

Kanga, Z 2014, 'Not Music Yet: Graphic Notation as a Catalyst for Collaborative Metamorphosis', *Eras*, vol. 16, no.1, pp.37-58



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“Not Music Yet”: Graphic Notation as a Catalyst for Collaborative Metamorphosis

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***Abstract** | In the past five years the collaborative relationship between composer and performer has emerged as an important field of enquiry. Challenging the assumptions of distinct roles and creativity in solitude, recent research publications by Östersjö, Clarke/Cook/Harrison/Thomas, Roche, Hayden/Windsor and Heyde/Fitch have examined their own creative practices to explore many different models of collaborative relationships. The author’s doctoral research in this field examined the collaborations on ten new works for solo piano, one of which is the graphically notated score, Not Music Yet (2012), by Australian composer, David Young. This article explores how Young’s use of graphic notation alongside symbiotic collaborative strategies catalysed a metamorphosis of the collaborative process. In 2011, the author, a concert pianist, commissioned Young to compose a new work for solo piano. Young’s decision to notate the score as a large watercolour painting served as both a point of resistance and a catalyst in the collaborative process. The article examines Young’s strategies of managing and manipulating the author’s interpretation, while affording the author control over fundamental compositional decisions. The author’s process of creating a performable realisation of the score – utilising sonic and pianistic experimentation with a wide variety of extended techniques – is also examined. With reference to the author’s doctoral research, which examined the effects of notational practices, imbalances of authority, and external pressures on the collaborative process, the article provides insights into the impact of graphic notation on the collaborative process and shows how Young’s specific use of interdependent notational and collaborative strategies can provide a useful model for future collaborators and researchers while also facilitating new perspectives on the conventional roles and responsibilities of composer and performer.*

Introduction

This paper presents one case study from my doctoral research into the collaborative process between composers and performers, “Inside the Collaborative Process: Realising New Works for Solo Piano”.² Using forty-two collaborations between myself (as solo pianist) and composers that I documented over the last four years, I focused on ten that demonstrated the effects of notational methods, pressures of time, power imbalances, the ‘frame’ of virtuosity, and the effect of repeated collaborations on the cases studied, tracing the effects of these factors as catalysts or moderators in the creative process. The works themselves (the scores, my performances and recordings)

¹ Zubin Kanga’s post-doctoral position is supported by funds granted by the ANR (National Agency for Research, France) for the GEMME project, hosted by the University of Nice Sophia Antipolis and IRCAM (Paris).

² Zubin Kanga, “Inside the Collaborative Process: Realising New Works for Solo Piano” (Ph.D. Royal Academy of Music, 2014).

also function as research outputs in their own right, discovering and demonstrating new approaches to composing for the piano.³

The methodologies employed in this paper draw upon a large and established body of auto-ethnographic research methods and a large but recent body of research into creative collaboration in the arts, sciences, and business, as well as being positioned within a fledgling, but fast growing field of research, specifically examining composer-performer relationships.⁴

The case study presented below examines the collaboration around the creation of the solo piano work, *Not Music Yet* (2012), composed for me by Australian composer, David Young. Currently based in Berlin, Young's primary focus has been the development of cross-artform and interdisciplinary projects, most recently in his role as Artistic Director of Chamber Made Opera (2010 to 2013). Young's music has been performed in Australia, Europe, Asia, North America and South Africa, in contexts ranging from concerts to music theatre and installation. The music has been variously described as "musical origami", "accessible, yet satisfyingly abstract" and "quietly determined to be itself... an aural equivalent of seeing a world in a grain of sand".⁵ Young's choice to notate the work as a large watercolour painting catalysed a metamorphosis of our mode of collaboration. This transformation affected all types of interaction, from our earliest conversations to my preparations for performances,

³ For information about the author's career as a pianist see "About" in *Zubin Kanga, pianist*, <http://www.zubinkanga.com/about.php>.

⁴ The following papers, books and theses have made particularly significant contributions to the field, and they are the models for my own research into composer-performer relationships: Eric Clarke, Nicholas Cook, Bryn Harrison, and Philip Thomas, "Interpretation and Performance in Bryn Harrison's *être-temps*", *Musicae Scientiae: the Journal of the European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music* 9, no.1 (2005): 31-74; Fabrice Fitch and Neil Heyde, "'Ricerca' – The Collaborative Process as Invention," *Twentieth-Century Music* 4 (2007): 71-95; Sam Hayden and Luke Windsor, "Collaboration and the Composer: Case Studies from the Turn of the 21st Century", *Tempo* 61, no. 240 (2007): 28-39; Stefan Östersjö, "Shut Up 'n' Play: Negotiating the Musical Work," *Doctoral Studies and Research in Fine and Performing Arts*, vol. 5, (Malmö: Lund University Press, 2008); Heather Roche, "Dialogue and Collaboration in the Creation of New Works for Clarinet," (Ph.D., University of Huddersfield, 2011). For more on auto-ethnographic research methods see: Judith Okely, "Anthropology and Autobiography: Participatory Experience and Embodied Knowledge" in *Anthropology and Autobiography*, edited by Judith Okely and Helen Callaway, (London: Routledge, 1992), 1-28; Marilyn Strathern, "The limits of auto-anthropology" in *Anthropology at Home*, edited by Anthony Jackson, (London: Tavistock, 1987), 16-37; Chiener Chou, "Experience and Fieldwork: A Native Researcher's View," *Ethnomusicology* 46, no. 3 (2002): 456-86; Anthony P. Cohen, "Self-conscious Anthropology," in *Anthropology and Autobiography*, edited by Judith Okely and Helen Callaway, (London: Routledge, 1992), 221-41. For more on collaborative creativity see: Georgina Born, "Distributed Creativity: What Do We Mean By It?", *Creative Practice in Contemporary Concert Music Workshop: Distributed Creativity*, University of Oxford, 5 (September 2011); Keith Sawyer, *Group Genius: The Creative Power of Collaboration*, (New York: Basic Books, 2007); Vera John-Steiner, *Creative Collaboration*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1997).

