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Chapter 9

Moving the Gong: Exploring the Contexts of Improvisation and Composition

Karen Burland and Luke Windsor

(with Christophe de Bézenac, Matthew Bourne, Petter Frost Fadnes and Nick Katuszonek)

‘It’s the auditory and visual experience from the audience that I’m actually working with ... that’s the material I’m manipulating’

The contexts of improvisation and composition afford and constrain creative performance in interesting, and previously under-researched ways. Using the practice of musical improvisation as a starting point, this chapter aims to explore the impact of the audience (as well as other factors, such as instruments, fellow performers and playing contexts) on a musical event as it unfolds, through qualitative analysis of a formal discussion between practitioners and music psychologists preceded by a musical performance. For the purposes of this analysis, we refer to performance context as more than just the physical space in which the music is being created; rather this term refers to all of the sensory information available during a performance – the acoustics, the physical and emotional atmosphere, the instruments, the musical material (where it exists), the contributions of fellow musicians, the audience (who they are, their expectations, their response and attentiveness), the time of day and the situating of the performance. These aspects are important to all types of musical performance, but their significance becomes arguably more pronounced in improvised music, where typical musical constraints (e.g., the score) do not exist, or exist only in limited form. While many of the chapters in this book focus on audience experiences of live performances, this chapter aims to explore the direct role of the audience in the *creation* of the musical performance from the perspective of the performers.

The theoretical context we adopt is drawn from ecological psychology, considered broadly as the study of behaviour as a mutual outcome of interactions between organisms and environments. This context is best represented in mainstream psychology in the field of visual perception where the work of Gibson (1950, 1966, 1979) presented a challenge to traditional explanations of seeing and the role of structured information in the guidance of action. However, as Heft (2001) has attempted to argue, such an approach presents a wider and more fundamental challenge to cognitive psychology. Heft reintegrates Gibson’s work

within a pragmatic tradition of radical empiricism, in particular bringing together the work of Gibson (ecological psychology) and Barker (e.g., 1968), whose work on behaviour settings (e.g., Barker and Schoggen, 1973) or 'ecological science' redresses the lack of attention to rich cultural and social environments in ecological psychology.

The first contribution of an ecobehavioural approach is the concept of *affordances* (see e.g., Gibson, 1977; 1979; Heft, 2001, pp. 123–135; Windsor and de Bézenac, 2012):

The mutual relation between organism and environment is encapsulated in the affordance in the following way. Affordances are dependent upon the structure of the organism. This structure has been referred to as the organism's effectivities; its size, shape, muscular structure, movement capacities, needs and sensitivities that make action in the environment possible (see Shaw and Turvey, 1981). A rock which afforded throwing to an adult might be too massive to do so for an infant who does not have the appropriate size and muscular strength, and a pen would only afford writing to a human who has appropriate abilities. As affordances are a function of the relationship (or fitness) between an organism and its environment, they are not static, but change due to reciprocal changes in organisms and their environmental niches. For example, a dried river-bed no longer supports life for fish but may afford a crossing for a colony of ants. Likewise, as a child grows and becomes stronger, a rock that may have previously been unliftable may now afford throwing. This mutuality between an organism and the events and objects that surround it is central to ecological psychology. Hence, the concept of the affordance implies that whether we wish to study perception or action, the relationship between environment and organism is paramount, challenging mind/body and subject/object distinctions common in much modern philosophical and psychological thought. (Windsor and de Bézenac, 2012, p. 104)

In this context we focus on the settings for music-making and how these afford particular courses of action for the performers. A corollary of this approach is to consider the *constraints* a setting may furnish. The application to music of Gibson's most controversial (see e.g., Fodor and Pylyshyn, 1981; Sanders, 1997) but productive of concepts in this context is fairly unusual. However, work such as that by Windsor (2000; 2011), Reybrouck (2005), Clarke (2005), Krueger (2011), Menin and Schiavio (2012) and Windsor and de Bézenac (2012) has begun to use the concept of the affordance to better understand, for example, the role of the body in musical performance and listening, or the ways in which instruments constrain and afford musical outcomes.

