural timeline diagram spanning 9:52 to 10:05, showing three instrument rows: clarinet, piano, and soprano. Clarinet and piano exchange four echoed pitches (E, G-flat, B-flat, C) marked with star-and-arrow symbols. Piano then descends through a zigzag pattern labeled 'descending chords,' before rising sharply into 'aggressive ascending arpeggios.' Diagonal arrows show clarinet and soprano rising toward a shared convergence point at 10:05, marked with a filled circle labeled 'convergence: G-C'

By 9:49 the piano is changing harmonic direction rapidly, and the rest of the ensemble tracks it almost without lag — **collective shadowing at speed**. This is the runway into the climax: at 9:52 the clarinet ascends (E, G $\flat$, B $\flat$, C), and the piano answers each pitch in turn — a **note-for-note echo** — before descending through chords and launching into aggressive rising arpeggios that pull the soprano and clarinet upward, all three voices arriving together at the peak (G–C): a **collective ascent to convergence**.

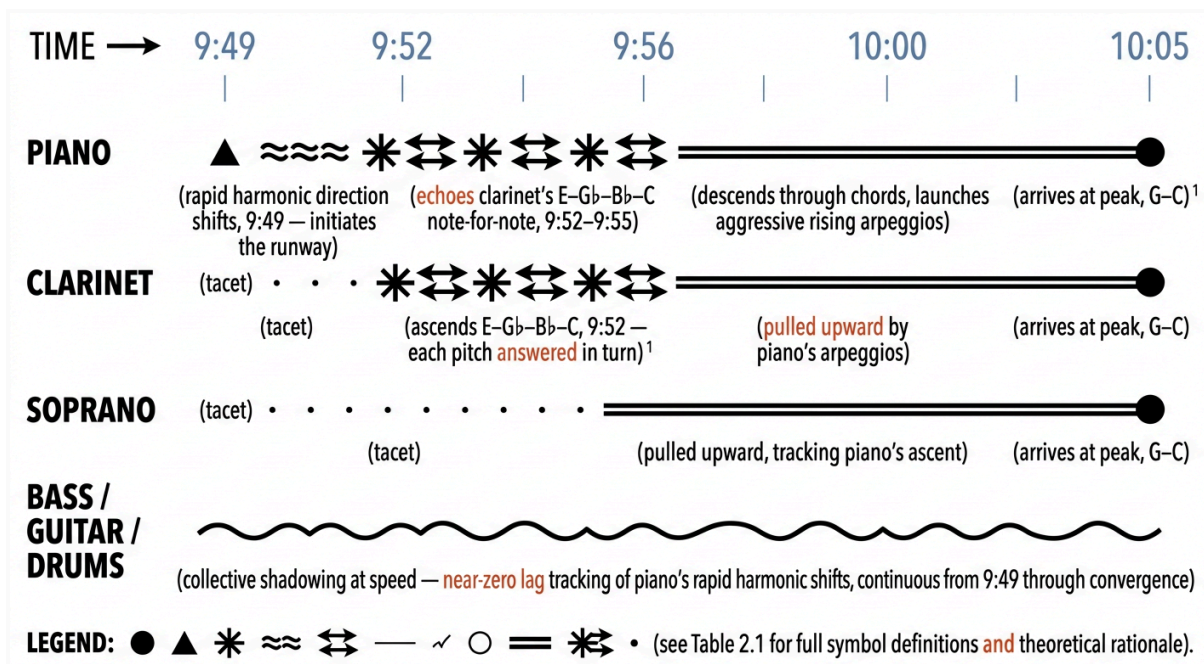


Figure 2.6: Gestural timeline, collective shadowing and ascent to convergence (9:49–10:05). Horizontal position is proportional to elapsed time; symbols indicate activity type rather than pitch content (see legend). The compound symbol *⇄ marks the four-note echo exchange between clarinet and piano (E, G ♭, B ♭, C); the shared arrival point at 10:05, where piano, clarinet, and soprano converge on G–C, is the only moment in the passage where all three lead voices occupy the same symbol (●) simultaneously.

Finally, at 10:24, the piano claims the floor one last time to announce the ending — not a handoff this time, but a closing declaration, the only moment in the passage where a single voice ends the conversation rather than passing it on.

Having traced this passage across nine transcribed excerpts and six gestural timelines, Figure 2.7 renders the entire five-minute span as a single continuous graphic score. Rather than adapting any single historical model, this approach draws conceptually on the broader tradition of symbolic and process notation that composers such as Karlheinz Stockhausen helped establish in the mid-twentieth century — using visual, non-staff-based systems to represent gesture, timing,

and process rather than fixed pitch and rhythm.²³ Read left to right, the map compresses every relay, handoff, and moment of collective convergence discussed above into one visual field — revealing a structure in which authority moves constantly among voices, arriving at unilateral closure only once, in the piano's final declaration at 10:24.

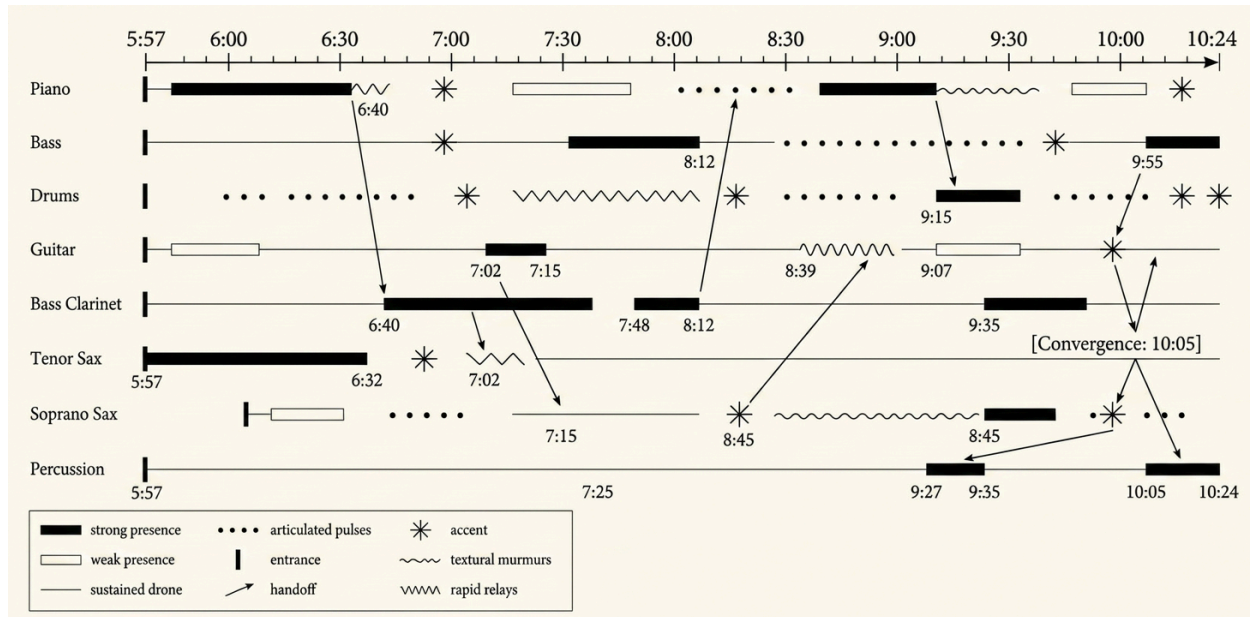


Figure 2.7: Graphic score interaction map of the full passage (5:57–10:24), rendered in the style of Karlheinz Stockhausen's graphic notation. Horizontal lanes represent the eight instrumental voices; symbol vocabulary corresponds to the taxonomy established in Table 2.1.

2.3 — From Taxonomy to Relay: Revisiting *LaCar*

During the qualifying examination that preceded this dissertation, an early version of the taxonomy now developed in Section 2.1 was applied to *LaCar*, the opening track of *Echoes of*

²³ Stockhausen was among several mid-century composers who developed symbolic and graphic notation systems as alternatives to conventional staff notation, representing process, gesture, and performer choice rather than fixed pitch and rhythm. The Interaction Map draws conceptually on this broader tradition of process notation rather than any single score. See Erhard Karkoschka, *Notation in New Music: A Critical Guide to Interpretation and Realization*, trans. Ruth Koenig (New York: Praeger, 1972); and John Cage, ed., *Notations* (New York: Something Else Press, 1969), which anthologizes Stockhausen's work alongside other composers experimenting with graphic score forms

Origin. That analysis divided the piece's solo section into ten discrete time segments and classified the interaction occurring within each according to categories such as role-based interaction, harmonic synergy, and motivic development.²⁴ The method was descriptive by design: it could establish, for instance, that a given ten-second span exhibited "melodic echoing" or "equal participation," but it could not capture the order in which that echo occurred, who initiated it, or how the initiative passed from one player to the next. The same limitation that motivated the Interaction Map's development in the *Emanations* analysis above is visible, in retrospect, in this earlier work — and revisiting one passage of "LaCar" through the Interaction Map format makes that limitation concrete rather than merely asserted.

Consider the opening moments of the solo section, roughly 1:13 to 1:22. The original qualifying-exam analysis offers two separate descriptions of this same brief span, written for two different categorical purposes. Read side by side, they diverge in a small but telling way: one account has the saxophone's opening phrase "immediately answered by an accented E3 on the downbeat," with the piano then varying the melody's closing note from B to Bb; the other account has the bass "echoing" the saxophone's full melody before the piano's variation occurs.²⁵ Under a purely categorical framework, this discrepancy is invisible — both readings satisfy the label "melodic echoing." A relay-based framework cannot absorb the ambiguity so easily, because a Handoff Point has to be placed somewhere specific. Figure 2.7 below renders the passage as a working Interaction Map, with the unresolved step marked explicitly rather than silently smoothed over.

²⁴ Boris Acosta-Jaramillo, "Doctoral Qualifying Examination" (Ph.D. qualifying exam, University of California San Diego, August 2024), 33

²⁵ Boris Acosta-Jaramillo, "Doctoral Qualifying Examination" (Ph.D. qualifying exam, University of California San Diego, August 2024), 23

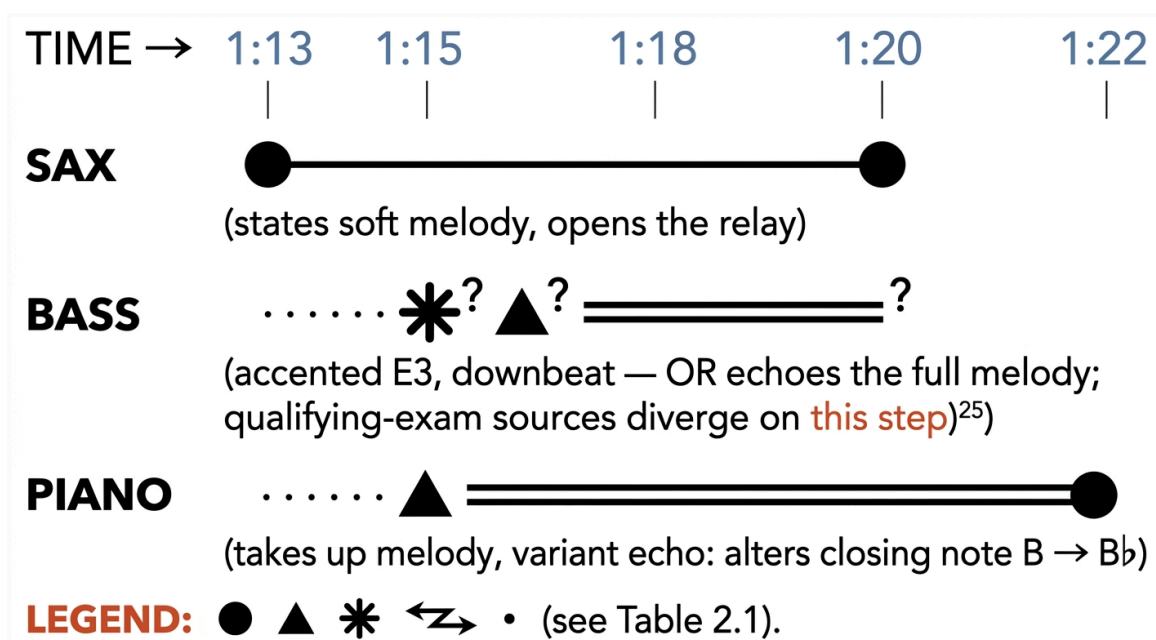


Figure 2.8: Initiative relay, "LaCar," opening solo section (1:13–1:22). The bass's contribution (marked with ?) is rendered provisionally pending confirmation against the source recording; both candidate readings are shown as they appear in the original qualifying-exam material. Notation follows Table 2.1.

Whichever reading is confirmed, the act of building the figure already accomplishes something the original taxonomy could not: it forces a decision about sequence and agency that the category "melodic echoing" was never designed to make. This is, in miniature, the exact gap this dissertation's methodology section identifies — a taxonomy that can name a type of interaction but not trace its relay. *LaCar* is not analyzed here as a second full case study alongside Emanations; a single passage, mapped against the same categorical description that originally described it, is sufficient to demonstrate the distance between the two methods. The broader solo section of *LaCar* — its shift into rhythmic independence, its dissonant piano-and-drums pairing, its collective rather than unilateral close — is taken up again in the discussion that follows, where it serves a comparative rather than a demonstrative function.

2.4 — The Grammar of Relay

Read against this dissertation's refusal to resolve improvisation into a binary between process and product, the initiative relay traced across "Emanations" — and, in a different register, across *LaCar* — is not merely a technical feature of ensemble interaction.²⁶ It is a live demonstration of distributed agency, in which musical authority exists nowhere permanently and everywhere provisionally. No single performer authors the passage; no predetermined plan assigns its roles. Leadership is instead something the ensemble improvises collectively, moment to moment, alongside the notes themselves. What emerges is a model of musical agency that resists both composer-centered and soloist-centered analysis: the voice this dissertation set out to locate is not housed in any one instrument, but distributed across the attentive, provisional, ever-shifting relay between them.

Having traced the Emanations passage moment by moment across Figures 2.2 through 2.6, and compressed it into a single continuous view in Figure 2.7, we can now step back and ask what this granular detail actually demonstrates. The answer is not simply that initiative moved — that much was already visible in real time, handoff by handoff, across those figures. The deeper claim is that the mechanism of that movement recurs with enough consistency to constitute a practice, not a coincidence — and that this consistency holds even where the underlying musical logic diverges sharply, as the contrast with *LaCar* in Section 2.3 makes clear.

Consider how often the same structural move reappears across both sections of the Emanations passage, disguised each time by different instrumentation. The focal handoff that sends the bass forward at 7:26 is structurally identical to the delayed entrance validated by patience that brings the guitar forward at 9:07: in both cases, an instrument that has been patient

²⁶ See Chapter 1, drawing on Lewis and Piekut's treatment of freedom and structure as co-emergent rather than opposed.