⁵ Biography provided by the composer, July 2014. For further information about David Young, see "David Young" in *Chamber Made Opera*, http://www.chambermadeopera.com/people/David_Young.

recordings and beyond. The case will show how Young’s collaborative methods, designed to interact symbiotically with his notation, diverged significantly from the methods I have observed in collaborative partnerships around works using conventional notational approaches. It thus provides one of the few auto-ethnographically documented case studies on the collaborative creation and realisation of a solo piano work with graphic notation, allowing essential insights into the potential impacts of graphic notation on collaborative processes. In addition, Young’s specific use of interdependent notational and collaborative strategies, and my own responses to his creative challenges, may provide useful models for future composers, performers and researchers of collaboration.

Early Meetings

During our first meeting in March 2011, Young began by discussing his most recent piece for piano *Incisioni Rupestri* (2004), a graphic score based on rock carvings from Val Carmonica.⁶ An excerpt is shown in Figure 1.

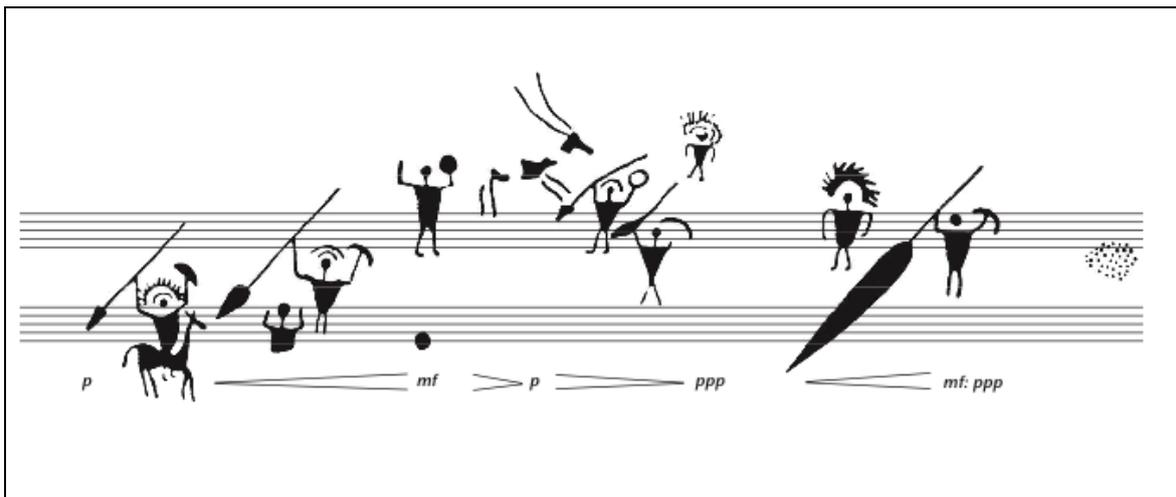


Figure 1 Excerpt from *Incisioni Rupestri* for solo piano (2004) by David Young. All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission.

Young was particularly interested in the different approaches of pianists Mark Knoop and Michael Kieran Harvey, who both performed the work:

⁶ The following meetings and workshops were documented using a digital camcorder: 3 March 2011 (Chamber Made Opera offices, Melbourne – the details of the commission were agreed at this meeting); 25 August 2011 (Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne); 24 April 2012 (David Young’s residence, Melbourne – the completed score was handed over at this meeting); 18 July 2012 (Skype workshop - filmed at the author’s Sydney residence); 1 August 2012 (Skype workshop - filmed at the author’s Sydney residence).

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You could not imagine two more different approaches. Mark had a very obsessively calibrated and notated score to give himself indications and time signatures... whereas of course Michael took a much more broad brushstroke approach and yet the result was *strangely* similar.⁷

The differences and similarities between the two performances go to the core questions around the use of graphic notation. How much liberty can one take? Can radically different interpretations still be recognisable versions of the same score? Where is the composition process? And most importantly, how is authorship distributed and does this distribution challenge the conventional roles of composer and performer?

Young is well aware that his graphic scores are part of a long and diverse tradition. But although he admires the notational methods of John Cage, Earle Brown, Cornelius Cardew, Karlheinz Stockhausen, among many others, his own very particular approach to graphic notation grew out of his exploration of the extremes of conventional notational methods and his desire for more control over the type of performance his scores elicit.

In our early meetings, it was clear that Young, in his choice of topics and requests of me, was already collaborating according to a long-term strategy. Part of this strategy was to recount the long journey his notation had taken, starting by using a notational approach similar to composers of the 'New Complexity' school. He explained his reasons for moving away from this approach towards graphic notation, after the experience of composing, *Scant* (1993) for guitar and cello:

But actually more pragmatically than that, I started using graphic notation because I'd written a lot of music that was fiendishly difficult. There's one piece of mine in particular which is for ten string guitar and cello. It was written for Geoff [Morris] and Friedrich Gauwerky of *Elision* and they could do anything, these guys. And the piece goes for about 12 minutes but it's so difficult and it ends up on 4 or 5 staves and they're just doing ridiculous things, much of which I appreciate and they could hear, but you know, the detail and nuance of it was incredibly subtle and of course it took them 9 months to practice it and hours and hours and hours and I think they did one performance and a recording. And for me it was just so disproportionate.⁸

An excerpt from *Scant* is shown in Figure 2.

⁷ Kanga, "Inside the Collaborative Process", 393.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 395.