The second theoretical contribution that this ecobehavioural approach can make to the understanding of creative practice is in its acknowledgement of and empirical focus on *behaviour settings* as higher order ecological units that both constrain and afford musical behaviour. Behaviour settings contain *topographical*

features (such as the layout of a symphony orchestra, or the presence of a balcony in a concert hall), and *climatological properties* (such as the humidity and temperature of a concert hall or club). Cutting across and interacting with these are *sociocultural practices* (such as those described by Small (e.g., 1998) in relation to Western concert practice), and the objects, tools (instruments), people (co-performers, audiences) that are available within these settings (see Heft, 2001; Davidson and Good, 2002; Windsor and de Bézenac, 2012). In addition, the environment of a performer also contains the products of human cultural behaviour and their agreed significance (Windsor, 2004).

To summarize, we propose that the behaviour of musicians is afforded by relationships with their behaviour settings, and it is important for a psychology of performance to investigate these settings, the information they furnish and the use we make of them in performance: both behaviour and setting need to be examined in tandem.

Participants and Research Method

The starting point for this chapter comes from an invited panel entitled 'On the margins of idiomatic jazz: creativity in improvisation, performance and composition', which took place at the Centre for Musical Performance as Creative Practice (CMPCP) Performance Studies Network Conference at Oxford University in 2011, and its associated performance the previous night. The panel consisted of Luke Windsor and Karen Burland, who led the discussion with five musical improvisers – Christophe de Bézenac (saxophone) and Metropolis (Petter Frost Fadnes (saxophone), Matthew Bourne (piano), Colin Sutton (bass), and Nick Katuszonek (kit)). The performers have worked together in different ways previously, in ways that were helpful to the reflective nature of the research: de Bézenac and Bourne play regularly together as a duo, and de Bézenac, Bourne and Frost Fadnes completed doctorates in performance supervised by Luke Windsor. Some of the performers were less familiar with each other, since there were two performance groupings reflected in the membership, while all have an interest in the boundaries between free improvisation and composition.

In some sense these performers represent an opportunity sample, and any grouping of improvisers might have been appropriate. However, their shared interests allowed for the possibility of a richer discussion across the continuum between improvisation and composition than otherwise might have been afforded by, for example, a group of free improvisers or a group of idiomatic jazz musicians. The high levels of general and musical education possessed by the group may or may not be entirely representative of improvisers (or musicians) but is indicative of a sophisticated level of both technical and philosophical engagement. The web of relationships between the players (and indeed the researchers) allowed for a number of interesting interpersonal dynamics to emerge from both the performance and subsequent discussion.



Figure 9.1 View of the performing space from the balcony

The Performance

On 16 July 2011, Metropolis (Petter Frost Fadnes, Matthew Bourne, Colin Sutton and Nick Katuszonek) and Christophe de Bézenac played a late-night set at the CMPCP Performance Studies Network Conference; the following day they were joined by Karen Burland and Luke Windsor for the invited panel discussion. The performance took place in Robinson College Hall, Oxford, and was preceded by a formal dinner. Figure 9.1 shows the performing space during rehearsal taken from a balcony: during the performance about half of the audience watched from this vantage point, half from the floor of the hall on the seats as set out at long tables for the dinner. There was a high audience turnover, with many appearing and disappearing to and from the adjoining bar. The acoustic was extremely reverberant, and there was no stage lighting, making the venue unusual for this style of music.

The performance began with a duo (Bourne and de Bézenac); this was followed by a section in which the other musicians of Metropolis took over (starting with Katuszonek and Sutton, then Fadnes and Bourne), with de Bézenac returning and the full group continuing in varied configurations for the remainder. The performance lasted for approximately 90 minutes.

The Invited Panel

Following a brief introduction by Luke Windsor, the panel introduced themselves and provided some biographical information to contextualize their experiences as improvisers. Karen Burland led the discussion, which began by considering the previous evening's performance before moving on to a broader discussion of the contexts of musical improvisation. The aim of the panel was to explore the aspects described above, focusing in particular on the behaviour settings of improvised music. The final 30 minutes of the discussion solicited input from the audience, which yielded further insights beyond the specific contexts and experiences of Metropolis and de Bézenac. The discussion was transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to reveal five main themes which can be considered as *behaviour settings* which influence improvised performances: other musicians, instruments, musical material, the performance context and the audience.