— accompanying, shadowing, waiting — is given the floor not by request but by the retreat of whoever held it a moment before. The mechanism is the same; only the surface texture changes. The same holds for ratification without transformation (the drummer's uptake of the bass's pulse at 5:57) and collective shadowing at speed (the ensemble's tracking of the piano's harmonic shifts at 9:49). Both are moments where the group affirms an idea rather than complicating it — a vote of confidence rather than a counterproposal. That this happens once near the passage's calm opening and once near its climactic peak suggests the behavior is not context-dependent; it is a default mode of listening this ensemble returns to regardless of intensity.

A third recurring mechanism appears in the note-for-note echo: the piano's exact citation of the soprano's Bb3–G3 at 8:55, and its exact citation of the clarinet's ascending E–Gb–Bb–C at 9:52, are the same gesture performed twice — the strongest available evidence, on each occasion, that listening in this ensemble is pitch-specific rather than merely gestural. Perhaps most tellingly, the passage's two moments of individual authority — the piano's holding the floor while surrendering it at 7:02 and its closing declaration at 10:24 — are mirror images of each other. The first is a retreat disguised as presence; the second is a presence that finally is an ending, with no handoff attached. The piano only claims true, uncontested authority once in nearly five minutes of music, and it does so at the one moment when the piece requires closure rather than continuation. This is not incidental. It suggests that even the ensemble's most harmonically central voice treats singular authority as a tool reserved for a specific structural function — ending things — rather than a default state to be maintained throughout.

Section 2.3's revisiting of *LaCar* sharpens this claim rather than standing apart from it. There, the same underlying commitment — that initiative must be traceable to a specific point of transfer — exposed a gap the original qualifying-exam taxonomy could not see: two descriptions

of the same six-second span, both satisfying the label "melodic echoing," yet disagreeing about who initiated it and when. The Interaction Map does not resolve this ambiguity by fiat; Figure 2.8 marks it openly, with a question mark standing in place of a premature answer. But the very fact that the map demands an answer — that it cannot rest on a category the way the original taxonomy could — is itself evidence for this chapter's central methodological claim: initiative is not a property a moment either has or lacks, but a transfer that occurred at some specific point between some specific pair of hands, whether or not the record allows us to say exactly where.

Taken together, these recurrences point toward the same conclusion from multiple independent angles: what looks, in the moment, like six or seven isolated instances of good listening is in fact a coherent practice — a shared grammar of initiative (the relay, the pivot capture, the suspended cadence, the shadow, the citation) that this ensemble deploys again and again, adjusting only the instrumentation and register, never the underlying logic. That grammar, however, describes only how initiative moves. It does not yet ask what is doing the moving — what kind of voice, assembled from what histories and negotiations, occupies each position in the relay before passing it on. That question is the subject of Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Voice Without an Interlocutor – Solitary Multivocality and the Instrument as Site of Self-Address

3.1 — Theoretical Framework

Chapter 2 closed by naming a question it had deliberately left unanswered. Having traced, across nearly five minutes of *Emanations*, a grammar of relay — handoffs, pivot captures, note-for-note echoes, the rare and structurally reserved moment of unilateral closure — the chapter turned that grammar back on itself: "That grammar... describes only how initiative

moves. It does not yet ask what is doing the moving — what kind of voice, assembled from what histories and negotiations, occupies each position in the relay before passing it on."²⁷ This chapter takes up that question, but under a condition Chapter 2 never had to face: what happens to the relay when there is only one performer to occupy every position in it?

My relationship to improvisation at the piano predates any theoretical vocabulary I now have for describing it. For as long as I can remember playing, improvisation was simply how I came to understand the instrument — not a technique layered on top of more serious study, but the ground on which everything else was built. And yet, for most of that time, I held this part of my playing at a kind of arm's length. I enjoyed it, but I did not think of it as musically important. In this sense, my early relationship to improvisation resembled what Christopher Small describes as simply "the way we play"²⁸ — an unremarkable, almost invisible mode of musical participation rather than a distinct compositional practice. It felt more like a private habit than a compositional practice: I let my hands move, and hoped they would connect with my ears at the moment I needed them to, but I rarely thought of what emerged as work that carried weight of its own.

Misterio Entre Tú y Yo was the first time I improvised in a professional recording studio with the explicit intention of releasing the result, and certainly the first time I imagined such a recording might one day serve as evidence in a doctoral dissertation. Working alongside Kamau Kenyatta during that process, I first began to suspect this material was not only worth sharing, but worth pursuing further as a distinct mode of musical thought.

²⁷ See chapter 2, p. 38, above.

²⁸ Christopher Small, *Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration in African American Music* (London: Calder, 1987), 27-28.

Taking it seriously requires returning to a question I posed, and left largely unresolved, in my qualifying examination. There, drawing on Katherine Meizel's ethnomusicological framework, I proposed the term *instrumental multivocality*²⁹ and asked how a concept built around singers moving between fixed vocal repertoires — an operatic voice set against a bluegrass voice, a Korean traditional voice against a pop voice — could transfer to improvisation, a practice with no fixed repertoire to move between in the first place. At the time, I suggested that improvisation's inherent fluidity should make it, if anything, a more natural home for multivocality than the named genres Meizel's singers inhabit. That suggestion was an intuition, not a demonstration. This chapter attempts the demonstration, and in doing so, it returns to a source Meizel herself draws upon — one whose original formulation, it turns out, fits improvisation more precisely than her own case studies do.

The term "multivocality" enters Meizel's framework by way of Mikhail Bakhtin's literary theory, where it names something structurally different from a singer's movement between named styles: "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses" coexisting within a single work, each "autonomous," none blending into "a cohesive whole," though capable of achieving, in Bakhtin's words, "a unity of a higher order than in homophony."³⁰

³¹Bakhtin's model, built to describe the polyphonic structure of Dostoevsky's novels, carries no requirement that unmerged voices correspond to pre-existing, named genres or repertoires. It requires only that multiple genuinely distinct perspectives remain audible within a single bounded work without collapsing into one governing voice. This is a structural claim rather than a repertoire-based one, and it is this claim, rather than Meizel's singer-based examples, that offers

²⁹Boris Acosta-Jaramillo, "Ph.D. Qualifying Examination Prospectus" (unpublished qualifying examination, University of California San Diego, 2024), 4.

³⁰ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 21.

³¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 6.

the more exact fit for a single, unrepeatable improvisation with no score and no genre to move between.

Adriana Cavarero's account of vocal relationality supplies the mechanism by which such unmerged voices might emerge and negotiate within one performer specifically. For Cavarero, voice never expresses a self already complete prior to speech; it comes into being only in the act of address, oriented toward another who might receive it.³² In ensemble improvisation, Chapter 2 traced that address moving between distinct musicians — the bass proposing, the drums ratifying; the piano offering, the saxophone completing. In solo improvisation, I will argue, the address does not disappear. It is redirected toward the performer's own immediately preceding gesture, which functions, briefly, as the "other" a new voice must answer, resist, or depart from. This redirection carries a methodological consequence this chapter does not want to obscure. Chapter 2's Interaction Maps could rely on an outside observer's ear — timbre alone distinguishes a bass clarinet from a soprano saxophone, so the question of whether a new voice has entered rarely arose; only how initiative passed between already-distinct voices required tracing. A solo performance offers no such shortcut. Before asking how initiative moves in *Misterio Entre Tú y Yo*, this chapter must first ask a question Chapter 2 never had to: whether a second, genuinely unmerged voice is present at all, and by what evidence — texture, touch, harmonic language, motivic relationship to what came before — such a claim could be sustained. Where Meizel answers this question by asking her singers directly which voice feels most like their own, and is met, in Lubana Al-Quntar's case, with an explicit refusal of the premise — "Apparently both are me... I really feel both equally"³³ — this chapter adopts a comparable method, adapted to its comparably solitary conditions. In the absence of a second performer to

³² Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 179.

³³ Katherine Meizel, "Finding a Voice," in *Multivocality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 46.

interview, the interview turns inward: the performer addressing, months after the fact, the recorded evidence of what an earlier version of himself did at the instrument, without always knowing why.

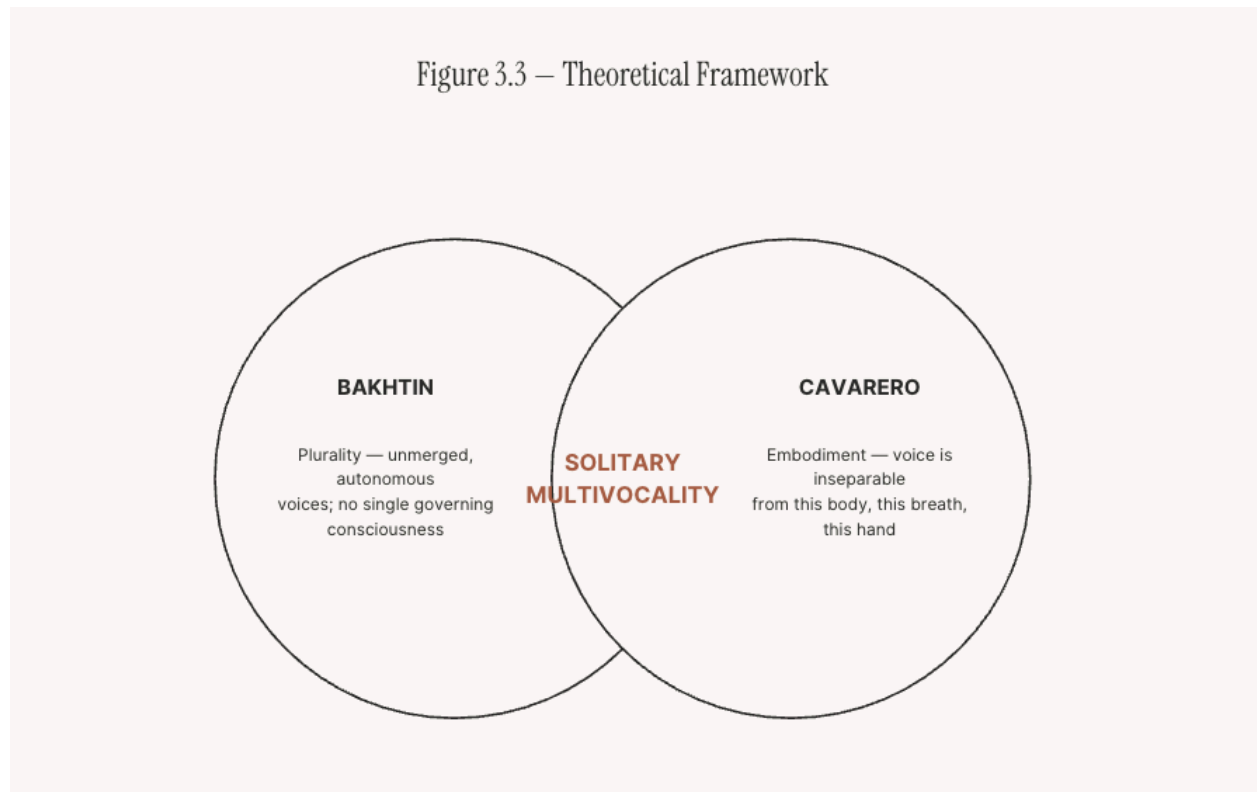


Figure 3.1. *Theoretical framework for the analysis of *Misterio Entre Tú y Yo*, combining Bakhtin's model of unmerged, autonomous consciousnesses with Cavarero's account of voice as inseparable from the body that produces it. Their intersection defines solitary multivocality: a condition in which the absence of other musicians does not produce a single unified voice, but reveals the plurality already latent within one performing body.*

The chapter proceeds in two movements. The next section traces the self-interview across the full arc of *Misterio Entre Tú y Yo*, moving section by section through its formal architecture — Introduction, First Statement, Second Statement, Development — toward the passage where this chapter's governing question is posed most sharply: a moment near the two-minute mark where the piece's contrapuntal material dissolves into a slower, harmonically static texture, and

where sustained exposure produces an audible crack in the performing voice itself — a blur, in the most literal sense, between the voice that has been speaking and the instability that speaking has apparently always contained. That descriptive account is interleaved with the self-interview method just described, treating the performer's own retrospective account of each passage as evidence in its own right, alongside the recording. The chapter then widens outward, asking what this trajectory might suggest about solo improvisation more broadly, before returning, in its final pages, to the question with which Chapter 2 left off: not only how initiative moves, but *what*, exactly, is moving.

3.2 — Tracing the Voices: A Self-Interview Through *Misterio Entre Tú y Yo*

Having established this framework, the self-interview method described above can now be applied directly to the recording itself. What follows is not a transcription of that interview but a synthesis of its findings, organized by the piece's own formal architecture, and building — as promised above — toward the passage where the chapter's central claim becomes most audible: the moment, just past the two-minute mark, where the performing voice cracks.

Figure 3.1 – Formal Map of *Misterio Entre Tú y Yo*: Voices Across Time

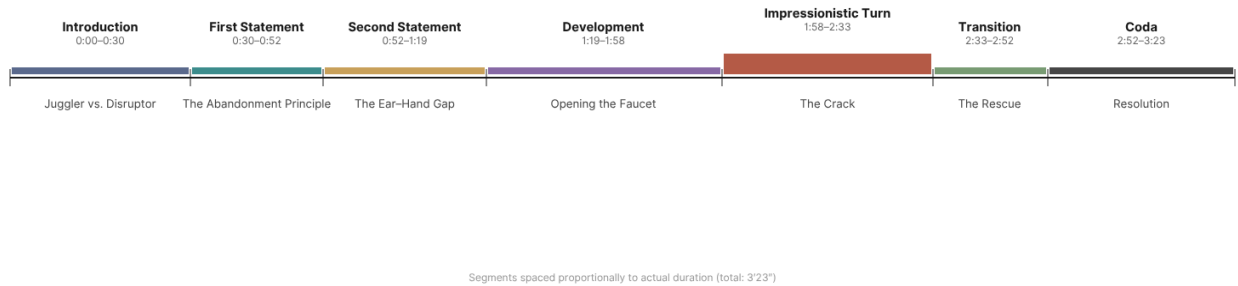


Figure 3.2. Formal map of *Misterio Entre Tú y Yo*, showing the piece's seven structural sections spaced proportionally to their actual duration, alongside the interpretive voice or concept associated with each. The performing voice's audible crack, occurring during the Impressionistic Turn (1:58–2:33), is highlighted as the chapter's central analytical focus.

