

Collaboration as the Initial Stage of Artistic Group-Work:

The collaborative stage of co-creation between music composers and other artists

by

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ABSTRACT

There are as many different approaches to artistic collaboration theory as there are authors who have created them. This paper postulates that collaboration is a stage of the artistic co-creative group-work process. Theories of collaboration were examined to isolate verbiage used in various attempted definitions of artistic collaboration. Two theories were selected to serve as a joint model for the creation and maintenance of a collaboration stage during the artistic co-creative group-work process including a derived series of conditions required for a co-creative initial stage to qualify as collaboration. Those conditions were then applied to five collaborative situations to determine if each situation had established a collaboration stage, how that establishment occurred, if that collaborative atmosphere was maintained over the life of the co-creative process, how the presentational outcome of the group-work was affected by the presence or lack of a collaboration stage, and finally this collaborator's general reactions to the process.

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Chapter 1: DEFINITIONS OF COLLABORATION

Enter a long, wooded room whose walls are peppered in paintings, tapestries, poetry, and placards. A humming is coming from somewhere. You move further in. On the far side of the gallery, stuffed deeply into a corner, sits an uncouth machine bursting with wires and extension cords. It looks terribly out of place amidst the vibrancy of the visual art. You walk closer; the humming gets louder in volume and higher in pitch. Startled, you stumble backward. The sound changes again, becomes more complex as an unsuspecting collaborator enters your performance. Another patron of the gallery stumbles into range of the thing just as you did. A half glance occurs between the two of you along with an uncomfortable smile. However, somehow in that moment, you connect with this unwitting accomplice and know they are thinking the same thing you are. You move forward again—louder—and back—quiet. To the side and back, the sound changes and changes again. They do the same a few feet away. You half-dance with your collaborator to create a sine wave symphony in the corner of a tiny gallery.

It only lasts 10-20 seconds before you both laugh awkwardly and move on. The humming continues and the next collaborators take the stage.

An engineer and sound designer watch silently gleeful from behind a storage door.¹

¹ Personal recollection, March 2016, Grand Valley State University Art Gallery

In nearly every discipline of art, business, medicine, technology, etc., professionals of their respective industries agree that group-work toward a common goal promotes a cooperative atmosphere, produces unforeseen outcomes with the benefit of multiple perspectives, and broadens participants' understanding of group and personal goals through discussion. Such group-work is often referred to as collaboration. The value of group-work and the novel methods, ideas, and solutions can be seen in reflections on the benefits of group-work across multiple disciplines. Though the disciplines may be different, the process of the group-work tends to have similarly positive outcomes. In medical research, "Art-science collaborations illuminate methods or procedures used in various disciplines that could enhance medical practice."² In behavioral science, "Collaboration shows promise for solving organizational and societal problems..."³ Group-work encourages teamwork, leads to invention, and increases efficiency. There is a collective societal consensus that group-work is effective and should be sought out. However, there is a great deal of ambiguity over how to define different types of group-work. A better understanding of how and why group-work is constructed and the process by which it then unfolds can lead to a better execution of group-work during the working process and in the achievement of the work's outcome.

One of the leading survey studies that has sparked an inventive research tree about collaboration was published by Barbara Gray and Donna J. Wood in 1991. At the opening of the article, the researchers establish their definition of collaboration group-work as published by Gray in an article two years previously: "...a process through which parties

² Caroline Wellbery, "Art-science Collaborations—Avenues toward Medical Innovation," *The New England Journal of Medicine* 373, no. 26 (2015): 2496.

³ Donna J. Wood and Barbara Gray, "Toward a Comprehensive Theory of Collaboration," *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 27, no. 1 (June 1991): 139.

who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible.” Wood and Gray postulate a series of assumptions in this definition that, over the course of their theory review, they hoped to assemble into a cohesive set of parameters that define collaboration. First, they assumed that collaboration is a process; an idea that becomes essential in developing later definitions. Second, there is an assumption that the purpose of collaboration is to solve a problem. Third, that the parties of the collaboration will explore solutions through the lens of different backgrounds, experience, and areas of expertise. Finally, Wood and Gray assume that the outcome of a collaboration will produce an eventuality that no member could have envisioned alone.