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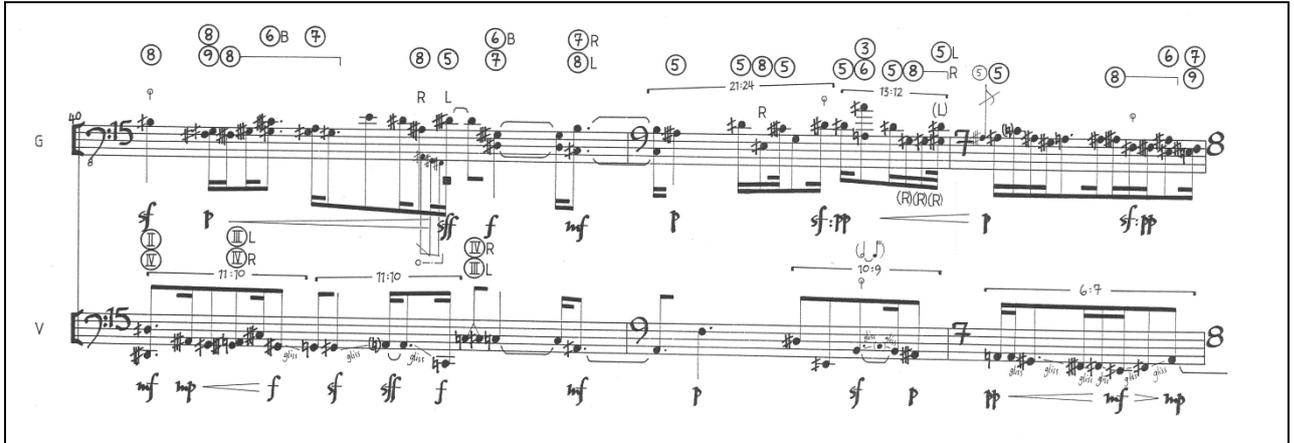


Figure 2 *Scant* (1993) for 10-string guitar and cello (excerpt) by David Young. All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission.

From this point, Young began to use hybrid scores before moving into fully graphic scores such as his opera cycle composed with Margaret Cameron, *The Minotaur Trilogy* (2012). An excerpt from this work is shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3 “The Fall of Icarus” from *The Minotaur Trilogy* (2012) by David Young and Margaret Cameron (scan of watercolour score). All rights reserved. Reproduced with permission.

This process took almost 20 years and he now believes that graphic notation allows him to “achieve a very similar effect musically but with a very deft notation which is much more precise, more nuanced and actually freer.”⁹ Significantly, Young still wants the performer to engage with his scores rigorously, rather than simply using them as stimuli for improvisation:

⁹ Ibid., 393.

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I'm fascinated by how unconcerned I am about letting go of that complex notation because I adore precision and I find it very exciting when you can, when an ensemble is doing something together, I find that totally exhilarating. So it's not that I'm not interested in precision, it's just I'm interested in a different kind of precision.¹⁰

Despite his desire for precision, he does not advocate any specific methods to achieve this goal, preferring to let the performer decide the musical materials and the resolution of their interpretation. Thus, Young draws from the two divergent traditions of graphic notation: the use of graphic notation as a precise schematic (as found in the works of Stockhausen and Penderecki) and the use of graphic notation as a stimulus for the performers to produce a realisation (or improvisation) with their own choice of musical materials (as found in the works of Bussotti, Cage and Cardew). How I would negotiate these multiple functions of the notation would become the major focus of our collaboration.

A topic that dominated my early discussions with Young was the work of American choreographer, Deborah Hay, with whom he had previously collaborated.¹¹ Though he does not use Hay's specific type of scores (featuring Zen riddles as instructions) Young's intense description and discussion of Hay's work highlighted a number of his preoccupations that would become features of our own collaboration. He explained that the effect of the 'scores' and contradictory instructions of Hay's work produced a particular response in the performer:

One of the things she talks about is that the performer is so busy relating to all those things so that's where this immediacy or presence comes from because there's no time to start inventing or interpreting or elaborating or even performing.¹²

And later:

I'm sure you've seen it many times where someone will be performing. It's that 'look at me' or 'here I am presenting myself to you and I'm very conscious that you're looking at me'. There's that kind of artifice and people use their technique or their training to hide the fact that they're actually there. And then when you see someone who is absolutely there, it's a completely different effect. And that's the kind of performance that I'm interested in, because I find it utterly compelling.¹³

¹⁰ Kanga, "Inside the Collaborative Process", 396.

¹¹ Young and Hay collaborated on the work *Seeing Seeing Seeing* (2009) for solo percussionist, Eugene Ughetti. For information about Deborah Hay, see www.deborahhay.com.

¹² Kanga, "Inside the Collaborative Process", 399.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 400. Author's emphasis.

An example of Hay’s approach can be found in the cryptic choreographic instructions for *No Time to Fly* (2010), designed to confound as much as guide the dancers in order to produce the type of performative immediacy Young had observed:

I start spinning, not literally but as part of an onstage counterclockwise spinning vortex that only I can perceive. I am a speck, a dot, a flake, endlessly spiralling towards centre stage, and absolutely no one can identify me as such.¹⁴

Another aspect of Hay’s work that would parallel our own collaboration was her ability to hand over the work (after the initial ‘teaching’ phase) and allow the performer *carte blanche* to then interpret it, combine it with music, and use costumes and sets as they wished, regardless of whether she thought it was in good taste or not. Although he did not explicitly state that his approach to performers was modeled on Hay’s, the similarities to her collaborative strategies became clear as the collaboration progressed.

The Score

Young handed over the score to me in April 2012. After numerous experiments and attempts, he had created the score, in the form of a watercolour painting, in a single day. The score, a miniature, scanned copy of which appears in Figure 4 has the dimensions 102 cm by 68 cm. Young’s creation of this score enacted many of his ideals about spontaneity of expression, and indeed the painting can be seen as a type of performance in itself. He described this process:

I worked on it, then let it dry then worked on it again. Though it probably only took me two and a half minutes to actually paint. There were many drafts and studies, dozens, maybe hundreds of smaller watercolours and some large ones as well which were all working with a particular technique. It’s a process of refining but a very intuitive exploration. When I arrived at *Not Music Yet*, I had developed techniques for working with the materials and the temperature and how long to let it dry. So I’d developed skills in all of that but I was also at a point where I could trust the materials to create it and I was able to get out of the way and not be trying so hard and just letting it happen.¹⁵

¹⁴ Deborah Hay, *No Time to Fly* (solo dancer), 2010, accessed 16 Sept 2014, <http://www.deborahhay.com/DHDC%20Website%20Pdf/NTTF%20booklet.pdf>. Hay discusses her approach to choreograph and collaboration in her books, including *Lamb at the Altar: The Story of a Dance*, (Durham: Duke University, 1994).