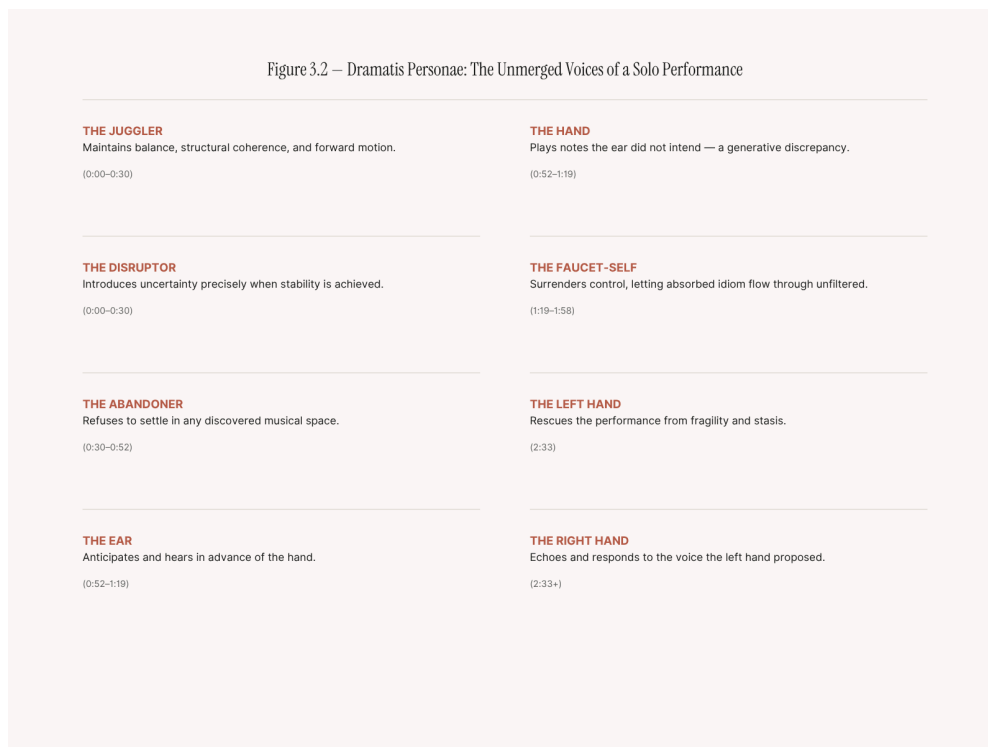


Figure 3.3. Dramatis personae of *Misterio Entre Tú y Yo*, identifying the distinct interpretive voices enacted across the performance's seven sections. Voices are paired according to their structural or dialogic relationship rather than strict chronological entrance, reflecting the chapter's central claim that solo performance stages an internal multiplicity of unmerged consciousnesses.

3.2.1 The Introduction (0:00–0:30): Two Wills at the Threshold

The opening thirty seconds establish, in miniature, the central tension the rest of the piece will elaborate. In my own account of this passage, two competing figures emerge almost immediately: a "juggler," whose task is to maintain balance, structural coherence, and forward motion, and a "disruptor," whose function is to introduce uncertainty precisely when the juggler seems to have achieved stability³⁴. At 0:18, this tension becomes audible as concrete musical event: a stepwise ascending gesture, F–F#–G, is abruptly interrupted by an unrelated arrival on an E major sonority — a harmonic non sequitur that has no preparation and offers no resolution. Describing this moment afterward, I noted that there had been no time to think the interruption into being³⁵; the disruption arrived faster than conscious deliberation, suggesting that the "disruptor" voice operates below the threshold of premeditated choice, closer to reflex than to plan.



Example 3.1. *Reduction of the Introduction's opening harmonic gesture (0:14–0:22), showing the chromatic bass ascent F–F#–G beneath parallel slash-chord harmony, followed by unprepared arrival on E major/E minor. The absence of conventional voice-leading preparation supports this chapter's characterization of the moment as a harmonic non sequitur.*

³⁴ Boris Acosta-Jaramillo, "Self-Interview: Reflections on *Misterio Entre Tú y Yo*," unpublished document, Fall 2024. Compiled with reference to the author's studio journal, Fall 2024. "Introduction," Q1.

³⁵ Self-Interview, "Introduction," Q1.

This is Bakhtinian unmerged consciousness in its most literal form: two wills, occupying the same body and the same eighteen seconds of music, neither one fully subordinated to the other. Crucially, neither voice "wins." The juggler does not suppress the disruption, and the disruption does not derail the juggler's project entirely; the two persist in an uneasy, ongoing negotiation that the Introduction simply exposes rather than resolves. In Cavarero's terms, this negotiation is not abstract — it is physically located. I have described training myself to recognize particular hand-shapes as generative of particular sonorities, meaning the juggler and the disruptor are not merely competing musical ideas but competing physical postures, alternative configurations the hand can assume,³⁶ each carrying its own sonic consequence. The voice, here, is quite literally in the fingers.

3.2.2 First Statement (0:30–0:52): The Principle of Abandonment

Where the Introduction stages conflict, the First Statement reveals a governing compositional ethic that will recur throughout the piece: the deliberate abandonment of every discovered musical space. Rather than settling into the material uncovered in the opening bars, I describe consciously vacating it,³⁷ moving the hands into unfamiliar physical configurations and, by extension, into unfamiliar harmonic territory. This is not indecision; it is a principle. Comfort, in this account, is treated as a warning sign rather than an achievement — the moment a passage begins to feel secure is precisely the moment it must be left behind.

This matters to me less as an absolute rule than as an instinct: what I am actually guarding against is not comfort itself, but the pitfalls that unexamined comfort tends to produce — repetition mistaken for development, familiarity mistaken for depth. Not everything I play

³⁶ Self-Interview, "Introduction," Q2.

³⁷ Self-Interview, "First Statement," Q2.

needs to be a discovery. There is room, and sometimes necessity, for the obvious, the logical, the phrase that arrives because it is the phrase the moment calls for. Comfort is not always something to escape. The principle, then, is less about vacating security at every opportunity than about refusing to let security become the *only* available option — keeping the door open to departure, even in passages where I ultimately choose to stay. It is a balance rather than a mandate: a way of creating space where both discovery and familiarity remain live possibilities in the same conversation.

What is notable here, in dialogic terms, is that this abandonment is itself a voice — a recognizable, recurring stance toward the material, distinguishable from both the juggler's stability-seeking and the disruptor's interruption. Style itself, I noted in this section, arrives only as a byproduct³⁸ of this abandonment, never as a conscious target. The performer does not decide to "sound like" any particular idiom; idiom emerges retroactively, as residue left behind by a process whose actual goal was constant departure.

3.2.3 Second Statement (0:52–1:19): The Gap Between Ear and Hand

The most theoretically productive discovery of this section concerns what might be called the aural-motor gap³⁹: the recognition that the hands, in performance, sometimes produce notes different from what the ear anticipated or heard a moment before, and that this discrepancy — rather than being corrected — becomes generative, a source of new direction the "thinking" performer would never have chosen deliberately. This is coupled with a highly specific, embodied compositional technique: constructing chords in which the middle voice is deliberately

³⁸ Self-Interview, "First Statement," Q1.

³⁹ Self-Interview, "Second Statement," Q1.

played with lighter touch while the outer voices receive greater weight, producing a particular kind of internal transparency within the harmony.

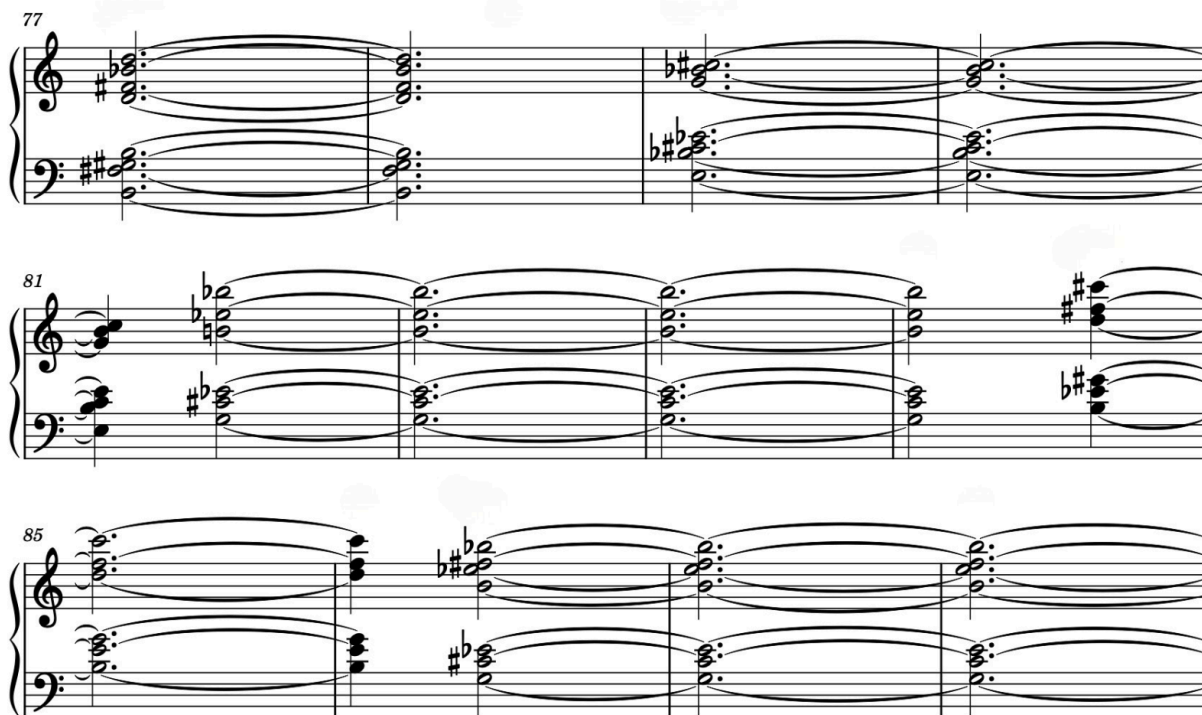
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Example 3.2: Conventional notation transcription, mm. 45–52 (0:52–1:19): the embodied compositional technique described above, in which the middle voice is voiced with lighter touch against the heavier outer voices, producing internal transparency within the harmony. The passage's underlying chromatic-median progression ($D \flat - B \flat m - B \flat - D - Gm - C$, mm. 49–52) coincides with the shift into the "brush stroke" chordal quality discussed at 1:18.

At 1:18, the texture shifts decisively into what I have described as a "brush stroke"

⁴⁰chordal quality — a change in touch as much as in harmony, in which the attack becomes softer and the chords begin to function more coloristically than functionally. This shift matters because it marks the first moment in the piece where a change in section is driven primarily by a change in physical touch rather than by melodic or harmonic event, reinforcing Cavarero's insistence that the voice is inseparable from the body that produces it. The ear did not simply hear something new; the hand did something new, and the ear followed.

⁴⁰ Self-Interview, "Second Statement," Q2.



Example 3.3: *Conventional notation transcription, mm. 77–87 (1:18–1:33): the "brush stroke" chordal passage described above, in which sustained, softly-attacked chords (Bm–E ♭ 7–C ♭ –A ♭ m7–G–E ♭ 7–C ♭) are voiced and held through ties across each bar rather than rearticulated, producing the coloristic rather than functional harmonic quality discussed in the accompanying text. The chromatic-mediant relationships between successive chords (e.g., Bm to E ♭ 7, C ♭ to A ♭ m7) replace conventional functional progression with harmonic drift.*

3.2.4 Development (1:19–1:58): Opening the Faucet

If the earlier sections are governed by active negotiation between competing wills, the Development section introduces a third, quite different relationship to authorship. Here, I describe deliberately relinquishing control altogether — "opening the faucet,"⁴¹ in my own words, and allowing accumulated musical influence to pass through unfiltered, without conscious steering toward any particular style or idiom. This surrender stands in direct contrast to the juggler's active management described in the Introduction; where the juggler works to maintain balance, the faucet-self works to stop working altogether, trusting that whatever

⁴¹ Self-Interview, "Development," Q2.

emerges will be shaped by a lifetime of absorbed musical language rather than by any present-tense decision.

What emerges, between 1:42 and 1:57, is a passage of contrapuntal, melodically active lower-voice writing that I identify, in retrospect, as carrying the audible influence of Bill Evans, Keith Jarrett, and, behind them, Bach⁴² — a lineage of pianists and composers whose treatment of independent melodic lines within a harmonic texture had long represented, for me, a sensibility I aspired to but had never consciously tried to reproduce in performance. This is heteroglossia — Bakhtin's term for the coexistence of multiple, socially and historically situated voices within a single utterance — in precisely the sense he intended: the presence of another's speech within one's own utterance.⁴³ The idiom was not chosen; it was let through. This distinction is theoretically significant, because it relocates the source of stylistic influence away from intention and toward something closer to embodied memory — sedimented listening, absorbed over years, surfacing at the exact moment conscious control is relaxed.

⁴² Self-Interview, "Development," Q1.

⁴³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 428, s.v. "heteroglossia."



Example 3.4: *Conventional notation transcription, mm. 105–116 (1:42–1:57): the contrapuntal, melodically active lower-voice writing described above, in which the bass clef pursues an independent melodic line — rather than a purely harmonic or supportive role — moving in rhythmic and intervallic counterpoint against the treble. This interweaving of independently active voices exemplifies the heteroglossic quality discussed in the accompanying text, audibly recalling the contrapuntal keyboard textures of Bill Evans, Keith Jarrett, and, more distantly, Bach.*

3.2.5 The Impressionistic Turn and the Crack (1:58–2:33): Fragility as Structural Outcome

At 1:58 the texture changes again, decisively — and it is here that the question posed at the outset of this chapter finds its sharpest answer. The dense contrapuntal activity of the Development gives way to something far sparser: open, softly voiced chords in a harmonic language I have described as Ravel- or Debussy-inflected — "like a rainy day,"⁴⁴ in my own formulation — built from a sonority that shifts, at 2:04, from an Eb major chord to a reharmonized Eb sonority with the third placed in the bass. Above this static, repeating harmonic

⁴⁴ Self-Interview, "Impressionistic Turn," Q1.

foundation, slow melodic material unfolds in octaves in the instrument's upper register, producing what I have called a contemplative quality, an atmosphere of stillness sustained well past the point where a listener might expect harmonic or rhythmic development to resume. It is in this stillness — not in any moment of technical excess or rhythmic intensity — that the performing voice audibly cracks. I have described this moment with unusual precision: certain notes, sustained within this fragile, repetitive texture, produce an audible cracking effect, an instability in the sound itself that becomes perceptible precisely because the surrounding texture offers it nowhere to hide.

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Example 3.5. *Reduction of mm. 137–145 (approx. 2:18–2:33), showing the sustained, densely tied harmonic texture of the Impressionistic Turn's climax. The isolated whole note at m. 143 marks the passage this chapter identifies as the performing voice's audible crack; the left hand's entrance on Fm at m. 145, followed by Bbm7 and Bbm, marks the moment of rescue and the return of harmonic motion.*

This is the pedal-induced blur named at the outset of this chapter: a moment where sustained harmony and sustained pedal allow one sonority to bleed into the next, and where, in that bleed, two distinct voices — the voice that intended stillness and the voice that stillness has exposed — become momentarily impossible to separate. The crack is not produced by loss of control in a moment of density or virtuosic risk; it is produced by exposure, by the decision to remain still, to repeat, to sustain a single harmonic area long enough that whatever instability

⁴⁵ Self-Interview, "Impressionistic Turn," Q1.

exists within the instrument, the body, or the performance itself has no choice but to surface. In Cavarero's terms, this is the vocal crack as ontological event rather than technical failure⁴⁶: the moment where the irreducibly embodied, unrepeatable nature of this particular voice, in this particular body, becomes undeniable, because the music has stopped moving fast enough to conceal it.