Over the course of the study, Wood and Gray conducted an in-depth review of nine theories that explore collaboration and, at the end of their study, came to this conclusion:

Based on these cases, none of the theories offers a comprehensive model of collaboration. Some theories...identify specific preconditions for collaboration and use these to predict outcomes, without regard to what might transpire during the life of the collaboration. For other theories...the paramount concerns are the process of collaboration and the ongoing relationships among the stakeholders and their environment. Furthermore, different theories focus on different kinds of outcomes, whereas a comprehensive theory should be able to account for them all.⁴

Wood and Gray’s intended purpose of piecing together a compressive theory of collaboration did not unfold as the authors had wished. They discovered that the parameters that constitute a collaborative act may be too broad with too many circumstantial possibilities to create an encompassing definition that fits all collaborative circumstances.

I would argue that Wood and Gray came to this conclusion in part because the tendency of

⁴ Ibid, 155.

research about collaboration is to apply the ideas of collaboration to the entire creative group-work process—collaboration as its own encompassing process. My postulation is that collaboration is a stage (or stages) of the group-work process that occurs during many types of group-work—collaboration is a part, not the whole.

Given the current societal and educational trends of practicing, encouraging, and teaching the art of collaboration, scholars in multiple disciplines have attempted to isolate what about this process is unique and to put language to its inherently abstract nature. In an article exploring the theoretical framework of collaboration, Indiana University researchers came to this broad conclusion about the definition, or lack thereof, of collaboration:

Interorganizational collaboration is a term used by scholars and practitioners to describe a process that can emerge as organizations interact with one another to create new organizational and social structures.

Collaboration is emerging as a distinct focus of scholarly research. Although the literature is vast, multidisciplinary, and rich with case research, it also lacks coherence across disciplines. A wide range of theoretical perspectives results in an equally wide variety of definitions and understandings of the meaning of collaboration. Although multiple conceptualizations of collaboration add richness to the research, they often impede its rigor and cumulativeness. To put it simply, lack of consensus among scholars on the meaning of collaboration makes it difficult to compare findings across studies and to know whether what is measured is really collaboration.⁵

The researchers, in their final statement of the above quotation, conclude that there are instances classified as collaboration that may not actually be collaboration. Defining collaboration is like defining love. It is a small term that encompasses a vast swath of situations, disciplines, and peoples.

⁵ Ann Marie Thomson, James L. Perry, Theodore K. Miller, “Conceptualizing and Measuring Collaboration,” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 19, no. 1 (2009): 23-24.

The lack of an agreed upon, quantifiably measurable model to plainly outline how and why collaboration occurs forces scholars to rely on case studies and qualitative data that does not reveal enough correlation to construct a reliable model that can be proven in practice beyond a reasonable doubt. On an instinctual level, those who engage in collaboration *know* what collaboration is, but even those often engaged in collaboration and who study collaboration are ill-equipped to specifically define a pre-determined set of circumstances and processes that fosters successful collaboration other than those of individualized definitions based on personal experience. In short, collaboration is easy to recognize but difficult to define.

One of the ways to narrow a definition of collaboration can be to explore it within a focused lens of a specific type of group-work. In this chapter, I explore a series of definitions of artistic collaboration by professionals from different creative genres. This exploration is in search of similarities across the professionals' definitions that might be beneficial in constructing a definition of group-work as it applies to the creative arts.