This chapter complements others in the volume by offering insight into the impact of performance contexts (including the performance space, the audience and other musicians) on the performers and the overall performance experience – perhaps particularly pertinent to an improvisational context. As discussed elsewhere in this volume, albeit with different terminology, behaviour settings have an impact on audience experiences in live performances (i.e. the venue, other audience members, perceived atmosphere – see chapters by Pitts, Kronenberg, Karlsen), and this chapter offers an insight into the experience from the other side of the stage – suggesting that performers, and performances, depend upon the range of behaviour settings described above.

Topographical Features/Climatological Properties

Given the unusual nature of the performance venue and context, it is perhaps appropriate to begin our discussion by considering the impact of the physical space on the musicians, before considering the impact of sociocultural practices related to other musicians and the audience. As stated in the description of the gig above, the acoustics of the performance venue were extremely reverberant and therefore challenging for the musicians.

The room plays a massive part and the more dense the texture the more difficult it is, you know, it's good for a room to tie you together in certain ways, but it can go overboard. (CdB)

However, in the same way that the musicians perceived 'musical' challenges as inspirations, so too a venue's acoustics shape the performance:

Initially I think 'right, I have to adjust the way that I play' which automatically puts me in a position where I've kind of not been before, and I have to think about whether I can still play the tunes and improvise and still get the message across, so I'm kind of dealing with a whole different set of circumstances really, just think about how I still get the energy and the message that I want to get across, but still kind of keep it under control ... it's good in a way, it might not feel like that when you soundcheck in the afternoon, you think 'shit, what am I going to do?!' but looking back it's good, 'cause you realise you have to adapt and it forces you to kind of face up ... it might push you into new areas that you might never have been in before (NK).

The challenge of working in an unfamiliar and unflattering venue highlights the ways in which topographical features shape performances. While the planned performance may not be possible in such a setting, the implication in the quote above is that such contexts may actually enhance the performance: the acoustics in a venue can affect the ways in which a performer adapts the performance – in terms of communicating 'the message' to the audience – while also maintaining some sense of control. Concern for the audience's experience is at the heart of the performance choices made by the musicians, and responding to particular topographical features brings that concern to the surface and, in some instances, provides new inspiration for the music. This also indicates an intricate web of interactions between different behaviour settings; other musicians offer affordances for a given musical performance, but such interactions take place within a physical environment which also affords and constrains particular behaviours.

One example of this emerged within the audience Q&A at the end of the roundtable session – providing an insight into the impact of the performers' choices on the audience. As already described, the musicians began the gig with a duo (Matt and Christophe), incorporating the dinner gong which happened to be present in the room as well. Earlier in the discussion the musicians highlighted that it was the nature of the room's acoustics that had led to the decision to start as a duo. In addition, the choice to use the gong demonstrates a concern with exploring sound to engage an audience:

It was interesting having the gong there too ... it could be anything, for me it doesn't necessarily have to be a piano, I mean you can make music out of some glasses, it's not different ... I think that's why we kind of work well together ... because the instruments that we play and practice on so much can still be ... you can still find amazingly fresh things within them, and certainly for the piano, especially with a grand piano, there's so many things, harmonics, between, and obviously using other objects to get sound from them is really interesting (MB).

The gig started with Matt playing the gong, a choice that drew the audience's attention to the unconventional performance space, immediately engaging the audience and drawing them into a creative process that relied entirely upon the

precise performance context at that moment in time. This choice was particularly successful, according to one audience member:

I really liked the way you started, the duet started playing the room ... with that very percussive approach right at the beginning, dealing with the reverberation and so on ... I think it was really helpful to start the gig like that, just feeling your way into the space.