What follows the crack is, if anything, more remarkable than the crack itself. At 2:33, I describe the left hand as coming "to the rescue,"⁴⁷ introducing a melodic line that pulls the music out of its fragile stasis; the right hand then echoes the voice the left hand has proposed, and the texture returns to a more actively polyphonic, contrapuntal character. The language here is worth pausing on. I do not describe deciding, as a unified performing subject, to resolve the fragility of the preceding passage. I describe one hand rescuing the performance from a crisis that another part of the same body seems, momentarily, unable to escape — followed by a second hand echoing the first, as though responding to a proposal made by an independent interlocutor. This is perhaps the clearest instance, in the entire self-interview, of Bakhtinian unmerged consciousness rendered in explicitly embodied, Cavarero-inflected terms: two hands, two voices, one body, engaged in a call and response that resembles nothing so much as dialogue between separate agents who happen to share a single performer.

3.3 – Toward a Theory of the Solitary Multivocal Performer

Taken together, these five sections chart a trajectory that is neither linear nor resolved so much as continuously renegotiated. The juggler and the disruptor of the Introduction do not

⁴⁶ Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 4-5.

⁴⁷ Self-Interview, "Impressionistic Turn," Q3.

disappear as the piece progresses; they are joined by the abandoning voice of the First Statement, the aural-motor gap of the Second Statement, the surrendering "faucet" of the Development, and finally by two hands in the crack passage who behave, by the performer's own description, as independent agents capable of rescue and response. No single one of these voices governs the piece from beginning to end. Each surfaces, recedes, and resurfaces in altered form, and their interaction — never merger, always negotiation — constitutes what I am calling solitary multivocality: a condition in which the absence of other musicians does not produce a single unified voice, but rather reveals, with unusual clarity, the plurality that was always latent within one performing body.

Returning, then, to the question with which Chapter 2 left off — not only how initiative moves, but what, exactly, is moving — the self-interview conducted here suggests an answer specific to the solitary case. What moves is never a single performer negotiating with an absent partner, but a body already plural before any note is played: a juggler and a disruptor, a principle of abandonment, an ear and a hand not always in agreement, a willingness to surrender authorship to inherited idiom, and, at the moment of greatest exposure, two hands answering each other as though across the gap Chapter 2 found between separate musicians. The interlocutor Cavarero's model requires was never absent from this performance. It was simply relocated — into the instrument, into the hands, into the seconds immediately behind whatever the performer has just played.

Chapter 4: – Post-Improvisatory Composition: Reflexive Production in Bird Song-Moon Landing

4.1 — From the Relay to the Room

Chapter 2 traced how musical initiative moves between improvisers in real time, developing the Interaction Map to render that relay visible, handoff by handoff. Chapter 3 asked what kind of voice occupies each position in that relay, extending the inquiry into the layered, multivocal identity that persists even when only one performer remains to occupy every position. Both chapters share an assumption neither one examines directly: that the relay ends when the musicians leave the room. This chapter tests that assumption. Using *Bird Song-Moon Landing*, the second track of *Emanations*, as its case study, it asks what happens when a new participant enters the relay after the fact — not trading initiative with other performers in real time, but redistributing initiative across performances that were never in dialogue with one another to begin with, months after any of them occurred.

Chapter 1 named this tension in general terms, describing the dual position occupied throughout the making of *Emanations*: performer and bandleader in the studio, generating music as its "driver," and editor and mixing engineer afterward, shaping the recorded artifact as its "passenger."⁴⁸ Teo Macero's editing work with Miles Davis, and *Bitches Brew* in particular, was introduced there as the methodological precedent for treating that second position — the passenger's seat — not as a diminished or merely technical role, but as a compositional one in its own right, continuous with rather than separate from the improvisatory logic of the original session. This chapter takes up that precedent directly, tracing it through a single track in enough procedural detail to show precisely how far, and by what means, that continuation can be pushed.

Bird Song-Moon Landing is the second track on *Emanations*, and it extends an approach I had already begun to explore on the album's opening track, though in a far more intensive form. Where "Emanations" reflects a lighter editorial hand, this track is, by comparison, the most

⁴⁸See Chapter 1, section 1.3, for the initial framing of the "driver/passenger" tension between performer and producer.

heavily manipulated and reconstructed piece on the record — less a document of a performance than a set of musical moments located within a much larger improvisation and reassembled afterward. It was tracked in a single unbroken improvisation lasting nearly fifty minutes, on the last day of recording, by an ensemble comprising piano, double bass, electric guitar, flute with auxiliary percussion, and drums and percussion — several of whom had never played together before that session.

I chose this piece as this chapter's case study because the editing process it required was, by a wide margin, the longest and most demanding of any track on the album. I genuinely lost track of how many weeks — at some points, I suspect, months — I spent inside it. There were stretches where I stopped entirely, not out of frustration alone but out of a need to regroup, to let my ears rest before returning. More than once I asked myself honestly whether the track was worth continuing, because I could not yet see where, if anywhere, it was going.

What kept me returning to it was not a clear structural idea but a quality I could feel before I could name it: something calming, meditative, introstpecrive, and textural, almost healing, that suggested a genuine interaction was taking place in that room despite the musicians' lack of shared history playing together. My own presence — the piano — recedes further into the background on this track than anywhere else on the record, and I found I liked it that way. Some of my favorite passages are the long stretches where the piano falls silent entirely and the direction of the music is carried by the other musicians without any input from me at all.

That absence is precisely what opened the door to the editing that follows. Because I had not been directing the improvisation moment to moment as a performer, the editing and mixing stage became an opportunity to engage with the material as its producer in a way I had not had the chance to elsewhere on the record — not shaping it from inside the performance, but

discovering what shape it might take from outside it, after the fact. The field recording that gave the piece its rhythmic seed reflects this same uncertainty about purpose from the very start. I had recorded birdsong in the field with no fixed plan for how, or whether, I would use it, until I noticed a call-and-response rhythmic cell in the birds' calls that seemed worth extracting. I took the rhythm, not the melody, brought it to the musicians, and we jammed around it briefly before moving on to other material entirely, with no larger structure guiding where the session went next. What began as an idea picked up almost in passing became, much later, the seed the entire finished track would grow around.

That gap — between a fragment absorbed in passing during a fifty-minute improvisation and a finished, structured composition assembled months afterward — is where this chapter's real subject lies. For a long stretch of the editing process, I could not see how the raw material I had could become anything worth hearing, and I now suspect that uncertainty was inseparable from not allowing myself enough distance from the material along the way. Looking back at the piece now, there are so many details I have come to love in it that I find it difficult to reconstruct the state of mind in which I nearly gave up on it. I am grateful, simply, that I did not.

This chapter documents that process directly, but it does so with the two preceding chapters' vocabulary in hand rather than starting from nothing. If Chapter 2 showed that initiative in live performance is proposed, ratified, withheld, and seized among several distinct performers, and Chapter 3 showed that even a single performer's voice is never quite unified, this chapter asks what becomes of both claims once the performers have left the room and only a producer's judgment remains. The relay, I will argue, does not end there — it continues, but under different rules, exercised by a participant who was never actually present at the moment the original initiative was offered.

4.2 — The Spectrum of Intervention: From Macero to Reflexive Production

Chapter 1 named Teo Macero's editing work on *Bitches Brew* as this dissertation's methodological precedent for treating post-production as compositional rather than merely technical. It is worth returning to that precedent in more procedural detail before asking what *Bird Song-Moon Landing* does with it, because the two projects, despite sharing a method, sit at markedly different points along what this chapter will call a spectrum of intervention.

Macero's technique on *Bitches Brew* is well documented: working from many hours of studio improvisation, he spliced together takes recorded on different days, looped short passages to extend them, and reordered material into structures the musicians in the room never played in that sequence.⁴⁹ Crucially, though, Macero's edits largely preserved the internal identity of each spliced unit — a given loop or splice is still, recognizably, a continuous performed gesture, relocated but not internally reconstructed. His intervention operates at the level of arrangement: deciding which performed units go where, not altering what happens within a unit.

Bird Song-Moon Landing pushes further along this same spectrum, though not through the algorithmic time-stretching that a tool like Ableton's Warp function performs — which stretches or compresses audio while preserving its original pitch. Instead, its contrasting section, discussed in detail in 4.4, was built through meticulous copy-paste duplication and recombination. The source material was a short guitar riff — captured not during performance but while teaching a rhythmic figure to the drummer and guitarist — that was too brief on its own to sustain the section. That riff, along with smaller sub-sections extracted from within it,

⁴⁹ Paul Tingen, *Miles Beyond: The Electric Explorations of Miles Davis, 1967–1991* (New York: Billboard Books, 2001), 33

was duplicated and reassembled to construct an extended passage roughly eight times the riff's original length, meticulously synchronized to the drummer's rendering of the bird rhythmic transcription. Because each copied unit's internal audio was left unaltered — no pitch-shifting, no time-stretching — the intervention here is not internal reconstruction in the sense of altering a fragment's duration or pitch identity. It is instead a finer-grained extension of Macero's own method: rather than relocating whole continuous units, this section duplicates and recombines fragments below the level of the original performed phrase, generating a rhythmic dialogue between guitar and drums that did not occur in that form during the pedagogical moment itself. Macero relocates continuous units; this chapter's case study multiplies and reassembles them into a new internal architecture before those units ever reach the timeline as an arrangement decision.

This distinction matters because it has consequences for how the finished material can be understood to relate to its source. To make that relationship precise, it is necessary to establish why a producer's reconstructive labor does not straightforwardly falsify the recording it works on — a question this dissertation's other chapters have not needed to confront, since Chapters 2 and 3 both treat the recorded document as a reasonably faithful trace of what occurred in the room. This chapter cannot make that assumption, and so it turns to two theorists who ask, from different angles, what a recording actually is once significant reconstructive labor has been applied to it.

Evan Eisenberg supplies the historical precondition. Prior to the phonograph, Eisenberg argues, music existed within an "architecture of time"⁵⁰ — bound to the unrepeatable moment of its performance, unrelocatable because it had no existence apart from that moment. Recording severs this bond: it reifies performance into a discrete, manipulable object, one that can be

⁵⁰ Evan Eisenberg, *The Recording Angel: Music, Records and Culture from Aristotle to Zappa* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987), 47

examined, divided, and recombined independently of when or how it was originally produced⁵¹. This is the precondition, rather than the content, of reflexive production — it is only because the fifty-minute improvisation underlying Bird Song-Moon Landing became such an object, audio files in a digital workstation rather than a nonrepeatable acoustic event, that any of the reconstruction described in 4.4 was possible at all.

James Lastra supplies the mechanism by which that reconstruction relates to the feeling of authenticity it produces. Rather than treating a recording as a degraded copy of some purer, prior original, Lastra argues that the sensation of an authentic original is itself an effect produced by the possibility of repetition and recombination — what he calls the "originality effect."⁵² On this account, authenticity is not damaged by reconstructive labor; it is generated by it, retroactively. This directly challenges a producer's own testimony about "discovering" a composition inside improvised material — testimony this chapter's diary evidence will supply at length in 4.3 — by suggesting that the sensation of discovery is not incidental to the reconstruction but one of its products.

A further complication deserves acknowledgment here, one that is less a gap in this dissertation's argument than a gap in the field it addresses. Music production literature offers remarkably little sustained discussion of reconstructive editing applied to fully improvised material — of the specific problem this chapter is concerned with, which is not simply how to edit, but how to pursue a coherent aesthetic outcome from performances that had no shared blueprint to begin with. Film editing, by contrast, has produced exactly this literature, because narrative film routinely confronts the same structural problem in more extreme form: hours of

⁵¹ Eisenberg, *The Recording Angel*, 48

⁵² James Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 115.

footage, shot out of sequence, containing performances that must be assembled into an emotional and dramatic continuity that never existed as filmed.

Walter Murch's *In the Blink of an Eye* is the clearest articulation of this craft, and it is invoked here as a retrospective analytical lens rather than a documented influence on the editing process itself — no diary entry from the period records reading or thinking about Murch directly, and this dissertation's broader methodology, which treats diary evidence as a check against hindsight, requires that distinction be stated plainly rather than blurred. Murch's well-known "Rule of Six" ranks the priorities an editor serves when a cut must satisfy one criterion at the expense of another⁵³ — emotion first, then story, then rhythm, with strict spatial and temporal continuity ranked lowest of all. An editor, in other words, is licensed to violate literal continuity precisely in order to serve a truth that continuity alone cannot deliver. Murch extends this into a claim about discovery itself: the assembled film, he argues, is frequently better than the film that was planned or shot, because the edit reveals a shape latent in the footage that no single vantage point during production — director's, actor's, or cinematographer's — could have seen in advance.⁵⁴

This vocabulary, developed for a different medium and applied here after the fact, nonetheless maps with unusual precision onto the problem Bird Song-Moon Landing posed. Each instrumentalist's contribution across the fifty-minute improvisation functions, in this retrospective sense, like footage shot across multiple takes never intended to be heard together in sequence — a guitarist's teaching-moment aside, a drummer's rendering of a transcribed rhythm, moments of restraint and density scattered across nearly an hour with no shared plan connecting them. Treating these contributions as something closer to characters — voices with their own

⁵³ Walter Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 2001), 63

⁵⁴ Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye* 41.

internal history and disposition, requiring reassembly not into strict chronological continuity but into a coherent relational truth — offers, after the fact, a name and a lineage for the granular recombination described in 4.4, even though that lineage sits outside music production's own critical literature and was not consciously present during the process it describes.

Together, Eisenberg and Lastra supply the theoretical apparatus this chapter tests directly against lived experience: Eisenberg explains why the improvised session could become an object subject to intervention at all; Lastra explains why intervening on that object does not need to be understood as a betrayal of its authenticity, but can instead be understood as authenticity's actual source. Chapter 4.3's diary evidence will hold both claims up against the producer's own contemporaneous testimony, written without knowledge of how the process would resolve. Murch, by contrast, offers no such testable claim about lived process — his contribution is a vocabulary supplied after the fact, useful for naming what the reconstruction resembled rather than for predicting or explaining how it unfolded in real time. Between Eisenberg and Lastra's tested poles sits a range of possible producer behavior, from Macero's arrangement-level splicing at one end to the internal reconstruction this chapter documents at the other; Murch's borrowed vocabulary describes the ethic guiding movement along that same range, without claiming to have guided it as it happened.

I define this intensified end of the spectrum as reflexive production: a mode of post-improvisatory composition in which the producer does not merely select, trim, or relocate improvised material, but actively constructs relationships — between instruments, between takes, between moments that never co-occurred in performance — that exist nowhere in the original session except as raw possibility. Where Macero's *Bitches Brew* demonstrates that editing can be compositional, *Bird Song-Moon Landing* asks how far that compositional

authority can be extended before the term "editing" stops accurately describing what is taking place.