¹⁵ Kanga, “Inside the Collaborative Process”, 405.



Figure 4 *Not Music Yet* for solo piano by David Young (scan of watercolour on paper score). All rights reserved. Reproduced with permission.

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The instructions were very specific, requiring it to be considered a time-space score (with the pitch on the vertical axis and time on the horizontal). I was to perform three ‘passes’ from left to right, first playing the black parts of the painting, then the white and finally the blue. There are two versions of the work, one lasting 7 minutes (with each pass lasting 2 minutes 20 seconds) and a 42 minute version (with each pass lasting 14 minutes).

Crucially, Young’s instructions also stated, “while by its nature, this notation has many freedoms, every attempt should be made to realise the graphics’ contours and shapes as carefully and precisely as possible”.¹⁶ The resistance between his desire for interpretative precision and the ambiguity of the notation would remain a creative focus throughout the process of preparing my realisation.

Preparing an Interpretation/Realisation

In the months between the handover of the score, and my workshops with Young in August 2012, I developed my interpretative approach. The watercolour notation, combined with Young’s instructions, obstructs many of the modes of interpretation that might be applied to working with graphic scores. It requires a different approach to that needed when interpreting other graphic scores, such as John Cage’s *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (1958), Cornelius Cardew’s *Treatise* (1967), and Earle Brown’s *December 1952* where the delineation of events on the page is much more clear, but the interpretative approach is not prescribed.¹⁷ It is also different from Morton Feldman’s *Projection* (1951) and Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Prozession* (1967), which function as precise schematics, given that the precise methods of translating image to sound were left to my discretion. And although Young had given me permission to find my own interpretative approach, I was aware of a deeper authorial question in play: should I actively attempt to mimic the style of performances of Young’s other works (including his conventionally notated works) to allow his ‘authorial voice’ through, or would such an approach show a distrust of the notation’s precision? I decided that approaching the notation methodically, with no reference to other interpretations of Young’s work would fulfill his instructions while freeing me from unneeded creative

¹⁶ David Young, *Not Music Yet* for solo piano (preface to the score), (Sydney: Australian Music Centre, 2012).

¹⁷ Although there are many freedoms for the interpreter of these scores, the extent of this interpretative scope is open to debate. For example, Aloys Kontarsky recalls a student at Darmstadt who performed Brown’s *December 1952*, using it as an inspiration to “improvise a rather disorganized muddle of single pitches, clusters and figures.” In contrast to what he derides as these “sly tricks”, Kontarsky advocated a rigorously analytic approach to the score so that each element of the notation could be mapped precisely into sound. Aloys Kontarsky, “Notation for Piano” [1964] in *Perspectives on Notation and Performance*, edited by Benjamin Boretz and Edward T. Cone, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1976), 188. I would argue that in this case, it is the ideology of the performer rather than the composer that is being expressed and that many diverse, but equally satisfying, interpretations of this score are possible. But I would also agree with Kontarsky that without some interpretative restriction, even self-imposed, the work loses its identity in performance and the score loses its relevance and potency.

restraints, and that later workshops on this interpretation would allow Young the opportunity to exercise further authorial control, if he desired it.

Several approaches were trialled. Inspired by the precisely measured, fully scored realisations of, pianist David Tudor’s work with John Cage’s graphic scores, I measured the width of all the significant events in the score, converting these to timings and measured the vertical placement of features, converting these to pitches on an 88 key piano.¹⁸ An excerpt of these measurements appears in Table 1.

Table 1 Excerpt from spreadsheet of calculations for realization of *Not Music Yet*, converting measurements of the painting to timings and pitches.

Black	Horizontal Measurements	Timings (mins) (Total 14 Mins)		
		Minutes	seconds	
First high black starts	52	1.76	1	45
First high black ends	101	3.42	3	25
Second high black starts	116	3.92	3	55
Second high black ends	171	5.78	5	46
Thin black arc	235	7.95	7	57
Thin black arc	259	8.76	8	45
Third high black starts	264	8.93	8	55
Third high black ends	287	9.71	9	42
Fourth high black starts	358	12.11	12	6
Fourth High black ends	407	13.76	13	45
		0	0	0

Although I initially intended to write a fully notated realisation using these measurements, I decided that this type of realisation would be a reduction (in all senses). I therefore decided to mark up the score, at first marking in absolute time markings (using colours to differentiate between each pass) as shown in Figure 5. This score was used for the premieres, but for the later recordings and performances I found it more precise to mark equal increments of time, as shown in Figure 6. This allowed me to choose which features of the score to draw upon in any given performance, rather than predetermining and measuring specific features, as in the previous version.

I use contrasting sound worlds for each of the three sections: for the black section I use all unpitched sounds from the piano, the white section is on the keyboard and predominantly uses just the white notes, and the blue section features pitched sounds from the strings, playing inside the piano. Thus the three sections form a progression from the noise of the materials of the piano, to the natural (but naturally abstract) piano sound, through to the pure sounds of the strings themselves. Each section also has its own interior arc: the black moves from unpitched sounds to muted, barely discernible pitched sounds, the white moves from pure white notes, to a more

¹⁸ For more on Tudor’s approach to interpretation see: Peter Dickinson, “David Tudor”, *Cage Talk: Dialogues with and about John Cage*, edited by Peter Dickinson (Rochester: University of Rochester, 2006); John Holzaepfel, “Cage and Tudor”, *The Cambridge Companion to John Cage*, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2002); Isaac Schankler, “Cage = 100: David Tudor and the Performance Practice of Concert for Piano and Orchestra”, *New Music Box*, accessed 16 Sept 2014, www.newmusicbox.org/articles/cage-tudor-concert-for-piano-and-orchestra, 2012 .