By recognising the affordances of the specific performance space, the performers were able to enhance the audience experience; the musicians and audience alike were affected by the specific performance context (i.e. 11pm, unconventional performance space within a grand Cambridge dining hall) and the choice to work with the affordances of such factors helped the audience to engage more immediately with the performance.

In addition to the physical space, its particular climatological features also impact on a performance:

There are people who rely less on their intuition and rely more on, you know, on the things that they've learnt to carry it off, you know, they battle against all these natural circumstances rather than giving themselves over to it, and I think in a lot of ways ... some people end up missing out on all the surprises and fun and enjoyment you can get from giving over to it. You know, maybe the room's really hot, and at first it might really piss you off, but then again you might get really into it, and just starting thinking, well I'm slightly hot, so I might as well work as hard as I can and just sweat! (MB)

Matt suggests here that challenging performance settings can potentially detract from the performance. However, he implies that 'giving ... over to it' can actually enhance the performance, affording new musical opportunities and experiences that might otherwise be missed. While Matt is talking specifically about the room temperature in the quote above, all musicians agreed, and provided evidence throughout the discussion, that 'giving over to it' – whether 'it' is a difficult acoustic, physical performance space, or performance time – affords a wide variety of musical opportunities. It is possible that this may be particular to contemporary and open improvisation, but we suggest that such perspectives inevitably have an impact regardless of musical style – they are simply brought to the fore in a discussion about music which does not rely solely on a written score.

Sociocultural Practices: Other Musicians

The relationships and interactions between musicians are important within any performance context, but arguably these are magnified within an improvisational context. Unlike more traditional musical performances, musical improvisation

does not rely wholly on fixed notation; in addition to the performance space, the audience and the instruments themselves (which will be considered below), other musicians can offer inspiration – both in terms of performance intention (i.e. when planning a performance or rehearsing) and in the live performance.

Like-minded, but Different

For the musicians in the current study, a shared vision among co-performers was important when deciding to work together initially, as well as for developing material:

It was very much a bit of rebellion against the system to start with ... it was just finding people with similar interests really. (NK)

It's the people that are willing to actually stay together for long enough to ... figure something out ... and there's also the intention to [use] everyone's various backgrounds, but to try to find something new or some common goal within a particular context ... it can't just be the typical jazz thing in terms of 'we're getting this music together for a particular event', there has to be a reason for getting the music together ... it's in and of itself a valuable thing, and not everybody thinks that way. (CdB)

The implication is that working within an improvisational context relies upon establishing a sense of value-based cohesion which allows the musical material to be the primary focus, allowing an eventual performance which is meaningful and rich, cohesive yet individualistic. Value is placed on a musician's individuality, their (often) diverse musical backgrounds and on finding a way to explore those differences within any performance. Indeed, conflict is perceived positively by these musicians:

We've just kind of accepted that we're different and that ... makes it what it is, and we've ... gone at it so much that the ... disparate elements... form that one sound, if you like. And that's certainly the case in the way that we operate, I mean, each of us... operates differently. (NK)

The worst music I hear is music where you can hear all the musicians agreeing, or seemingly agreeing, and ... playing together as one big happy family ... we're not trying to be, and we're not afraid to just ... go 'OK, you can hear we're clearly not agreeing in this' but it ... gives it tension, so for us to agree would be completely against what we ... do. (PFF)

Aside from the 'rebellion against the system' (NK) providing a foundation for the music in its broadest sense, differences between performers afford the exploration and development of musical material that is entirely dependent upon

that particular moment in time and the performers' individual experiences of that shared context. The tension arising from the 'disparate elements' is ultimately the unifying feature of this particular group of musicians; conflict affords musical opportunities. In a similar way, the musicians spoke about the inspiration derived from introducing new players into the group:

[Bringing new players into a group] broadens it up straight away... getting another saxophone player in ... you get torn and you start anew, you hear new sounds and you think 'OK, we could try that' ... it's like having conversations, suddenly, you know, you get new impulses, new ideas. (PFF)

There is a tension here between musicians working together long enough to find some common ground (see Christophe's comments above) and taking inspiration from a new player with whom they have shared less performing experience. Both situations offer musical affordances of different kinds in the context of improvised music, yet both are described by the participants as inspirational and as having a direct impact on the musical material. The spontaneous nature of improvised music is thus shaped in part by the affordances of other musicians, although this only works when there is a certain amount of trust between the musicians.