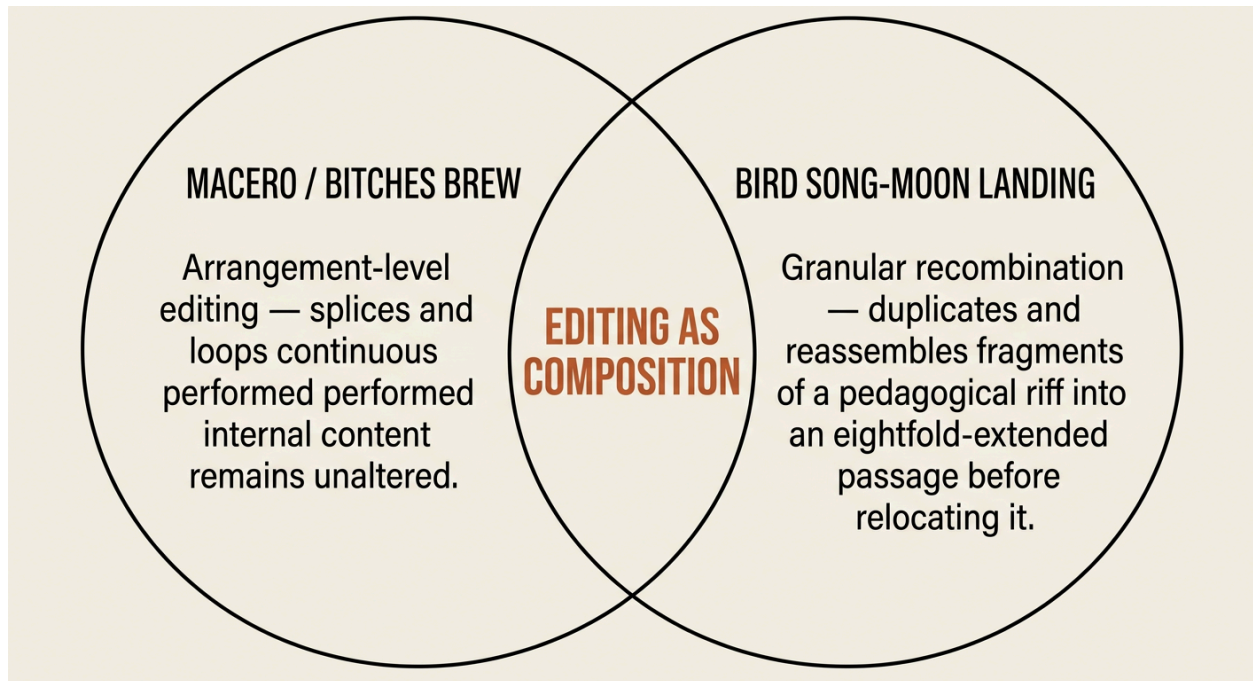


Figure 4.1. *The spectrum of intervention, from preservation to reconstruction. Macero's Bitches Brew technique — splicing and looping continuous performed units without altering their internal content — occupies a middle position: clearly compositional, but operating at the level of arrangement. Bird Song-Moon Landing's contrasting section, built by duplicating and recombining sub-fragments of a pedagogical riff into an eightfold-extended passage, occupies the spectrum's far end: reconstruction of a new internal architecture from unaltered units, not merely relocation of an existing one.*

4.3 — The View Without Hindsight: Diary Evidence and the Discovery Effect

Chapter 4.2 closed by proposing that Eisenberg and Lastra's claims could be tested rather than merely invoked — that the producer's own contemporaneous record of the process, written before its outcome was known, could serve as a check against the retrospective coherence that any finished chapter, including this one, is tempted to impose on events that did not feel coherent

while they were happening. This section takes up that test directly, using the unusually precise archival record that *Bird Song-Moon Landing's* project files happen to preserve: a chronology exact enough to place a diary entry, a period of silence, and a change in the project's working title on a shared timeline, rather than asking the reader to take a producer's retrospective narrative on faith.

The file history leading up to the crisis follows the same clustered, irregular working pattern described in 4.1 and 4.2 — sessions in early July 2025, again in late August, again in mid-October, each burst separated by weeks rather than months. [Figure 4.2] The last of these sessions, opened on November 19, 2025, would prove to be the final time the file was touched for nearly four months. Within days of that session — close enough that the two can reasonably be read as responding to the same state of mind — I wrote the following in my journal:

Spent another few hours on “bird groove” tonight and I'm not sure I'm getting anywhere. I keep listening back to the same forty seconds and I genuinely don't know if there's a song in here or if I'm just imagining one because I don't want to admit the session didn't produce anything usable. The birdsong idea felt so alive in the room and now it just sounds like a fragment I can't get out of. I don't know if I should keep pushing on this one or let it go.

Day 3-original_Song 2_5.3.25.als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_6.4.25.als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_7.2.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_7.3.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_7.4.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_7.5.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_7.7.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_7.8.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_7.10.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_7.11.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_7.17.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_7.24.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_7.29.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_7.30.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_8.26.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_8.27.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_8.30.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_9.01.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_9.02.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_10.14.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_10.15.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_10.16.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_10.17.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_10.21.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 2_10.24.25 (bird groove).als
 Day 3-original_Song 21.19.25 (bird groove).als

Figure 4.2. Session file history for "bird groove," May–November 2025, showing the clustered working pattern preceding the November 19 rupture.

This is, I think, the most direct evidentiary support this dissertation can offer for a claim made without evidence in 4.1: that I "asked myself honestly whether the track was worth continuing, because I could not yet see where, if anywhere, it was going." The diary entry above is the primary source behind that sentence, written not in retrospect but at the moment the doubt was live, before I had any indication that the track would ever resolve into something I would come to value as highly as I now do.

The four months of silence that follow are, on their own terms, a piece of evidence worth taking seriously rather than passing over as mere inactivity. Eisenberg's architecture-of-time argument establishes why the improvisation could persist as an object during this period at all — the fifty-minute session existed as audio files on a hard drive, available for return at any point, entirely unlike the unrepeatable performances his account of pre-phonographic music describes.

But the silence itself demonstrates that this object-status is a precondition for reconstruction, not a guarantee of it. The files sat, technically available, for 114 days without generating anything. Whatever Lastra's "originality effect" names, it evidently requires something beyond the recording's mere existence as a manipulable object; it requires labor applied to that object, and for nearly four months, no labor was applied.

That labor resumed, tentatively, on March 13, 2026. I returned to the file almost by accident, while searching my drive for an unrelated guitar sample and passing over the old "bird groove" folder along the way. The session retained its original title at this point — still "bird groove" — suggesting that whatever prompted the return had not yet resolved into the clarity that would follow. That clarity arrived five days later. On March 18, 2026, I restructured the project and saved it, for the first time, under a new name: "moon landing."

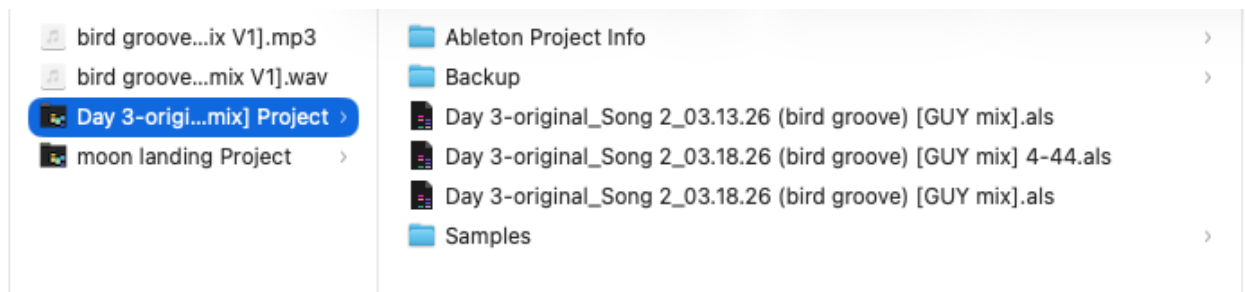


Figure 4.3. Project directory showing the original "bird groove" files alongside the newly created "moon landing" project folder, March 2026.

The interval between March 13 and March 18 deserves more weight than its brevity might suggest, because it separates two acts that a less granular record might collapse into one: returning to the material, and knowing what to do with it. The file history shows these as distinct events, five days apart. This distinction bears directly on the question 4.2 raised about discovery. Lastra's claim — that the sensation of an authentic original is produced by the possibility of

recombination rather than prior to it — implies that whatever I felt as "finding" the song inside the improvisation was not a recognition of something already latent, waiting to be uncovered, but an effect generated by the reconstructive work itself, available only after that work had progressed far enough to produce it. The diary entry from late November, read on its own terms and without the resolution that followed, offers no such discovery. It documents doubt, not latency; absence, not a hidden shape waiting to be found. If the reconstruction that began on March 13 had failed — if I had abandoned the track rather than renaming it — this same entry would stand as evidence of nothing more than a project that did not work out. Its status as the "crisis" that precedes a "construction" is retroactive, assigned by the outcome rather than contained within the entry itself. This is, I take it, close to what Lastra means by the originality effect operating on the level of narrative as well as sound: the discovery feels prior, but its status as a discovery is conferred after the fact, by success.

This does not diminish the diary's evidentiary value; if anything, it sharpens it. The entry is valuable to this dissertation precisely because it was written without knowledge of how the process would resolve, and so it cannot be read as a knowing setup for the construction that follows. What it offers instead is a documented, dated instance of the uncertainty that reflexive production, as defined in 4.2, requires the producer to tolerate: a period in which the raw material of an improvisation is simply inert, available but unresolved, with no guarantee that any coherent shape will be found in it at all. Section 4.4 turns to what was, in fact, found — tracing in notated detail the musical architecture that emerged from the March reconstruction, and asking what, specifically, changed between the "bird groove" the file history documents and the finished Bird Song-Moon Landing this dissertation has been describing since 4.1.

4.4 – The Six Constructive Strategies

4.4.1 Relocation and the Duration Problem

The material underlying the contrasting section originated as a fleeting moment within a much longer improvisation: a rhythmic figure derived from birdsong, played by the drums, and a responding riff played by the electric guitar. Neither phrase was conceived as a loop or a repeatable unit — both emerged spontaneously within the flow of the original performance, brief statements rather than sustained material.

The birdsong-derived cell (Figure 4.4, upper stave) is a short rhythmic phrase, roughly seven beats in length, that resolves into silence rather than repeating. The guitar riff (Figure 4.4, lower stave) is a distinct melodic-rhythmic idea, notably already performed three consecutive times within the original take — suggesting the guitarist gravitated toward repetition somewhat naturally, even without a fixed arrangement guiding him to do so.

Taken together, these two phrases total only a few seconds of usable material. The finished contrasting section, by comparison, runs a full 150 seconds (5:46–8:16). A handful of seconds of improvised phrasing cannot simply be looped or extended to fill this span — it must be actively rebuilt into an architecture capable of sustaining two and a half minutes of musical development, using these two brief phrases as raw material rather than as a finished pattern. The remainder of this section traces that reconstruction phase by phase, documenting six distinct constructive strategies through which a few seconds of improvisation were converted into the section's full 150-second structure.



Figure 4.4. Source material for the contrasting section, notated for reference. Top: the birdsong-derived rhythmic cell as performed by the drums. Bottom: the electric guitar riff, shown as originally performed — three consecutive repetitions of the same melodic-rhythmic idea. Both phrases, as they occur in the source recording, are brief and self-contained; the constructive strategies documented in 4.4.2–4.4.6 trace how they were expanded and combined into the section's full duration.

4.4.2 Curatorial Extraction: Building the Guitar/Drum Conversation (5:46–6:20)

The contrasting section opens with the guitar riff set against a simple hihat pattern, establishing what registers to the listener as a settled, conversational exchange between the two instruments. The session data tells a different story. Rather than a single continuous performance, the guitar track across this passage is assembled from numerous short, individually bounded clips — visible fragments extracted from a longer, more exploratory take (Figure 4.5). The original recording captured a guitarist and drummer still working out their rhythmic relationship, not yet locked into a fixed pattern; alignment between the two instruments emerged inconsistently across the performance rather than holding steady throughout.

The reconstructive task here was therefore not one of multiplying a fixed idea, but of curatorial extraction: listening back through the continuous improvisation, identifying which brief segments happened to align convincingly between guitar and drums, and assembling those isolated moments into a sequence that reads as a coherent, intentional conversation. This is an editorial logic closer to documentary sound editing — selecting usable fragments from an

unresolved exchange — than to conventional loop-based composition, where a single clean cycle is simply repeated.

The hihat track received comparable treatment. As Figure 4.5 shows, both the guitar and drum rows across this passage consist of numerous short clips rather than sustained regions, indicating that both sides of the "conversation" were reconstructed from fragments rather than one being fixed while the other was built around it. This stands in contrast to the bass and primary drum bed elsewhere in the section, which remain largely uninterrupted — a distinction worth noting, since it shows that fragmentary reconstruction was applied selectively, to the instruments whose original performance was least resolved, rather than uniformly across the entire arrangement.

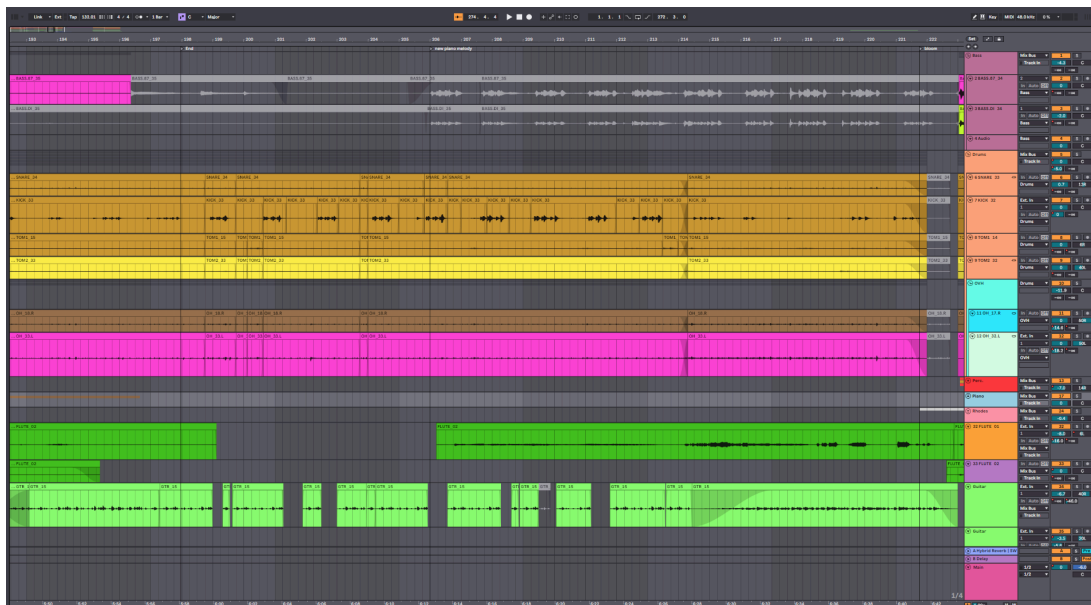


Figure 4.5. Ableton arrangement view, guitar and hihat tracks, 5:46–6:20. The guitar row (bottom) is visibly fragmented into numerous short, individually bounded clips, selected from a longer continuous take. The hihat row (top) shows comparable fragmentation. Both are shown in contrast to the bass and main drum bed elsewhere in the arrangement, which remain largely continuous — indicating that curatorial extraction was applied selectively to the two instruments whose original performance was least rhythmically settled.