Definitions of Collaboration

People engage in creative group-work for many reasons. A group of university students may have an idea for a musical. Musicians in countries around the world may want to lend their collective talents to creating a remix album. A group of educators may be directed by their administration to create a new curriculum. In order to begin creative group-work in the arts, an artist or artists have an individual or collective idea that they cannot (or do not wish to) bring to fruition without the contribution of other creative

individuals. In a text specifically devoted to collaborative motivations and tendencies in many fields, author Vera John-Steiner notes these motivations for creative group-work:

Some of the motivational sources for collaboration include shared, passionate engagement with knowledge in dyads and groups devoted to groundbreaking endeavors...It also contributes to human plasticity, an opportunity for growth through mutual appropriation of complementary skills, attitudes, working methods, and beliefs.⁶

In my experience with creative group-work, when the co-creative experience is successful, there is a certain satisfaction in creating with other artists that differs from the satisfaction of creating alone. In reference to John-Steiner's quote, there is a sense of creating something groundbreaking—a new creation as product of a process consisting of elements and outcomes outside of my traditional creative pattern. There indeed is a sense of growth in experiencing one's creations from the perspective of another artist. Often, artists experience their work through the response of an audience. Working instead with another artist allows for the process of absorption, reinterpretation, and reactive creation that is satisfying beyond a general audience reaction that tends to be "like" or "dislike." In creative group-work, I have had the pleasure to experience my art leading to the creation of a new and separate art by someone who took the time to internalize and respond to my work with their own time and talents while I in turn did the same with their creative output.

In composer Alessandro Capriani's 2004 *Organized Sound* article, he discusses collaboration between composers. Capriani never explicitly defines collaboration, but he states, "Collaboration operations are usually between people who divide tasks between themselves."⁷ Similarly to other definitions, Capriani draws attention to the relationship

⁶ Vera John-Steiner, *Creative Collaboration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), "Introduction," Kindle ed.

⁷ Alessandro Cipriani, "Collective Composition: The Case of Edison Studio," *Organized Sound* 9, (2004): 269.

component of collaboration—it takes place “between people.” Members of creative group-work must be able to verbally and non-verbally communicate with other creators in the now. Secondly, Capriani requires that collaboration include a division of labor. As will be discussed in chapter 2, there are other categories of group-work that also include a division of labor. For the purposes of my definition of collaboration (in that it is a stage of group-work), Capriani’s definition better fits later stages of the group-work rather than the collaboration stage. Capriani’s definition is noticeably missing the ‘product creation’ element determined by Wood and Gray. No purpose is stated for the collaboration—it simply is. This implication leads me to believe that the collaboration stage does not necessarily have to produce a final work, rather a collaboration stage may exist simply for the purposes of discussing how hypothetical joint creative works may be pursued. However, for the purposes of practicality and in acknowledgement that most artists do engage in group-work for the purpose of a joint creation, I tend to believe that Capriani’s implication of the presence of a creative product lives within his description, so that omission need not be applied to these definitions.

Fabrice Fitch and Neil Hyde never define their personal or a general definition of collaboration in their 2007 *Twentieth-Century Music* article, though the purpose of the article is to outline the nature of collaboration between composers and performers. Fitch and Hyde provide periodic statements from which their beliefs about the definition of collaboration can be inferred. For example, “A successful collaboration will not attempt to defuse the difficulties of the situation, which are in any case, unavoidable, but will harness its provocative and questioning aspects.”⁸ In this statement, the authors assume that

⁸ Fabrice J. Fitch and Neil Heyde, “‘Recercar’: The Collaborative Process as Invention.” *Twentieth-Century Music* 4, no. 1 (2007): 73.

collaborations present difficulties that can lead to stimulating situations. This portion of their definition paints collaboration as presenting a problem that needs to be solved or a question that needs to be answered. During the discussions of hopefully collaborating artists, one could posit that the execution of reaching whatever goal has been established may fall under the category as a problem that needs solution or question that needs answering.