Walking on stage in a room like that, you know, at 11 o'clock, in a sense the situation is against you, but we know each other well and I trust them that whatever happens we'll ... be able to pull through ... obviously you want to be pushed and you want to ... be on edge in the sense of when you're playing together and move into interesting areas, but at the same time you want the trust there that if I stop, other people are doing different things and you know, if I do this thing, and react to it. (PFF)

There is a clear sense of shared responsibility between the musicians to ensure the quality of the performance regardless of the specific performance context (in this case, the late timing of the gig); the experience of the audience is implicated in the quote above, but co-performers are trusted to challenge, enhance and support the individual performer and the performance more generally.

Sociocultural Practices: The Audience

While the emphasis so far has been on the performer perspective, the other integral participant in any performance is the audience. Christopher Small (1998) describes the separation between performers and the audience, suggesting that the latter have no impact on the musicians on stage. Recent research suggests that this is far from the truth in a variety of contexts such as chamber music (Pitts, 2005b), jazz (Hytönen-Ng, 2013) and popular musics (Karlsen, this volume), although there are few examples of such studies. The improvisers in this study also acknowledged

the role of the audience, emphasizing its influence on their experiences of any given performances, as well as on their musical choices.

Relevance and Communication

There was agreement among the panel that the audience has a direct impact on live performances, describing them as ‘completely linked’. The audience is both a source of information which may guide the performance, and a focused target for the musicians’ actions. Communicating with the audience was of primary concern and all musicians spoke of their awareness of the audience – its experience of the performance, its visible or audible reactions – and its impact on the performance. The behaviour settings described above would be incomplete without the presence of an audience, particularly in relation to the musical score:

I think it’s about what you, as a performer, what’s the process that you want to go through to, in a sense, communicate something meaningful, so in that sense the audience and the performance are completely linked ... I mean if we stand there and read and have like ten page scores, and maybe play music that sounds relatively similar to what we’re doing, but it would make us fundamentally unhappy as performers, we wouldn’t necessarily be able to communicate a sense of excitement, a sense of edge, all the things you expect as audience. (PFF)

The combination of behaviour settings described so far directly impacts on the performers’ experiences of a performance, which in turn has consequences for the experience of the audience. Within the broader context of other musicians and the performance space, the musical score is potentially limiting for the live performance. Indeed, the beginning of the gig as described above would not have been possible had the performance been reliant on that ten page score. However, it would be misleading for us to suggest that improvised music is most successful when it is completely free; the musicians all acknowledged how the presence of some notation affords a range of musical opportunities:

I think that just by having the tunes there themselves, it just opens it up and makes it even more free, I know that’s a bit of a contradiction but just turning up and playing free is kind of limiting in a way ... for me it kind of comes with all that baggage and that’s the kind of sound world and you can do things to get away, but having the tunes there as well, and having that as almost like a departure point for improvisation ... it just kind of opens up a new area. (NK)

It’s very easy to get stuck in various ruts ... if you’re sort of exploring a texture ... well for me anyway, I’m sort of falling back into certain licks or tricks, whereas ... I think if you’ve got a piece of music in front of you ... it can help to stop that sort of, you know, reliance on ... sort of autopilot in playing, so you can look at the score and think ‘OK, I’m going to take that, that needs to

be there' and play around with it, and then all of a sudden you're into these new areas without even ... having to work particularly hard at that, and you'll just sort of become ... immersed in the music. (MB)

While the audience are not mentioned explicitly in the two quotes above, the musicians are aware that the performance may suffer if the innovation and inspiration afforded by the interleaved behaviour settings are absent; the musical material contributes to these settings and also affords opportunities for creative and engaging performances.