Figure 5 *Not Music Yet* by David Young – marked up score for original performance (excerpt)

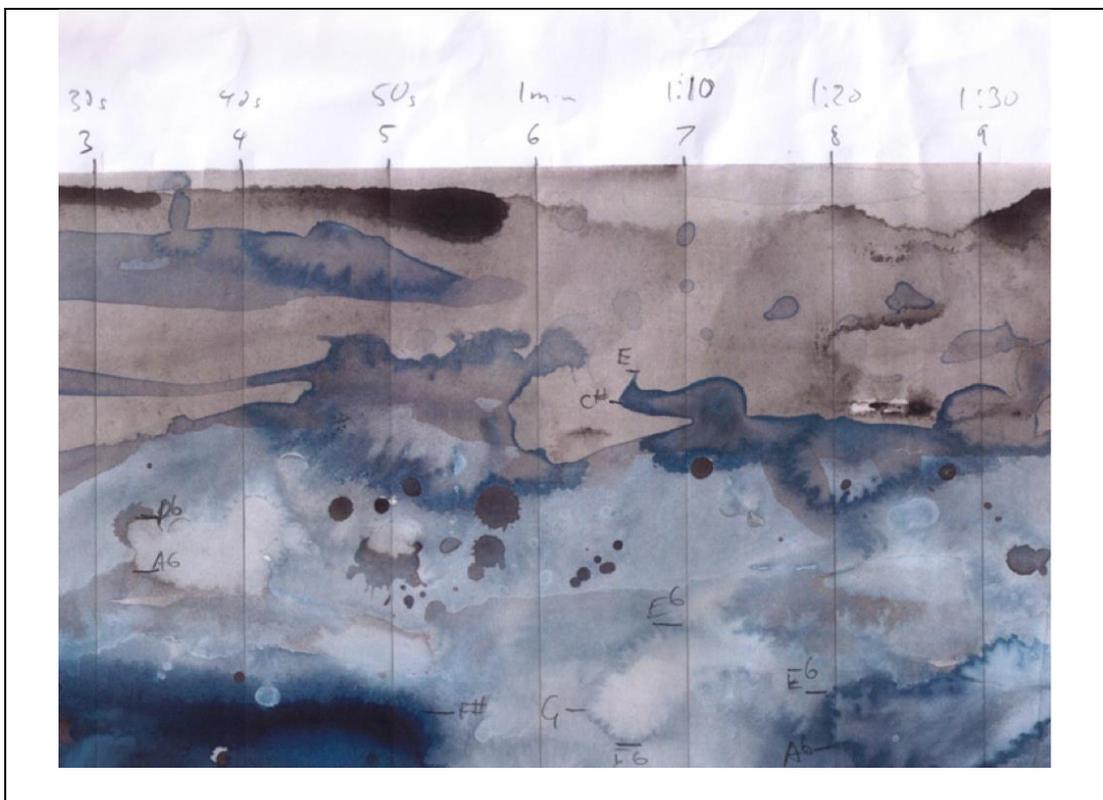


Figure 6 *Not Music Yet* by David Young – marked up score for recording session

chromatic sound world, and the blue section goes from playing the strings with vibraphone mallets to produce large masses of sound to the more controlled, tactile sounds of fingers directly on the strings. Another general rule I employ is that I predominantly perform using unconventional pianistic techniques throughout to attempt to avoid any resemblance to canonical works. To this end, I use three unconventional types of musical material – the cluster, the glissando and the tremolo – which can all be performed across all three sections, whether on the keyboard or inside the piano using extended techniques.

Although my chosen palette of sounds, superimposed structure for each movement and timing of events gives me a high level of precision and consistency between performances, the microstructural details are left to improvisation. For example, at the opening of the 'black' section, shown in Figure 7, I measured the thick black line near the bottom of the page as an interval of a minor 3rd (spanning F-sharp to A in the opening). The line gradually descends until it hits the bottom of the instrument. In this case, I play these low clusters (muted by my right hand to maintain the more percussive sound world of this section) as individual chords, spread out every 20 to 30 seconds over the duration of the movement.¹⁹ This gives an outline of the descending line, using discrete gestures to reveal thin slices of the whole, freeing my hands to add further layers of texture above.

Another approach can be found in the central passages of the blue section with serrated round shapes in the centre and a more fluid mix of blues underneath shown in Figure 8. Here I use the dulcimer hammers to play two lines zig-zagging up and down in contrary motion, alternating this with scraping the dulcimer hammers along the length of the low, copper strings to produce a complex wash of low frequencies.²⁰ The fact that I have only two hands makes it impossible to play both types of musical material simultaneously and continuously, but it is possible to dovetail between these textures and sustain sounds in the pedal. And although there may be variations in the exact execution of the passage in different performances, the shape, character, pitch contours, tessitura and duration of each large gesture remain constant between performances.

The use of pedal to imitate certain painterly effects is also crucial. In the centre of the white section, I play glissandi and clusters, held in the pedal, then release the pedal while holding specific subsets of the pitches just played, allowing these chosen harmonies to emerge out of a larger wash of sound. At other points, I hold chords with the middle pedal before playing notes in other parts of the piano, creating 'shadow

¹⁹ I first encountered bass note harmonics and muted sounds while playing George Crumb's *Makrokosmos I* (1972) and Rolf Hind's *Towers of Silence* (2007).

²⁰ I first developed this specific use of dulcimer hammers inside the piano during workshops with David Gorton during the development of his solo work, *Orfordness* (2012). See David Gorton, *Orfordness*, Study Score 1st Edition, (David Gorton Music, 2013).