Fitch and Hyde's second hint states that, "...the collaborative process is very difficult to present because the evolution of ideas was fundamentally non-linear."⁹ This statement occurs during a discussion between how composers and performers work together; often the process is ongoing and not all collaborative acts or discussions take place in order of how their outcomes appear in the final piece. Here, the authors emphasize the importance of discussion in a collaborative act. Also, they note the generation of unprompted ideas and acknowledge the messiness of that process, referred to by them as "non-linear." There may be multiple collaborative acts over the course of a group-work. Each act may not occur in a linear succession—discussion about the beginning of a work may occur at the end of a collaborative act and vice versa. A certain amount of adaptability is needed to compensate and be accepting of what may be a clustered-like process.

Finally, Fitch and Hyde's last point is that, "...the collaborative process is not an end in itself..."¹⁰ Here, Fitch and Hyde infer to the creation of a product through the act of group-work. Collaboration has a purpose. In the arts, often that purpose is the creation of a new piece of art. There are enlightening aspects to Fitch and Hyde's definition in highlighting possible parts of a collaborative act. These acts occur specifically between the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid, 74.

artists through discussion that may lead to barriers that can inhibit the progression of the collaborative act. In later chapters I define parameters needed for the execution of an effective collaboration stage, and the ability to successfully diffuse unforeseen difficulties that may arise in the project or between group members is vital for the continuation of the collaboration stage.

Another common strategy to describe and define collaboration is to liken it to a marriage. The assumption may be that since collaborators are entering into a relationship, therefore some of the expectations and solutions to problems may mirror that of a personal relationship. In an exploration of collaboration between choreographer/dancers and composers, author Van Steifel alludes to this common metaphor for collaboration.

However, she goes on to say:

The ‘marriage’ metaphor for music and dance really only goes so far. It may say much more about the emotional experience of the collaboration on an interpersonal level than about any one artistic result or about the underlying generic conventions of both music and dance that influence all collaborative endeavors. The organizational forces shaping the collaboration, the history and nature of communication between the art forms can at times, make the music and dance collaboration resemble less a ‘marriage,’ than a ‘trial reconciliation.’¹¹

It seems Steifel and those she interviewed may have had unpleasant collaborative experiences. She mentions that the metaphor of a marriage alludes to the emotional journey of a collaboration. One of the unusual points in this definition is the more in-depth look at the nature of the relationship between collaborators, which it cannot be denied is a crucial foundation of any collaboration. At a point along the collaborative path of this

¹¹ Van Steifel, “A Study of the Choreographer/Composer Collaboration,” Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies, Working Papers, 3.

choreographer/dancer and her collaborating composer, one of the structural foundations supporting their joint effort likely collapsed. I will hypothesize why such collaborative structures dissipate in a later chapter.

In analyzing definitions, some common threads can be seen. These include:

- 1) Collaborations occur between people (that may or may not come from different backgrounds, specialties, and experiences)
- 2) The purpose of collaboration is to create something or solve a problem
- 3) Collaboration is a process
- 4) Successful collaboration requires the collaborators to contribute to the collaboration (in equal or unequal quantities)
- 5) Collaborators work together in a collaborative relationship

Each of the definitions obviously includes particulars but these are the broad points to be interpreted from them. We can see that these points can be applied to any number of situations. It is no small wonder that those who are attempting to define this term become lost in its breadth when applying it to an overarching joint creative process.

Artistic group-work has the potential to lead to the creation of innovative works that have the benefit of contribution from multiple creative perspectives, provide artists insight about their own creative process, and encourage artistic growth through sharing creative processes with another creator. There are so many benefits, therefore, why should processes of creative group-work be studied further? No need to fix what is not broken. The unfortunate fact is that not all group-work toward a mutual creative goal is successful. For various reasons, the group-work may break down, the mutual creation never come to fruition, or the alliance of creators leads to interpersonal clashes that cause group members

to withdraw from the work. As a strong advocate of creative group-work, my goal is to establish that collaboration is a stage of creative group-work. The better a group's understanding of the parameters of the collaboration stage, the better the group can co-create. Also, it is my hope that if those parameters are effective in establishing a successful collaborative stage, that the application of those parameters to future collaboration stages may serve to prevent creative group-work from being unsuccessful. There are times that this process just does not work and it is my goal to understand why—"...collaboration represents an ideal to which we aspire but sometimes fall short of achieving."¹²

¹² Thomson, et al, 29.