4.4.3 Sustained Restraint: The Guitar–Drum–Flute Trio (6:20–6:40)

Where 4.4.2 traced the construction of the guitar-and-drum conversation, the passage that follows does not thicken that texture further — it holds it deliberately in place. From 6:20 to roughly 6:40, the arrangement settles into a lean, three-way texture: guitar, drum kit, and a sparse, understated flute line, all continuing without the percussion, Microcosm/pedal layers, or additional audio textures that will enter later in the section. Crucially, this thinness is not an absence waiting to be filled — it is a sustained compositional decision, held in place across a full twenty seconds before anything changes.

The session data supports this reading directly. Across this window, the drum kit (snare, kick, toms, overheads) continues its established pattern uninterrupted, the guitar remains active in its fragmented, curated form (as established in 4.4.2), and the flute enters as a genuinely minimal presence — a thin, intermittent line rather than a sustained melodic statement. Meanwhile, the percussion tracks, the Microcosm/pedal layer, and the additional audio tracks that will later fill out the texture sit essentially empty for the full duration of this passage. Nothing here is missing by accident; the sparser instrumentation available in the session was withheld on purpose, reserved for a later point in the structure.

This restraint functions narratively as a held breath — an intimate, exposed texture that invites close listening precisely because so little is happening. In compositional terms, it demonstrates that density is not simply something a producer adds over time; withholding density, and sustaining that withholding across a meaningful span, is an equally active structural choice. The trio format here is not a reduced version of a fuller idea — it is the idea, occupying its own deliberate space in the section's arc.

That space closes decisively at 6:41. As 4.4.4 will show, the same session reveals a marked locator labeled "bloom" at precisely this timestamp — the producer's own naming of the moment where percussion, Microcosm, extra audio layers, and a fuller flute texture all enter together, while the guitar exits. The sustained restraint documented here exists specifically to make that entrance legible as a genuine structural event, rather than an arbitrary addition of instruments.

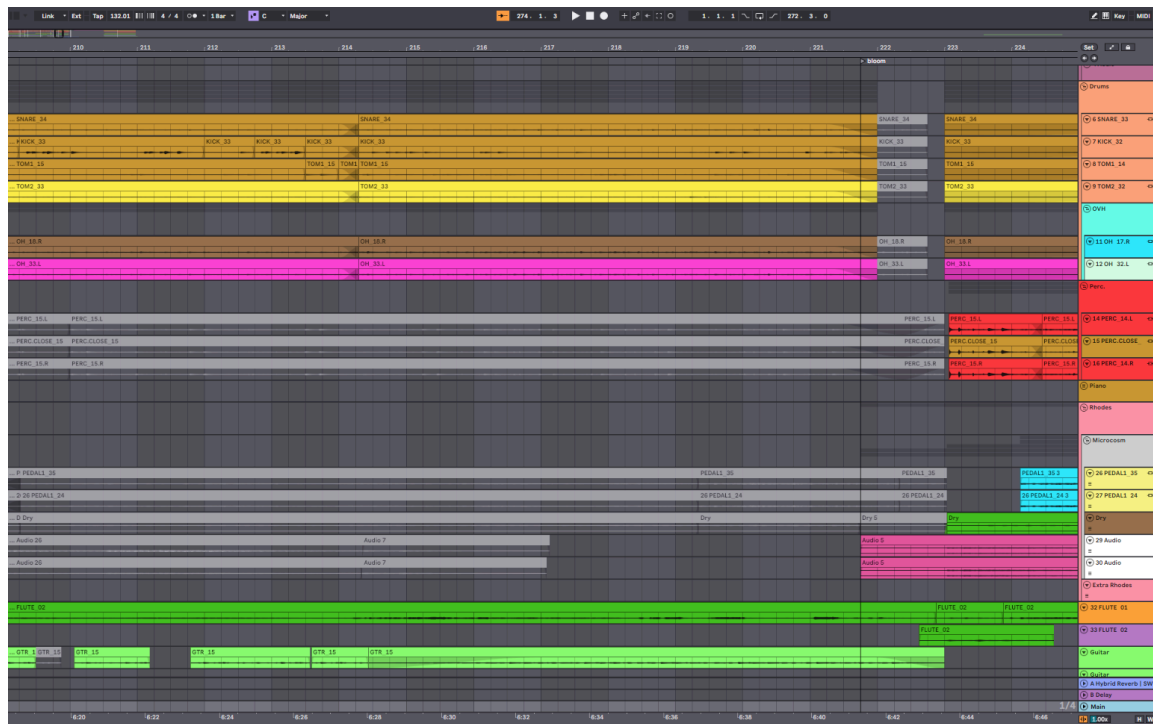


Figure 4.6. Ableton arrangement view, 6:20–6:40, showing the sustained guitar–drum–flute trio. The drum kit (top rows) and guitar (bottom row, fragmented clips) remain continuous throughout, while the flute (green row) contributes a sparse, intermittent presence. The percussion, Microcosm/pedal, and extra audio tracks (visible as empty lanes in the middle of the arrangement) remain silent for the full duration of this passage, confirming that the lean texture is sustained rather than transitional. The session's own "bloom" locator marker, visible at the right edge of the frame, marks the passage's endpoint and the start of the entrance discussed in 4.4.4.

4.4.4 The Bloom: Constructed Entrance at 6:41

The restraint sustained through 4.4.3 resolves decisively at 6:41, a moment the producer marked directly in the session with a locator labeled "bloom." The label is precise: what happens here is not a sudden interruption but a coordinated expansion, several layers opening outward from the narrow texture that preceded it.

At this timestamp, five elements move together. The percussion tracks — silent through the preceding trio passage — enter as a full, continuous pattern. The Microcosm/pedal layer thickens from scattered, isolated hits into dense, near-continuous motion. A set of additional audio tracks, entirely absent until this point, appear for the first time. The bass enters here as well, introducing a register that had no presence at all in 4.4.3's trio texture. And the guitar — the instrument that had anchored the section since 4.4.2 — drops out briefly right at this point, its clips resuming again only a short time later.

That guitar behavior is worth pausing on, because it complicates a simpler "handoff" narrative. Rather than exiting cleanly to make room for the new layers, the guitar steps back momentarily and then re-enters, weaving in and out of the now-fuller texture rather than disappearing from it. The effect is less a single relay pass and more a renegotiation of space — the guitar yields its former prominence just long enough for percussion, bass, and the pedal layer to establish themselves, then rejoins as one voice among several rather than the dominant one. This coordinated arrival of four independent elements at a single moment is the section's central structural pivot. Landing percussion, Microcosm/pedal, extra audio, and bass on the same beat, while the guitar steps aside, is a deliberate editorial act — the kind of alignment that does not happen by accident in a raw performance take. It's also worth noting what makes "bloom" the accurate term here rather than a dance-music "drop": the sequence moves from a sustained,

held-back trio into something more textural and expansive, layers and sustain accumulating rather than a harder, more insistent beat arriving. "Bloom" names an opening outward, and the track data bears that description out.

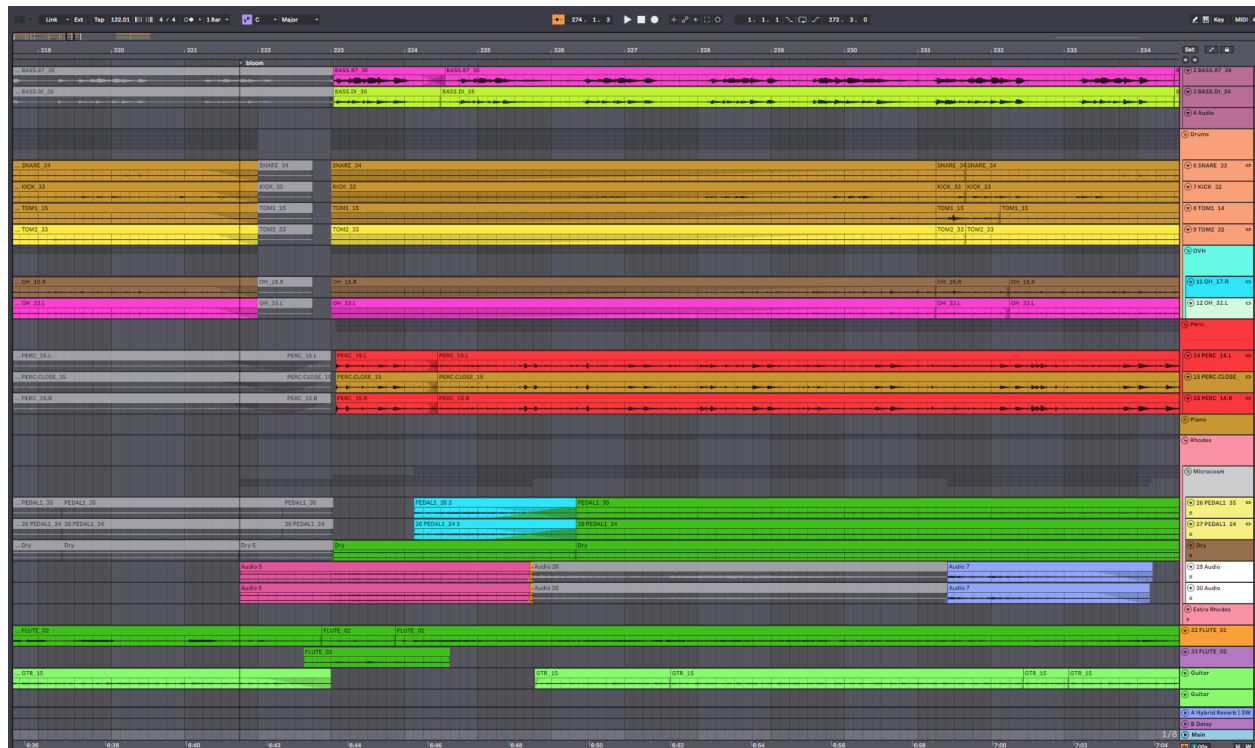


Figure 4.7. Ableton arrangement view centered on the "bloom" locator; 6:38–6:48. Percussion, Microcosm/pedal, extra audio, and bass tracks — all silent or minimal through the preceding trio passage — enter together at the marker, while the guitar's clip shows a brief gap at the same point before resuming shortly after. The coordinated timing across four independently edited tracks, together with the producer's own "bloom" label, indicates deliberate structural planning rather than incidental arrangement.

4.4.5 Redistribution: The Bass Assumes the Rhythmic Role (6:41–7:14)

The bloom documented in 4.4.4 does not simply add layers — it also begins a quiet reassignment of musical function. The bass, entering at the bloom, does not merely fill out the low end; over the following passage it gradually takes on the rhythmic role originally carried by

the birdsong-derived drum cell that opened the section. What began in 4.4.1 as a percussive figure has, by this point, migrated into a melodic-rhythmic hybrid voiced by an entirely different instrument.

This is redistribution: a structural idea preserved while its instrumental vehicle changes. The kit continues underneath, but the bass increasingly carries the pulse that once belonged to the birdsong cell alone, culminating in a coordinated crossfade across the ensemble at 6:54, where several tracks adjust levels together to usher in the section's final phase. Redistribution differs from the other five strategies in this chapter's schematic in that it operates on musical role rather than on arrangement density — a distinction worth foregrounding when the strategies are synthesized below.

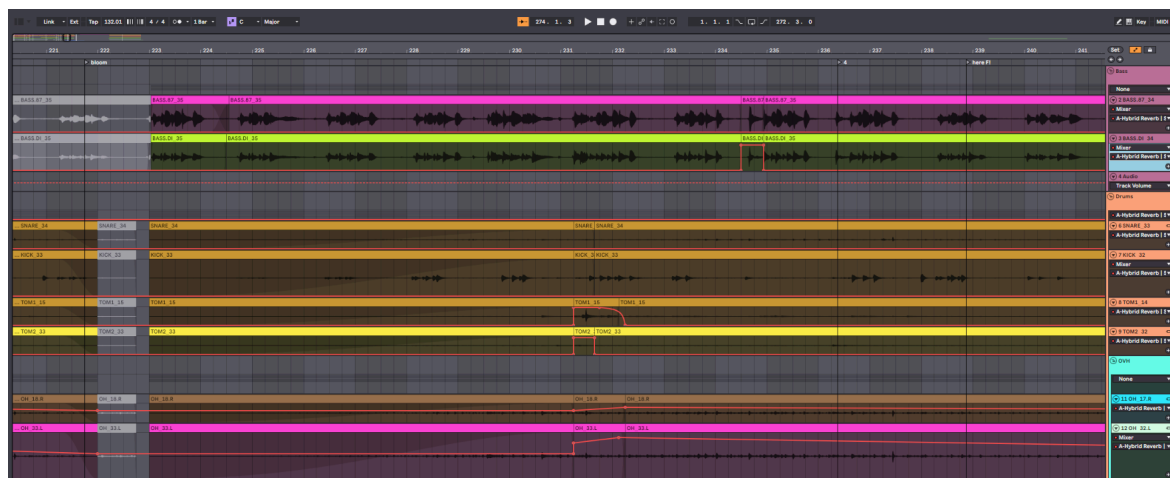


Figure 4.8. Ableton arrangement view, 6:41–7:14, tracing the bass's rhythmic role and the 6:54 ensemble crossfade. Automation curves on the bass, second tom, and overhead tracks converge around measure 228–229, marking the coordinated level adjustment described above; the full drum kit remains present throughout, allowing direct visual comparison between the birdsong-derived percussion and the bass's increasingly rhythmic function.

4.4.6 Convergence: The NASA Collage Climax (6:54–8:16)

The section's final ninety seconds function as a climax built by accumulation rather than by any single dramatic event. Multi-tracked flute, Fender Rhodes, and a layer of NASA mission

audio converge here, compounding the textural density established by the bloom into the section's fullest and most saturated point. Where 4.4.4's bloom introduced new voices one register at a time, this closing passage stacks them into simultaneous coexistence — the birdsong-and-guitar duet of 4.4.2 having traveled, by this point, an enormous structural distance from its origin as two brief improvisational fragments.

The NASA audio in particular introduces an external, non-musical voice into the texture — a curatorial choice (echoing 4.4.2's curatorial extraction, but applied to a wholly different sound source) that recontextualizes the entire passage. It repositions the birdsong material that opened the section as one instance of a broader idea: that non-human, "found" sound can be woven into the ensemble on equal footing with performed instruments.