Figure 7 ‘Black’ Section in *Not Music Yet* for solo piano by David Young (excerpt of scan)

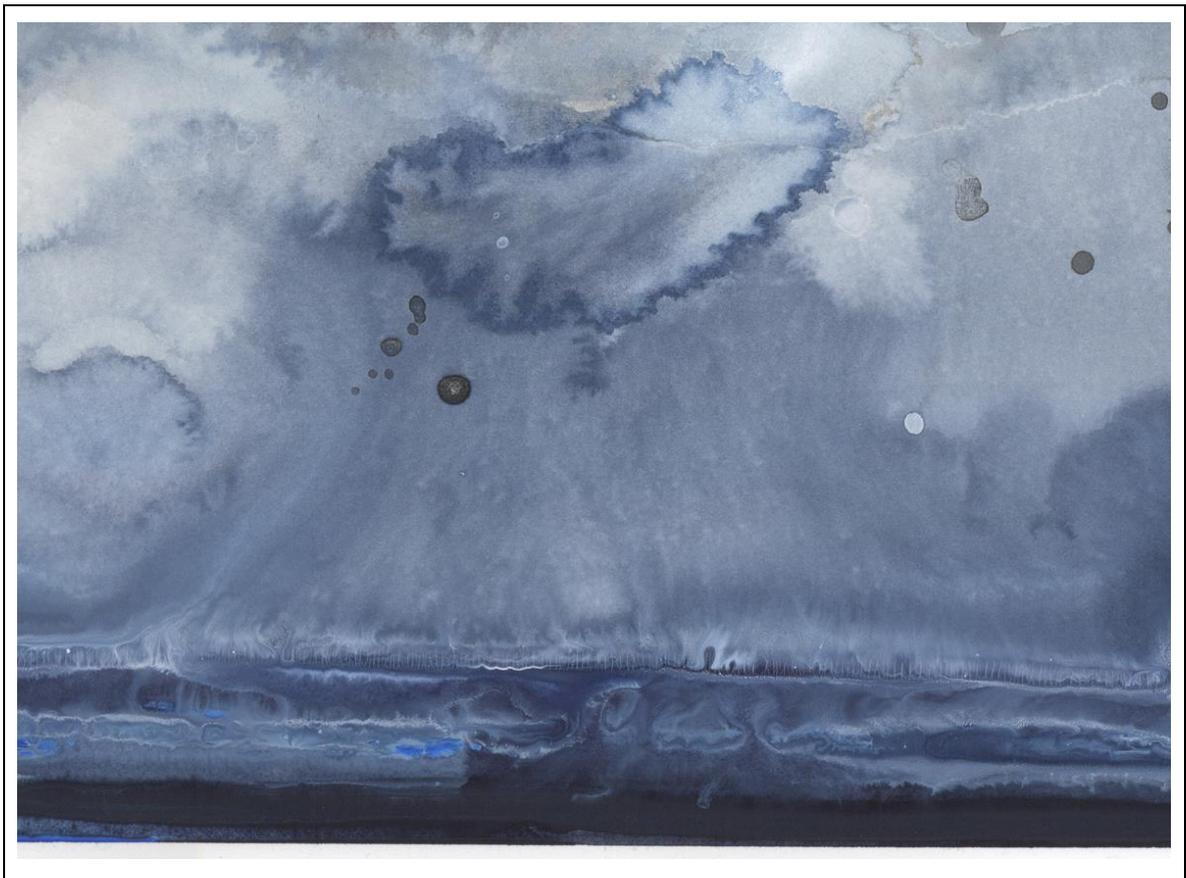


Figure 8 Central passages of “blue” section in *Not Music Yet* for solo piano by David Young (excerpt of scan)

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resonances' as these strings vibrate sympathetically.²¹ With these techniques, I am able to create sounds and textures that seem to change shape and colour after the attacks of the notes, defying the percussive nature of the piano's mechanism. I feel these effects closely resemble the many shades of white fluidly mixing together in this section of the score.

Using these approaches and others in my toolbox of techniques, I felt I had balanced Young's competing priorities of precision and spontaneity, but the workshops allowed him to adjust this balance as well as introduce new priorities.

Workshops

In the first collaborative workshop with Young, I demonstrated each of the sections in turn. After my playthrough of the black section, he said to me:

Excellent... I love the sound world and the structure and shape is all there. I think somehow now if you can start looking for something which is still as intense. It still has the same intensity but is not as dramatic... it's a watercolour. It's not an acrylic.²²

The last line goes to the heart of the notational uniqueness of the score. Not only are the events important, but the texture of built up paint, the places of dripping, smearing and cracking and the ambiguity of the colours are all crucial to determining the type and character of the material. His desire for me to be less dramatic and gestural, more 'in the moment' and less self-conscious, mirrors many of the instructions given by Deborah Hay to her dancers. This is another example of Young's use of creative resistance, using the workshop to challenge my initial response to the notation. In another similar exchange, he asked me to play with an approach that was more "technical and a little bit more subdued".²³ Again his instructions pushed against my natural virtuosic flair and guided me away from stock improvisational gestures and discrete shapes, inducing in me a heightened state of attention and spontaneity analogous to Hay's use of riddles to confuse her dancers' trained responses.

After playing it through again, Young said "Yeah, *that's* a David Young piece."²⁴ I was reminded that despite the freedoms afforded to me by the notation, the intentions of the score were still very specific and I was now satisfied that I had successfully negotiated the balance between finding my own interpretation and creating a realisation that was consistent with Young's other works (including his fully notated works). This adjustment to my interpretation is an example of work-

²¹ These techniques are combinations of those found among works by Helmut Lachenmann in *Serynade* for solo piano (Breitkopf & Härtel, 1998) and *Ein Kinderspiel* (1980), Rebecca Saunders in *Shadow* for solo piano (Edition Peters, 2013), and by Elo Masing in her work for me, *studies in resonance II* for solo piano (self-published, 2013).

²² As cited in Kanga, "Inside the Collaborative Process", 416.