Chapter 2: CONSULTATION vs. COOPERATION vs. COLLABORATION

In a long, rectangular room, a series of slowly morphing and shifting bright spheres of all colors drifted languidly over the walls, ceiling, and floor. I sat in the middle of them; I'm not sure how long. I became part of the installation and it became part of me. Like floating in a cloud of birthing stars or gliding through a jellyfish forest—dangerous and alluring. As I looked at the lights over and over again, I heard far distant music. Pulsing and sustains and consonance and dissonance.

In the second room of the installation, there was no light. The only illumination in the room came from a bold yellow text slowly unfolding across a screen. The particular shade of yellow reflected strangely on the faces of the patrons, causing them to freeze...or perhaps it was effect of the text itself. Phrases unfolded and faded one by one—defend the perimeter/cars stopped along the road/felt I couldn't move/made me want to vomit. The stark contrast of the soft, floating lights with this text helped me see what I was meant to see.

I was sad when time came to leave the room.¹³

Three years later...

“I've been thinking about Sightings for the last few years now. If it is alright with you...I would like to create a musical component to add to the project.”

“Exciting!...I think it would be ideal to get a chance to work with you in a very focused way, so that it may be more of an interconnected collaboration.”¹⁴

¹³ Personal recollection, March 2016.

¹⁴ Ashlee Busch and Nayda Collazo-Llorens, Email Communication, “Proposal,” September 2019.

What some refer to as collaboration might actually be more specifically defined as consultation or cooperation rather than collaboration. In order to distinguish between these three types of group-work, let us consider the similarities and differences between consultation, cooperation, and collaboration.

Composer/performer-turned-music researcher Alan Taylor¹⁵ has explored joint artistic work of many types in his publications. Taylor provides this definition of cooperation:

I suggest that consultative and co-operative relationships are common forms of working together in the arts, and may be the most common. I also suggest that co-operative relationships may take two different forms:

(1) Where there is an agreed framework or scenario, perhaps produced collaboratively, and then the partners make their contributions separately. I will call this pre-planned co-operation.

(2) Where the partners work together in making their separate contributions, sharing decisions on the contributions as they develop. I will call inter-active co-operation.¹⁶

By Taylor's first definition of cooperation, when artists undertake a project together, the initial stages of discussion may be categorized as collaboration. However, as the process unfolds, the group-work is performed separately and compiled together once the respective parts are complete. The second distinction between cooperation and collaboration is the shared decision-making process. Taylor creates a subcategory for this shared decision-making process—interactive co-operation. Group choices are made throughout the life of the project rather than just at the outset. We will lump together these two types of

¹⁵ "Research and Biography," Alan Taylor Website, <http://at.orpheusweb.co.uk>.

¹⁶ Alan Taylor, "'Collaboration' in Contemporary Music: A Theoretical View," *Contemporary Music Review* 35, no. 6 (2016): 569.

cooperation for our purposes and call both pre-planned co-operation and interactive co-operation simply cooperation.

Consultation is closely related to cooperation with a slight variant. The biggest difference between Taylor's definitions of cooperation and consultation lies in a hierarchical system. He describes consultant group-work as, "The participants contribute to the same task or tasks. One or more people decide on the contributions."¹⁷ When a hierarchy is present, not all contributors to the group-work have a say in what is actually contributed, how their contributions will be considered, or what the final assemblage of the product may be. As an example, Taylor relays this story:

In my own work, I have found myself in situations in which I was consulting others, as a composer working with musical performers. While notational decisions were left to me, I did not always feel entirely free to take decisions on the suggestions made by performers since to reject them would have seemed like consulting in bad faith.¹⁸

In this story, Taylor echoes other definitions of collaboration as needing the participating and input of other members, but there is a contradiction in that this situation implies a hierarchy: Taylor was in control of the final notation. That hierarchy prevents this experience from being a collaboration or cooperation. Therefore, this delineation provides another insight into the list of aspects we may add to a description of collaboration:

Collaborators are willing, able, and safe to contribute opinions, ideas, and judgements as well as be an equal advocate for how much of their own work is contributed to the collaboration in good faith.