On a different level, an audience's reactions during a performance can also shape it. At the most fundamental level, the audience has a direct influence on a performance, with Christophe stating that 'it's the auditory and visual experience from the audience that I'm actually working with ... that's the material I'm manipulating'. The audience becomes an integral part of a live performance, complementing the affordances of the other behaviour settings described above. Continuing the theme of 'giving over to it', working with, and responding to, the atmosphere created by the audience affords additional opportunities:

It ... depends on how much you're willing to embrace the atmosphere in a situation where you're playing, and that includes the audience and ... for me at least, the audience is really, really, really important, because even though, there's this very strange quality, there's a certain energy being given off by our audience, and there are certain things you can pick up on and certain things you can't, that, that unavoidably, I think it depends on how much you, you've got your ego switched on, but, but sometimes you think, well, 'I'm doing this, and this is fine, I don't need your reaction, I don't need to feed off it', and then sometimes, it depends on your own psychology, but you're like 'just give me something!' and I think sometimes it, ... in France especially, if you're playing on your own, the audience is so quiet that if there's something that you might do that's particularly frenetic or whatever and usually you might hear some fidgeting and someone going [whispery mumble] it, it's all these things that you can hear and absorb, and for you they can, those disturbances, they can come to mean certain things, you think 'oh this is going well, I'm getting a reaction'. Not that you do it to get a reaction, but, you know, there's certain signifiers and, um, for me those things are really important, but you know, some audiences are so quiet, and you get to the end of the gig and you find you have to do three encores 'cause they really liked it, they're only really quiet 'cause they're listening so hard. [MB]

The comments above further emphasize the interwoven relationship between different behaviour settings, used by these performers to create the performance and to make it meaningful. A further implication is that there is no single formula that determines the extent to which the settings interact; the individual identity of the performer and their own experiences of the performance in that particular moment is also critical – perhaps the underpinning notion is that of the sense of

‘giving over to it’ and working with the web of affordances presented by each unique performance situation.

The unique attributes of each performance certainly provide opportunities to explore the musical material and the affordances of the performance space but the audience have a further impact on the limits of that exploration:

It’s ... almost like an adrenaline junkie ... you just want to climb higher and higher and do more and more extreme things, and I’m working now more and more in settings where it’s completely improvised, feeling that, you know, going on stage and just completely working on the parameters you have in this room, with this audience, on this stage etc., and just focusing on that. But the challenge is, obviously, not being self-indulgent and not just ... playing for yourself because ... that’s the big ... pitfall of improvised music, where you end up, you know, it’s interesting and it’s fun, what you’re doing, but it doesn’t mean anything and it’s not relevant. (PFF)

Being mindful of the audience, therefore, has a dual purpose, particularly in this context: the audience can act as part of a behaviour setting in its own right, with audience reactions and energy impacting on the performance choices of the musicians, but it can also play the role of moderator – the musicians are aware of the audience’s experience of the performance and are concerned that it remains meaningful and entertaining. Hence, the audience both acts as a source of information for the performers, but also vice versa: the performers act upon the audience; two perception-action cycles interlock (as described in Windsor, 2011, in relation to visual information).

The audience is therefore an integral part of live performance, particularly within a free improvised setting. It is one component of an intricate web of behaviour settings that combine to create a performance – neatly summarized by one of the players as follows:

I think the audience and the room, and the temperature, your own psychology, you know, they’re massive factors, you know, especially when you’re improvising, and equally as a duo, I think there’s so much scope to feed off that, or the potential for that. [MB]

Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter has considered how the contexts of musical improvisation impact on live performances – from the perspective of the performer and the audience. Responding to the affordances of a behaviour setting can create a meaningful performance which is entirely dependent upon a unique combination of the different aspects of venue and people (performers and audience members) present in that moment. Although we have discussed these aspects in specific relation

to improvised music, it is likely that behaviour settings impact on all musical performances, regardless of musical genre and that by 'giving over to' the physical and social aspects of particular performance contexts, performers can create meaningful performances for audiences (cf. Gabriellson, 2010).

This chapter offers a complementary perspective to those offered elsewhere in this volume – demonstrating that just as the layout of particular venues or the atmosphere among the audience impact upon the audience's experience of a live performance, such aspects are significant for performers too. Therefore, considering live performances from an ecological perspective suggests that all aspects of performance contexts are important for *everyone* sharing the experience, and that to consider different behaviour settings in isolation may present an incomplete picture of what makes live performances meaningful.