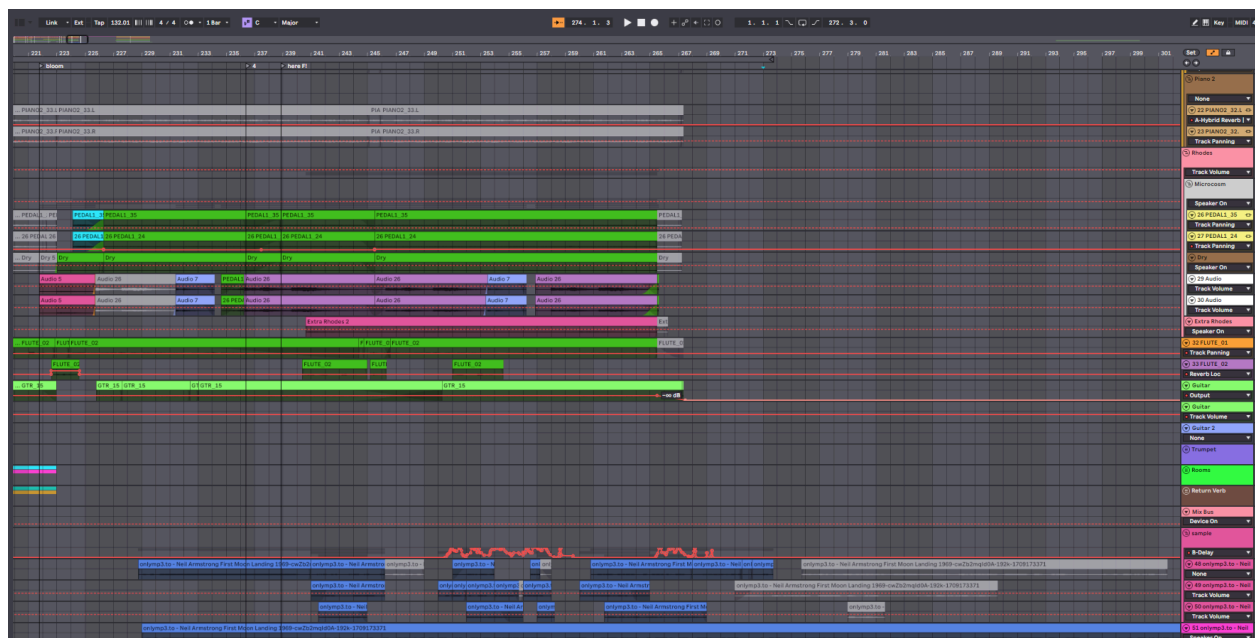


Figure 4.9. Ableton arrangement view, 6:54–8:16, showing the layered convergence of NASA audio, multi-tracked flute, and Fender Rhodes. Track colors follow the session's instrument-family coding: green for Rhodes pedal layers and flute, pink for piano and additional Rhodes tracks, and blue for guitar and the NASA audio samples, visible here as fragmented, repeated clips near the bottom of the view. This repetition and density mark the section's fullest and most saturated point, while sustained flute and Rhodes lines anchor the texture beneath it.

4.5 – Chapter Conclusion: Duration as Construction

Section 4.4 opened with a problem: two improvisational fragments, a birdsong-derived drum cell and a responding guitar riff, each too brief to sustain the 150-second passage the section required. What the preceding analysis has shown is that this problem was not solved through repetition, but through six distinct constructive strategies, each addressing a different dimension of the duration problem.

Table 4.1. *The Six Strategies, Synthesized*

Strategy	Section	What It Solves
Curatorial Extraction	4.4.2	Selecting coherent moments from a longer, exploratory take
Sustained Restraint	4.4.3	Holding sparseness in place as a deliberate structural choice
Constructed Entrance ("Bloom")	4.4.4	Coordinating simultaneous multi-track arrival to mark a structural pivot
Redistribution	4.4.5	Preserving a musical idea while migrating it across instruments
Convergence/Collage	4.4.6	Building climax through accumulation of disparate sound sources
(Automation, where confirmed)	throughout	Manufacturing continuity or decay the original performance lacked

What unites these six approaches is a single underlying principle: duration in this section was manufactured, not preserved. None of the source material was long enough on its own to fill the time it needed to occupy. The producer's task, then, was not to document a performance but to construct one — using the recorded fragments as raw material for an editorial process closer to composition than to documentation.

This has a broader implication worth carrying into Chapter 5: the studio-as-instrument thesis that animates much of the existing literature on record production tends to focus on sound design — how a mixing desk or a plug-in chain shapes timbre. What this section's close reading demonstrates is a parallel, less-examined phenomenon: the DAW arrangement view itself functions as a compositional instrument, one whose primary material is not sound but time — the sequencing, extension, and reassignment of brief fragments into sustained musical form. The birdsong cell and the guitar riff were never long enough to be a section. They became one only through the deliberate, visible editorial work traced across 4.4.1 through 4.4.6.

Chapter 5 — Conclusion: The Grammar of Relocation

Each of the three preceding chapters set out, independently, to answer a version of the same question: how does musical initiative move? Chapter 2 answered it by watching eight musicians in a room. Chapter 3 answered it by watching one. Chapter 4 answered it by watching a single producer return, months later, to a session none of its original participants would ever hear again in the form it eventually took. Read separately, as they were written, these are three case studies loosely unified by a shared vocabulary of proposal, ratification, withholding, and seizure. Read together, they describe something more specific: not three applications of one method, but one mechanism, observed three times, each time after the site where it operates has been relocated. This chapter's task is to say plainly what the preceding chapters demonstrated but never stated outright, and to ask what follows from having demonstrated it.

5.1 — The Relay, Relocated

Chapter 2 closed by naming a limit in its own findings. Having traced, across nearly five minutes of *Emanations*, a recurring grammar of handoffs, pivot captures, and note-for-note

echoes, it turned that grammar back on itself: the analysis, it admitted, had shown only "how initiative moves. It does not yet ask what is doing the moving."⁵⁵ That sentence was written as a hinge into Chapter 3, and it functioned as one. But read now, from the far side of Chapter 4, it turns out to have been asking a broader question than either of the two chapters that followed it, on its own, could fully answer. Chapter 3 answered the question of *what* is doing the moving by relocating the relay inward. Chapter 4 answered a related but distinct question — not what moves, but *where* the moving can still occur once the condition Chapter 2 quietly assumed throughout, that all relevant parties remain in the room together, no longer holds.

Consider what actually changes, and what does not, as the site of the relay shifts across these three chapters. In Chapter 2, the terms of the analysis were interpersonal and synchronous: initiative passed between distinct bodies, in real time, audible to any listener as a change in which instrument occupied the musical foreground. The bass proposed a pulse; the drums ratified it without transforming it. The piano held the floor while surrendering it, at 7:02, so that the bass could enter, at 7:26, with a clean and specifically named *focal handoff*.⁵⁶ Every mechanism identified in that chapter — the pivot capture, the suspended cadence of invitation, the rare and structurally reserved moment of unilateral closure — presupposed a second musician standing ready to receive whatever the first had offered.

Chapter 3 removed that second musician and asked whether the relay survived the removal. It did, but only by changing register. Initiative in *Misterio Entre Tú y Yo* no longer passed between bodies; it passed between what the chapter termed *unmerged voices*⁵⁷ occupying a single body — the juggler and the disruptor negotiating the Introduction's opening eighteen

⁵⁵ See Chapter 2, section 2.4, closing paragraph.

⁵⁶ See Chapter 2, Figure 2.2 and accompanying discussion, 7:26.

⁵⁷ See Chapter 3, section 3.1, drawing on Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 6, 21.

seconds, the aural-motor gap between ear and hand in the Second Statement, the left hand's rescue of the right at the passage this chapter identified as the performing voice's crack. What makes this a genuine relocation of Chapter 2's relay, rather than merely an analogous phenomenon, is that the same functional categories reappear in embodied form: ratification without transformation becomes the ear following where the hand has already gone; the focal handoff becomes one hand answering a proposal the other has just made. The mechanism did not change. Its site did — from the space between performers to the space between a gesture and the gesture immediately behind it.

Chapter 4 relocates the relay a second time, along an axis neither of the first two chapters required: time. The "driver" and "passenger" distinction introduced in Chapter 1 and taken up directly in 4.1 names this relocation precisely, if only in outline.⁵⁸ What Chapter 4 demonstrates in procedural detail is that the passenger's seat is not a diminished vantage point from which the relay is merely observed after the fact, but a position from which it continues to be played. The producer returning to "bird groove" in March 2026, months after the musicians who generated its raw material had left the studio and, in most cases, one another's company entirely, occupied a structurally identical position to the bass entering at 7:26 or the left hand rescuing the right at 2:33: someone who had been listening, waiting, and was now offering a response to material that had been left open. The difference is only that the "someone else" whose prior gesture is being answered is not a second musician, and not even a second hand, but a self separated from the original performance by an interval long enough to include a full change of working title, a hundred and fourteen days of silence, and, on the diary's own testimony, real doubt about whether a response was possible at all.

Three chapters, three axes: interpersonal, intrapersonal, temporal. What travels unchanged across all three is not any single musical event but the underlying logic Chapter 2 first isolated and named — that initiative is never a fixed property some party either holds or lacks,

⁵⁸ See Chapter 1, section 1.3.

but a transfer, occurring at a locatable point, between two positions that need not be two different musicians, and need not even be simultaneous. This is, I want to suggest, the dissertation's actual finding, arrived at cumulatively rather than stated at the outset: the relay does not require an ensemble, and it does not require a shared moment in time. It requires only two positions and a transfer between them. Everything else — how many bodies are involved, how far apart in time those bodies stand from each other, whether the "other" being addressed is a bassist, a hand, or a version of oneself four months younger — is, from the relay's own point of view, incidental.

5.2 — Three Tools, One Refusal

Each of the three relocations traced in 5.1 forced the chapter documenting it into the same predicament: an inherited analytical vocabulary, built for a different set of conditions, arrived at the material and proved insufficient. What is worth noticing now, with all three chapters visible at once, is not merely that each chapter solved its own local problem, but that all three solutions are the same solution, arrived at independently and only recognizable as such in retrospect. Chapter 2 reached this predicament first. Conventional staff notation, built to fix pitch and rhythm, had nothing to say about the choice to withhold, or about the moment a performer's silence becomes an active compositional decision rather than an absence.⁵⁹ The taxonomy developed during the qualifying examination fared no better: it could classify a passage as an instance of "melodic echoing," but a classification, however accurate, cannot say who echoed whom first, or when initiative changed hands within a passage broad enough to contain several such changes.⁶⁰ The Interaction Map was built to answer a question standard notation and prior taxonomy could not: not what kind of interaction is occurring, but at what specific point, and between which specific parties, initiative passed.

Chapter 3 arrived at a structurally identical impasse from the opposite direction. Katherine Meizel's multivocality, as developed for the singing voice, presumes a set of named,

⁵⁹ See Chapter 2, section 2.1.

⁶⁰ See Chapter 2, section 2.3.

pre-existing repertoires between which a performer moves — an operatic voice set against a bluegrass voice.⁶¹ Solo improvisation offers no such fixed repertoires to move between; there was, in this specific sense, no ready vocabulary for what needed describing. The chapter's response was not to invent a wholly new framework but to reach further back, past Meizel, to Bakhtin's original and more structural formulation of multivocality as "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices" requiring no correspondence to named genres at all,⁶² paired with Cavarero's insistence that voice comes into being only in address to another.⁶³ Where the singer's multivocality requires naming which repertoire is speaking, the pianist's multivocality, as this dissertation redefines it, requires only locating the "other" being addressed — even when that other turns out to be one's own hand, a moment behind.

Chapter 4 encountered the same impasse a third time, in a field with even less to offer than the first two. Music production scholarship, as 4.2 observed directly, has remarkably little to say about reconstructive editing applied to fully improvised material with no shared blueprint.⁶⁴ Rather than proceed without a vocabulary, the chapter borrowed one sideways, from a different medium facing the same structural problem in more extreme form: Walter Murch's account of assembling narrative continuity out of footage that was never shot in the order, or with the intention, the finished film requires.⁶⁵ The borrowing is explicitly partial — the chapter is careful to state that Murch functions as a retrospective lens rather than a documented influence on the process itself⁶⁶ — but the impulse behind it is identical to the impulse behind the Interaction Map and the self-interview: when the available vocabulary cannot describe what actually happened,

⁶¹ Katherine Meizel, *Multivocality: Singing on the Borders of Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 14.

⁶² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 6.

⁶³ Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 179

⁶⁴ See Chapter 4, section 4.2.

⁶⁵ Walter Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 2001), 63.

⁶⁶ See Chapter 4, section 4.2.

build or borrow one that can, rather than let the absence of a term stand in for the absence of the phenomenon.

Naming this pattern as a shared impulse is useful, but it risks understating what is actually at stake in it. What unites these three tools is not simply that each was homemade under pressure. It is that each one succeeds, specifically, by refusing to collapse a binary the existing literature had generally treated as settled. This is the same refusal Chapter 1 identified, at the level of the dissertation's overall argument, in George Lewis and Benjamin Piekut's treatment of freedom and structure as terms that "become emergent in improvisative interaction" rather than opposing forces requiring one to be sacrificed to the other.⁶⁷ Read against that framing, the three tools are not three separate contributions loosely joined by a shared author. They are three technical solutions to the same theoretical commitment, applied to three different pairs of terms that criticism has often been tempted to resolve in one direction rather than held open in both.

The Interaction Map holds open composition and improvisation. A relay that can be traced, handoff by handoff, demonstrates that structure exists in these passages — recurring mechanisms, a "grammar," reappearing with enough consistency to constitute a practice⁶⁸ — without requiring that structure to have been decided upon in advance by any single author. Composition, in the ordinary sense of a plan governing an outcome, and improvisation, in the ordinary sense of an outcome arising without a plan, are both present and neither is diminished by the other's presence.

The self-interview holds open unity and plurality. A single performer, working alone, produces a recording; nothing about the finished object announces that it was made by more than one "voice." Yet the method developed in Chapter 3 demonstrates that this apparent unity conceals a genuine plurality — a juggler and a disruptor, an ear and a hand not always in

⁶⁷ George E. Lewis and Benjamin Piekut, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 98.

⁶⁸ See Chapter 2, section 2.4.

agreement — without ever resolving into either a single governing consciousness or a mere collection of disconnected impulses.⁶⁹ The performer is one body and several voices at once, and the chapter's contribution is a method for keeping both claims true simultaneously rather than choosing between them.

Reflexive production holds open document and construction. Eisenberg's account of recording as an object freed from the "architecture of time," paired with Lastra's account of authenticity as an effect produced by recombination rather than violated by it,⁷⁰ together dissolve what looks, on its surface, like a contradiction: that *Bird Song-Moon Landing* can be, without qualification, both an extensively reconstructed artifact and an authentic record of what occurred in that room. The diary evidence assembled in 4.3 does not resolve this tension by proving the discovery was either fully genuine or fully retroactive; it holds both readings open, showing that the sensation of discovery and the fact of construction are not opposed but are, on Lastra's account, mutually generating.⁷¹

Even the dissertation's smallest formal choices bear this refusal out. Figure 2.8's unresolved question mark, left standing in place of a premature answer about which instrument initiated an exchange in "LaCar," is not a gap in the method. It is the method declining to manufacture a false resolution merely because a diagram conventionally expects one.⁷² A dissertation built around holding binaries open would have undercut its own argument by quietly closing this one simply for the sake of a tidier figure.