¹⁷ Ibid, 570.

¹⁸ Ibid.

A level playing field separates consultation from cooperation. It is, therefore, implied that cooperation is also a group-work that exists with all contributors on equal footing in the decision-making process.

Cooperation applies to a group with no hierarchy making joint decisions about the co-creation, retreating to their corners to complete their piece of the puzzle, and then the group comes together to join all contributors' parts together to complete the creation. Cooperation will likely begin with a collaboration stage where participants discuss ideas and then decide how to act upon them. Much 'collaboration' is actually cooperation that begins with a collaborative step—that point in the process where creators discuss together, on a level playing field, their ideas about how to create together and what will be created together¹⁹. In the words of Pierre Dillenbourg regarding collaborative learning, “In cooperation, partners spilt the word, solve sub-tasks individually and then assemble the partial results into the final output. In collaboration, partners do the work ‘together.’”²⁰ It is rare, however, that within the typical framework of group-work there is a constant togetherness with all collaborators present for every stage of creation.

Consultation is similar to cooperation but in consultation there are parties in charge of the decision-making process. Also, consultation may venture outside the group-work members; someone may contribute an idea or offer an opinion without being part of the group-work. Since consultation requires a hierarchy, it cannot be a collaboration. These subtleties in the nature of group-work are where the lines between each of these types of group-work become blurry.

¹⁹ Collaboration stages may occur multiple times over the course of a creative group-work.

²⁰ Pierre Dillenbourg, “What do you mean by collaborative learning?,” *Collaborative-learning: Cognitive and Computational Approaches*, (Oxford: Elsevier, 1999), 8.

Without clear distinctions about how group-work will proceed, members of the group-work may misunderstand how the process will unfold. In this statement about collaboration research, Taylor focuses on the danger of collaborators entering in to a process that may not be fully understood:

I will argue that the term ‘collaboration’ is used indiscriminately to describe a great variety of different working relationships, and that this wide usage can act as an impediment to the better understanding of the nature of the relationships which composers develop.²¹

Under this assumption, and seemingly supported by a series of poor ‘collaborative’ experiences, many may believe they are entering into a collaborative contract when instead they may be entering into a cooperation or consultation. In the next section, I will analyze several group-work examples to determine, based on the recounting only, if these occurrences may be classified as cooperations or consultations, and if these group-works included collaborative acts to examine the application of these descriptions to real events.

Examples

1) From Taylor:

Turning to my own practice, the work on a piece for a flute, cello and piano group, the Marsyas Trio, began with attending a rehearsal of theirs, and asking them for suggestions. They put forward several. I developed a way of combining three of these and wrote a short piece. On playing this through, they began to invent a scenario for the action which the music might be said to represent, and suggested that it felt like a prelude. I wrote a contrasting middle section, drawing on their reactions to the draft they had played, and followed it by a return to the opening material. The process of conceptualising the piece was therefore one of suggestions being put to me, my accepting or responding to them, and then my finding a way of expressing them in notation.

We carried out the process of notation, workshopping the draft, revisions to the notation, and then interpretation and

²¹ Taylor, 564.

performance... We made our separate contributions to create a piece of music within a concept which we had developed between us through an iterative process, with ideas put forward and responded to.²²

In Taylor's article, he describes this circumstance as cooperation, which is likely based on the level of input he felt was contributed from the ensemble. However, I would argue that this is an instance of consultation. The product created from the group-work was the piece of music. Even though the Marsyas Trio provided insight and suggestions regarding the work, it was always decided by Taylor how those suggestions were specifically integrated into the piece. He may have felt pressured into some of those decisions by the delicate interpersonal relationships that existed between him and the ensemble, but even having the authority for that dilemma is evidence that this was a consultation.