²³ *Ibid.*, 417.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 416.

specific performance practice – this information, provided verbally in the workshop, became as important as the score itself to my realisation of the work.²⁵

In the following exchange, we see Young’s focus placed on the performative dimensions of my interpretation while the compositional aspects are diplomatically sidestepped – another collaborative strategy analogous to those employed by Hay:

I think it’s almost like because the glissandi were so stark, it was kind of like you were making some kind of musical point about them, instead of them just being part of this accumulation of movement and sound... but I think that working mostly on the white notes is very logical and it does give it a weird tonal... it gives it this weird happy sort of quality which I think will contrast quite bizarrely with the first section. I think that’s not such a bad thing.²⁶

Rather than prescribing specific musical devices, he pointed me towards overall interpretative strategies, suggesting that my performance would improve as I moved into closer and closer details of the score:

I think the more you are convinced that what you’re doing relates to the painting, the more certainty, the better it will work, basically. So it’s really primarily about your relationship to what you’re reading now. And that’s when it works, and that’s why at the beginning of the third section, it does work so well, it’s because you’re very convinced about what you’re doing. You’re making that image into sound.²⁷

This was certainly the case when I recorded the 42 minute version, which forced me out of a semi-improvised mode of playing and into a much deeper interpretative relationship with every brushstroke of the score.²⁸ This longer version opens up interpretative possibilities in several ways. I am able to explore the use of space and silence much more than in the 7 minute version, where the need to complete each horizontal ‘pass’ of the painting in under two and a half minutes makes points of stasis longer than a minute difficult to execute. I can also create massed textures with more detail and subtlety – for example, the thunderous sound I use at the beginning of the blue section (performed with percussion mallets on the strings) lasts 50 seconds in the shorter version but 5 minutes in the longer version, meaning that I have time to explore many more nuances of attack and colour within this loud, rumbling texture. The longer duration also allows me to alternate between more

²⁵ Ibid., 456-457.

²⁶ Ibid., 417.

²⁷ Ibid., 422.

²⁸ Although, at the date of writing this article, I have not premiered the 42-minute version, I have recorded it for a CD released by Hospital Hill Recordings in 2014.

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layers of the painting and differentiate them in more detail. Finally, and most importantly, the 42 minute version allows me greater scope to map my own musical structure across Young's, without either being compromised. Thus, I can introduce motifs early in the black section, that appear in other layers towards the end of this section, and then reappear in multiple layers of the white or blue sections, and I can simultaneously articulate every major feature of the score rather than having to choose some features to omit. Although this approach is not fundamentally different to what I achieved in the 7 minute version, the results were more complex and sophisticated, with a greater 'resolution' of detail. It is in the long version that Young's choice of medium makes sense – with each pass over the score six times as long, I am required to spend much more time with a thinner 'slice' of the painting so that the minute details become less of a constriction on improvisation and more of a resource for continuously generating musical materials that will sustain an extended, coherent musical structure.

I performed the premiere of the 7 minute version at the Salon, Melbourne Recital Centre on 11th August 2012 and performed it again at the Independent Theatre, Sydney on 16th August. Young was pleased with both the performances,

They're such great recordings, the Melbourne recording is slightly higher quality while the Sydney performance is slightly more confident but both are fantastic. I remember being extremely pleased, quite startled actually, at how happy I was. I think it's a really good piece!²⁹

The live recording of the Sydney performance can be heard in Audio Example 1. I have also performed the 7 minute version at the Peabody Institute Baltimore (27 March 2014), Vanderbilt University, Nashville (29 March 2014), and the Royal Academy of Music, London (17 June 2014) and performances of the 42 minute version are planned for Sydney, Melbourne and London. A studio recording of both versions has been released on Hospital Hill Recordings.³⁰



Audio Example 1: *Not Music Yet* by David Young, recorded live at The Independent Theatre, Sydney, 16 August 2012

Conclusions

From my observations, Young's entire approach to collaboration – from the earliest meetings, to the choice of notation, to the final workshops – appeared to be part of an integrated strategy, based on his own philosophy of collaboration. Control over the

²⁹ Kanga, "Inside the Collaborative Process", 426.

³⁰ Zubin Kanga and David Young, *NOT MUSIC YET*, Hospital Hill Recordings, 2014, compact disc.

work was enacted through suggestion and ambiguous directions rather than direct notational prescriptions, using the workshops to activate sites of creative tension between contradictory priorities to create a performance that was both precise and spontaneous.³¹ In the sense that the score facilitates this approach, and is a semi-improvised performance in itself (having been painted in a single day in a medium that resists precision), the choice of notation supports Brian Ferneyhough’s assertion that “notation expresses the ideology of its own process of creation”.³²

The long discussions about Deborah Hay and her work, though seemingly tangential at the time, became increasingly relevant as we went along. By the end, it was clear that Hay’s use of riddles as instructions for her dancers as a way of producing new modes of expression was analogous to Young’s graphic score, devised to both guide and confound me in order to create the most immediate, spontaneous performance (a type of performance Young simply calls, “not performing”).³³ Young’s stoic non-interventionism towards many of my decisions (including the choice of materials and microstructure) also mirrors Hay’s practice, and the suggestions he did make were focused on the subtler performative and theatrical details, rather than the major choices fundamental to my interpretation. Thus, although the definition of roles was altered, the collaboration actually reinforced the boundaries of the roles of composer and performer, in contrast to many of the other collaborations I documented where these roles were fluid and dynamic.

Importantly, the score was a rewarding experience to interpret. The freedom to choose sounds and gestures allowed me, as a performer, a greater agency in creating the work in comparison to other documented collaborations even though I had no direct input into the creation of the score. The choice of notation guided me to create a sound world with relatively little work compared to if the same piece had been conventionally notated, which would have become extremely complicated on the page, extremely difficult and time-intensive to learn, and more difficult to achieve the same spontaneity of expression. This efficiency of creation, communication and interpretation of the notation confirmed Young’s assertions to me on the advantages of graphic notation. The creative stagnation that could have resulted from this efficiency was counterbalanced by injections of creative resistance, forming a body of

³¹ Creative resistance is explored in more detail in the conference paper: Sarah Callis, Neil Heyde, Zubin Kanga and Olivia Sham, “Creative Resistance: Towards a Performative Understanding of ‘Distributed Creativity’”, CMPCP Performance Studies Network, Second International Conference, University of Cambridge, 2013.