Three tools, then, built under three different kinds of pressure, are in fact one tool, reapplied: a way of working that treats an apparent either/or — performer or ensemble, unity or

⁶⁹ See Chapter 3, sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.3.

⁷⁰ Evan Eisenberg, *The Recording Angel: Music, Records and Culture from Aristotle to Zappa* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987), 47; James Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 115.

⁷¹ See Chapter 4, section 4.3.

⁷² See Chapter 2, section 2.3, Figure 2.8.

plurality, document or construction — not as a problem requiring resolution, but as the actual site where the interesting musical and theoretical work takes place.

5.3 — What This Contributes

Having traced the relay's relocation across three axes (5.1) and shown that each relocation required the same underlying refusal to resolve a false binary (5.2), it remains to state plainly what this dissertation adds to the fields it draws upon. Three contributions follow directly from the preceding chapters, and each is transferable beyond the two recordings that generated it — a criterion worth stating explicitly, since a dissertation grounded this closely in autoethnographic material must show that its tools survive the removal of the specific case that produced them.

The first contribution is methodological and belongs to Chapter 2: the Interaction Map itself, as a notation system capable of tracing initiative rather than merely classifying interaction type. Existing scholarship on improvised interaction — Berliner's account of shared cultural knowledge, Monson's account of non-verbal cueing, Sawyer's account of distributed group creativity⁷³ — has established, richly and repeatedly, that improvisers draw on a shared, learned vocabulary in order to communicate with one another in real time. None of this scholarship, however, offers a notation capable of representing the sequence in which that vocabulary gets exchanged: who proposed a given gesture, who ratified it, and at what precise instant authority passed from one player to the next. The qualifying-exam taxonomy this dissertation inherited and outgrew could name a *type* of interaction; it could not locate a *transfer*.⁷⁴ The Interaction Map closes that gap, and it does so with a symbolic vocabulary — Table 2.1's full taxonomy of presence, withholding, handoff, and echo — deliberately built to generalize beyond *Emanations* and "LaCar." Nothing in its design depends on this dissertation's specific instrumentation, tempo,

⁷³ Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 101; Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 68; R. Keith Sawyer, *Group Creativity: Music, Theater, Collaboration* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), 38.

⁷⁴ See Chapter 2, section 2.3.

or idiom; a comparable ensemble working in an entirely different improvisatory language could be mapped using the same symbols, provided an analyst is willing to make the same kind of specific, falsifiable claim about sequence that Figure 2.8's unresolved question mark shows this method requires even of its own author.

The second contribution is theoretical and belongs to Chapter 3: an extension of Katherine Meizel's multivocality beyond the repertoire-based, vocal context in which she developed it, tested directly against a case her own framework does not anticipate. Meizel's account of border-crossing between named vocal styles presumes a performer moving between identifiable, pre-existing traditions — traditions a listener could, in principle, name.⁷⁵ Solo instrumental improvisation offers no such named traditions to move between, and this dissertation's qualifying examination had raised, without resolving, the question of whether multivocality could apply to a practice built on the absence of fixed repertoire in the first place.⁷⁶ Chapter 3 answers that question by returning to Bakhtin's original, more structural formulation of multivocality — a plurality of unmerged consciousnesses requiring no correspondence to named genres — and pairing it with Cavarero's account of voice as constituted only in address to an other.⁷⁷ The result is a working definition of multivocality that does not require named styles at all, only a locatable interlocutor, however briefly that interlocutor exists and however unconventional its identity turns out to be: a disruptor answering a juggler, an ear following where a hand has already gone. This reframing is available to any scholar working on improvisers, vocal or instrumental, for whom Meizel's own repertoire-based examples do not fit — a real gap, since Meizel's method of asking a singer directly which named voice feels most

⁷⁵ Katherine Meizel, *Multivocality: Singing on the Borders of Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 14.

⁷⁶ Boris Acosta-Jaramillo, "Ph.D. Qualifying Examination Prospectus" (unpublished qualifying examination, University of California San Diego, 2024), 4.

⁷⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 6, 21; Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 179

like their own has no clear analogue for a performer whose material was never named to begin with.

The third contribution is empirical and belongs to Chapter 4: a documented, diary-tested account of reflexive production that addresses a specific, acknowledged gap in music production scholarship. As 4.2 established directly, the literature on record production has generated extensive discussion of editing as a compositional act — Macero's work with Miles Davis being the paradigmatic case⁷⁸ — but remarkably little sustained discussion of the more particular problem this dissertation confronts: how a producer pursues a coherent aesthetic outcome from improvised material that had no shared blueprint among its performers to begin with.⁷⁹ Chapter 4 does not merely assert that such reconstruction is possible; it documents, with dated session files and diary entries written without foreknowledge of the outcome, what that process actually looks like when it nearly fails.⁸⁰ The one hundred and fourteen days of silence between the November 2025 crisis and the March 2026 return are, on their own, a data point the existing literature has no comparable record of: contemporaneous evidence, rather than retrospective narrative, of the uncertainty inherent in reconstructing an improvisation into a composition. This is a contribution other producer-scholars working reflexively on their own material can build on directly, since the method — checking retrospective coherence against dated, contemporaneous records — does not depend on this project's specific recordings.

Read together, these three contributions do more than accumulate. They demonstrate, across three different scholarly conversations, the same result the dissertation as a whole has been arguing for since Chapter 1: that a binary long treated as settled — process against product, composition against improvisation, a fixed voice against a plural one — dissolves under sufficiently close attention, and that dissolving it does not produce confusion but produces new

⁷⁸ Paul Tingen, *Miles Beyond: The Electric Explorations of Miles Davis, 1967–1991* (New York: Billboard Books, 2001), 33.

⁷⁹ See Chapter 4, section 4.2.

⁸⁰ See Chapter 4, section 4.3.

analytical traction. The Interaction Map, the extension of multivocality, and the documented account of reflexive production are three separate tools built for three separate literatures. What makes them a single dissertation, rather than three loosely related papers, is that all three were built by refusing the same false choice.

5.4 — Limitations

A dissertation built on autoethnographic method owes its reader a clear account of what that method cannot do, stated with the same specificity applied to what it can. Four limitations follow directly from choices made in Chapters 2 through 4, and each deserves acknowledgment on its own terms rather than as a general disclaimer.

The first concerns the interpretive authority built into the self-interview method at the center of Chapter 3. That method was explicitly modeled on Meizel's practice of asking her singers directly which voice felt most like their own, adapted to a solitary context by turning the interview inward.⁸¹ But Meizel's method retains a check this dissertation's adaptation cannot fully replicate: her subject and her interpreter are two different people, capable of disagreeing with one another. When performer and interviewer are the same person, examining the same recording months after the fact, there is no equivalent friction available. The account of the "juggler" and the "disruptor," or of a crack in the performing voice occurring precisely because a static texture "offers it nowhere to hide,"⁸² is compelling and closely argued, but it remains, irreducibly, one person's retrospective narration of his own gesture, checked against no second perspective. Chapter 4's diary evidence addresses a structurally similar problem by insisting on contemporaneous documentation rather than retrospective narrative alone;⁸³ Chapter 3, working with a single continuous performance rather than a documented process extending across

⁸¹ Katherine Meizel, "Finding a Voice," in *Multivocality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 46.

⁸² See Chapter 3, section 3.2.5.

⁸³ See Chapter 4, section 4.3.

months, had no equivalent contemporaneous record to check its retrospective claims against, and this dissertation should not overstate what the self-interview, on its own, can verify.

The second limitation concerns the Interaction Map's own claim to objectivity. Table 2.1's symbolic vocabulary was built to make interpretive judgment visible rather than to eliminate it, and Figure 2.8's unresolved question mark over the bass's entrance in "LaCar" was offered in 5.2 as evidence of the method's honesty about its own limits.⁸⁴ That honesty, however, does not resolve the underlying problem it exposes: a second analyst, working from the same recording, might reasonably assign a different set of symbols to several of the passages mapped in Chapter 2, particularly at moments this dissertation itself describes as ambiguous, such as the ratification at 5:58 or the precise instant a "companionable shadow" becomes an independent proposal rather than an accompaniment.⁸⁵ The Interaction Map is a notation for representing an analyst's judgment about where initiative transferred; it is not, and does not claim to be, a measurement instrument capable of producing the same result regardless of who applies it.

The third limitation is the more familiar one attached to any single-practitioner study, but it is worth stating in terms specific to this dissertation's claims rather than in general terms alone. Both case studies were produced by the same person, trained in the same jazz-adjacent, largely acoustic idiom described in Chapter 1's account of two lineages,⁸⁶ working with musicians drawn from overlapping circles, and processed using the same digital workstation and largely the same editing habits. The dissertation's three central claims — the relay traced in Chapter 2, the solitary multivocality traced in Chapter 3, and the reflexive production traced in Chapter 4 — are, on the evidence presented here, demonstrated for this practice. Whether they hold for a practitioner working in a different idiom, with a different relationship to notation, or without the specific dual role of performer-and-producer that Chapter 1 identifies as the condition making Chapter 4's

⁸⁴ See Chapter 2, section 2.3, Figure 2.8.

⁸⁵ See Chapter 2, section 2.2, Examples 2.2 and 2.3.

⁸⁶ See Chapter 1, section 1.3.

inquiry possible at all,⁸⁷ is a question this dissertation raises but cannot answer from its own evidence.

The fourth limitation concerns which material became available for analysis in the first place, and it is specific to Chapter 4. The reflexive production documented in 4.3 and 4.4 succeeded: the file that nearly sat abandoned for one hundred and fourteen days eventually became *Bird Song-Moon Landing*, a finished track this dissertation analyzes in detailed, celebratory terms. This dissertation does not, and by its nature cannot, offer a comparably detailed account of a reconstruction that was attempted and failed — a session that was revisited, found no coherent shape, and was abandoned rather than renamed. Section 4.3 itself acknowledges this asymmetry directly, noting that the November diary entry "would stand as evidence of nothing more than a project that did not work out" had the March reconstruction not succeeded, and that its status as a documented crisis "is retroactive, assigned by the outcome rather than contained within the entry itself."⁸⁸ The account of reflexive production offered here is, in this specific sense, a survivor's account. It documents what successful reconstruction looks like from the inside; it cannot document, with the same evidentiary weight, what unsuccessful reconstruction looks like, because unsuccessful reconstructions do not generate finished tracks that a later dissertation chapter has reason to analyze.

None of these four limitations undermines the contributions stated in 5.3. They mark, instead, the specific conditions under which those contributions were produced and the specific claims that would require different evidence to extend. A dissertation arguing, as this one does throughout, against the false comfort of resolved binaries should be the first to decline a false comfort of its own: the appearance of a method more objective, a practitioner more representative, or a body of evidence more complete than the one actually assembled here.

⁸⁷ See Chapter 1, section 1.3.

⁸⁸ See Chapter 4, section 4.3.

5.5 — Directions for Future Research

Each limitation named in 5.4 points toward a specific, answerable next study rather than a vague call for "more research." What follows are three directions, one for each tool developed in Chapters 2 through 4, followed by a fourth that responds directly to the survivorship problem identified at the close of the previous section.

The Interaction Map's claim to usefulness would be considerably strengthened by an inter-rater study it does not currently include. A natural next step is to give the same recording — *LaCar*, or a comparable duo improvisation — to a second analyst trained in Table 2.1's symbolic vocabulary, without access to this dissertation's own readings, and compare the resulting maps directly.⁸⁹ Where the two analysts agree, the method's claim to capturing something real about the sequence of initiative is strengthened considerably; where they diverge, particularly at the ambiguous moments 5.4 already identified, such as the 5:58 ratification or the "companionable shadow" passage, the specific location of that divergence becomes data in its own right, showing exactly where the method's judgment calls are least stable.⁹⁰ A related extension would apply the same notation outside the jazz-adjacent, largely acoustic idiom this dissertation draws from — a free-improvising string quartet, an electronic duo trading control of a modular synthesizer — to test whether the map's vocabulary of presence, withholding, handoff, and echo generalizes to interaction built on entirely different sonic materials, or whether it requires modification to remain useful outside the specific lineage described in Chapter 1.⁹¹

The self-interview method developed in Chapter 3 would benefit most directly from the kind of external check 5.4 identified as structurally unavailable to this dissertation's own case. Meizel's original method drew its authority from the gap between subject and interpreter;⁹² a future study could restore that gap without abandoning the solitary context that makes this

⁸⁹ See Chapter 2, section 2.2, Table 2.1.

⁹⁰ See Chapter 5, section 5.4.

⁹¹ See Chapter 1, section 1.3.

⁹² Katherine Meizel, "Finding a Voice," in *Multivocality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 46.

dissertation's contribution distinct, by working with a second improviser willing to undergo the same self-interview process on their own solo recordings, followed by a comparison of both interviewees' accounts against a shared set of analytic questions. Such a study would not resolve the single-practitioner limitation named in 5.4's third paragraph on its own, but it would begin to test whether the "juggler" and "disruptor" this dissertation identifies in one performer's account are a recurring structure in solo improvisation generally, or a description specific to this performer's particular way of narrating his own process.

Chapter 4's account of reflexive production suggests the most direct response to the survivorship problem 5.4 raised in its closing paragraph. Because this dissertation's diary evidence exists only for a project that succeeded, the clearest next step is deliberately prospective rather than retrospective: a producer-scholar committing, in advance, to keep dated process notes across several simultaneous reconstruction attempts, without knowing which will resolve into a finished track and which will be abandoned.⁹³ Such a study would generate, for the first time, a documented account of what an unsuccessful reconstruction looks like from the inside, written before its outcome was known — the evidentiary category this dissertation's own archive cannot supply, for exactly the reason 5.4 identifies: a finished dissertation chapter has no occasion to analyze a track that was never finished. Murch's own account of film editing, which this dissertation borrowed from in Chapter 4, describes failure as routine and instructive within his practice;⁹⁴ music production scholarship currently has no comparable documented account of a reconstruction that was tried, based on genuinely promising material, and did not work.

A fourth direction sits above the other three rather than alongside them. Chapter 1 framed this dissertation's central commitment as a refusal to resolve certain binaries — composition against improvisation, unity against plurality, document against construction — in favor of

⁹³ See Chapter 4, section 4.3.

⁹⁴ Walter Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 2001), 27

holding them open as sites of analytical traction.⁹⁵ Lewis and Piekut's account of freedom and structure as mutually emergent rather than opposed was offered there as the theoretical ancestor of that commitment.⁹⁶ A natural extension of this dissertation's overall argument would test whether the same refusal proves productive outside music altogether — in dance improvisation, where a comparable relay of initiative between bodies has received extensive attention from a different disciplinary tradition, or in visual collage practices structurally similar to the reconstructive editing described in Chapter 4. Each of these directions would ask the same underlying question this dissertation has asked of one specific performer's practice: whether an apparent either/or, examined closely enough, turns out to have been a false choice all along.

⁹⁵ See Chapter 1, section 1.1.

⁹⁶ George E. Lewis and Benjamin Piekut, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 98.

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