Improvised music is a useful example for highlighting the impact of the interaction between different behaviour settings because the absence of a full score allows for more opportunity to respond directly to the specifics of any performance context. However, the research demonstrates that an approach to performance which accounts for the experiences of the musicians and the audience simultaneously is critical to the success of a performance (cf. Radbourne et al., 2009). Therefore, an ecological approach offers an opportunity to suggest that the most successful and meaningful live performances depend upon a web of interactions between four features of the performance environment, as shown in figure 9.2

Each aspect of the performance environment affords opportunities for performers who aim to create meaningful performances for the audience (and themselves). Such performance factors can present challenges (such as difficult acoustics or climatological features), but may also enhance a 'planned' performance. By working with the affordances of each of the four elements, performers can create unique and special performances that work for audiences because they are directly relevant and responsive to that moment and place in time; the audience's experience becomes meaningful because they are part of, and witness to, the music's creation. This research furthers our understanding of what makes live music special and considers how performances are shaped by the performance context, just as the audience's experience is enhanced by a similar set of behaviour settings. Less certain, however, is the extent to which our participants are 'typical' as some were particularly self-reflective about the nature of their practice, partly due to having completed PhDs with similar concerns. Similarly, there are still questions about how we can meaningfully 'measure' the impact of the environment on performance, particularly with improvised music. The approach we have taken here, however, provides an informed and considered performer insight into the impact of performance contexts on the creation of a musical performance, highlighting that 'giving over to' all aspects of a performance context (whether physical or social) can create meaningful experiences for everyone that could only be encountered by being there at that moment. Creative music-making transforms spaces for an audience: but the audience itself is part of the space to be transformed, a source of affordance and constraint, a target for

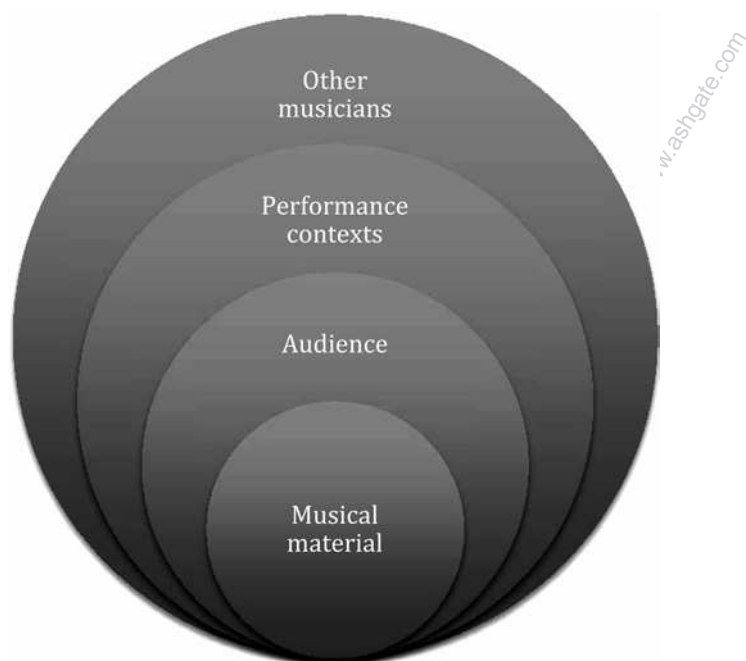


Figure 9.2 Factors influencing live performance/improvisation in context

transformation. As Reed (1996, p. 160) argues (in discussion of William Morris and Pablo Picasso): '(A)rt is a necessary way of enriching everyday experience. Both loved to transform their living places, to design rugs and chairs, plates and wall decorations that expressed how they wished to live'.

It is an error to portray creative music-making as the one-way transmission of information to an audience. It is a piece of work upon a space, which responds to that space and the audience within it as well as transforming it into a less unfamiliar, more challenging setting in which we audience and performers have to learn in real time.