³² Brian Ferneyhough, *Brian Ferneyhough: Collected Writings*, edited by James Boros and Richard Toop, (Amsterdam: Harword Academic Publishers, 1995).

³³ Young was not the only composer who was interested in inducing this type of spontaneity. Michael Finnissy, Daniel Rojas and Alex Pozniak all used workshops to produce a goal of ‘not performing’ but approached this goal through different collaborative methods. For more details see: Kanga, “Inside the Collaborative Process”, 459-460.

work-specific performance practice, imparted by Young in the workshops, that was crucial to my interpretation of the score.³⁴

The use of graphic notation catalysed the use of collaborative strategies that are markedly different from those of many of the composers I have documented who use conventional staff notation.³⁵ Although many other composers I documented were, like Young, interested in facilitating a spontaneous and unrestrained performance of their work, their strategies relied mainly upon the use of metaphorical language in workshops, rather than the choice of notation. Indeed, I have documented 25 cases that featured work with intricate (and in some cases, complexist) uses of conventional staff practices, and in all these cases, the composers' encouragement to find creative interpretative approaches to their music was used to counter the constrictive effects of the notation on my playing, a reversal of the collaboration with Young who provided constrictive instructions to counter the freedoms of the notation.³⁶ In the few other cases I have documented that did involve partially graphic scores, the notation was used as an *aide memoire* for gestures created together in workshops, rather than sites of creative resistance, as was the case with Young's work.³⁷ Perhaps the closest collaborative approach to Young's that I documented was Michael Finnissy's, who in his work *Z/K*, notated certain passages as strings of pitches, beamed in cryptic patterns with no rhythm, dynamics, articulation, tempo or expressive markings, leaving these details for me to decide.³⁸ Although he transferred these compositional decisions to me, he provided suggestions for the interpretation of these passages in our workshops, explaining that they needed to function as seamless transitions between sections but simultaneously have a free and unpredictable nature. Thus Finnissy was able to create a notational strategy that worked symbiotically with his collaborative strategy, using creative resistance to turn the transfer of

³⁴ The creation and application of work-specific performance practice is explored in many of the cases I documented. For a summary of my observations on the range of usage and ramifications for future performances see: *Ibid.*, 457-458.

³⁵ For further examples of the effect of graphic notation on a variety of cases, see: *Ibid.*, 443.

³⁶ Among the many such collaborations are those with Elliott Gyger, Marcus Whale, Philip Jameson, David Gorton, Daniel Rojas, Anthony Moles and George Benjamin. In all these cases, notation created undesired resistances in my playing that needed to be counteracted with instructions from the composers in workshops. *Ibid.*, 457. These cases mirror several of those documented by Roche, "Dialogue and Collaboration in the Creation of New Works for Clarinet" and Östersjö, "Shut Up 'n' Play: Negotiating the Musical Work."

³⁷ A prime case of this type of graphic notation was found in my collaboration with Alex Pozniak on his work, *Interventions* (2010). Pozniak eventually found the graphic notation was not providing him with the control he desired and he removed most of it from the revised version of the work. This demonstrated that the use of the original graphic notation was the product of convenience (and limitations of time) rather than strategy, a view confirmed by Pozniak. See Kanga, "Inside the Collaborative Process", 214-216. See also Alex Pozniak, *Interventions* for solo piano, Australian Music Centre, 2010.

³⁸ Kanga "Inside the Collaborative Process", 91-96. See also: Michael Finnissy, *Z/K*, self-published, 2012.

compositional responsibility into a more complex game.³⁹ The similarities of my collaborations with Finnissey and Young – the absence of important musical parameters from the notation, the transfer of compositional responsibility and the use of workshops to resist any easy solution to the challenge – show that my collaboration with Young is just an extreme case of an approach to collaboration and notation open to composers working in a variety of styles and with a variety of notational approaches.

Although Young’s use of graphic notation correlates with an unconventional set of collaborative strategies, many more cases, involving other instrumental combinations and other performers, will be required before any general findings can be made about the effects of graphic notation on collaboration. However, the case does demonstrate a successful approach to collaboration around graphic notation that is proactive rather than reactive. Young’s collaborative strategies were tailored to his notation to activate creative resistance in my interpretation, confounding my natural and obvious responses to the score, allowing the graphic score to retain its creative potency with successive performances. He enacted these strategies with efficiency and clarity, and with a notable absence of unproductive conflict.⁴⁰ So although Young’s approach may not be an archetype (and indeed may well be atypical) it is a model that, in my opinion, deserves to be emulated.

By selecting an extremely unconventional mode of notation, Young exaggerated the agency of the performer that is required in the creation of all new works, regardless of notation, and in doing so raises questions about precision of notation and the performer’s range of interpretative possibilities in relation to even traditionally notated scores. As he wrote in his program note:

The notation can convey great precision, nuance and complexity whilst remaining immediate, fresh and spontaneous. This paradoxical quality lends the performer some great freedoms all within very strict parameters. And as with all music scores, even when the composer hands it over to the performer, it is still not music yet.⁴¹

³⁹ This was explored further in: Zubin Kanga: “Filling in the Gaps: Notational Porosity as Collaborative Strategy in Michael Finnissey’s *Z/K*”, (Conference paper, *The Limits of Control*, International Conference at the Orpheus Institute, Ghent, Belgium, 2014). See also: Kanga, “Inside the Collaborative Process”, 454-455.

⁴⁰ Although conflict can play an important part in the collaborative process when task-oriented, it can be highly destructive to the project when relationship-oriented. Young’s avoidance of any significant conflict is notable as it was found in 65% of all documented cases. Kanga, “Inside the Collaborative Process”, 330-332, 454.

⁴¹ David Young: Program notes for *Not Music Yet* for solo piano.

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