Such a consultation process is typical and, indeed, encouraged for composers. It is widely encouraged (as well as an ingrained pedagogical strategy) for composers to confer with the performers for whom they are composing to learn the performer's tastes, capabilities, specificities regarding the commission, etc. In his own article, Taylor makes the argument that the composer/performer relationship can be collaborative but, in his own words, "...a composer may seek a performer's comments on a draft piece of music, and may be deciding whether to accept them or not—consultative working."²³ Though it is certainly possible for composer/performer group-work to be cooperative or collaborative, the majority of the composer/performer relationship is consultative. However kindly and well the group works together, the composer tends to have the final decision in what does or does not appear in the completed piece.

²² Taylor, 574.

²³ Ibid, 569.

2) In an interview with *World Literature Today*, former chair of the National Endowment for the Arts and highly decorated poet Dana Gioia²⁴ discusses collaborating with composer Alva Henderson for the creation of the opera *Nosferatu*:

Alva and I work very well together. It took us a while to agree on an operatic subject. He had some good ideas, but they weren't right for me. I needed a subject I could inhabit imaginatively in order to produce a text that was truly poetic and not simply workmanlike. Once we settled on *Nosferatu*, which was based, of course, on F. W. Murnau's 1922 silent film, I prepared a complete scenario—a detailed scene-by-scene prose summary that also proposed the various arias, duets, and ensembles. Alva helped focus this summary, and then the hard part began—writing the verse. I wanted to create a libretto that could stand independently as a poetic text but would work equally well with music. I drafted the libretto out of sequence. When inspiration came for an aria, I wrote it as a poem and then built the scene around it. I tended to send Alva texts half a scene at a time—a key aria or duet and the text leading up to it. Curiously, this odd system worked perfectly for his creative process since he likes to compose the central musical ideas of a scene and then develop the entire scene.²⁵

Note the process that Gioia describes—Gioia would create a text and send it to the composer (Henderson) who would then create the music. This group-work combines something of cooperative and consultative approach. However, Gioia's words in particular here—"He had some good ideas, but they weren't right for me," indicate the possible presence of a hierarchy with final decisions on the group work made by Gioia. This would not qualify as consultative because Henderson applied his expertise in the originally-composed music. Gioia did not write the music himself and then confer with Henderson. The implied presence of a hierarchy nudges the definition of this group-work toward cooperation or consultation. However, there were contributions from different members

²⁴ Michelle Johnson and Dana Gioia, "Poetic Collaboration: A Conversation with Dana Gioia," *World Literature Today* 85, no. 5 (2011): 26-35.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

with different areas of expertise, which leads me to categorize this group-work as a cooperation. Without more information about the progression of the group-work, it is possible that collaboration stages occurred as the group-work continued or even that the nature of the group-work changed over time. This may be an instance of the evolving nature of group-work—there need not be only one category.

3) An ingenious group-work opportunity available at certain universities around the world is called the Atelier program. This program pairs artists (and sometimes non-artists) from different disciplines in the creation of a new piece of collaborative art. One such iteration of that program exists at the Princeton University Lewis Center for the Arts. As described by Princeton’s promotional online materials:

The Princeton Atelier is a unique academic program that brings together professional artists from different disciplines to create new work in the context of a semester-long course. A painter might team with a composer, a choreographer might join with an electrical engineer, a company of theater artists might engage with environmental scientists, or a poet might connect with a videographer. Princeton students have an unrivaled opportunity to be directly involved in these collaborations...²⁶

However, it is not only the students who are performing the group-work—the professionals and faculty are as well. Therefore, this group-work is highly complex as multiple levels of group-work exist simultaneously. Bill Banfield, acclaimed composer and professor at the Berklee College of Music, has participated in this program and described, in his opinion, some of the most successful group-work moments during a 2005 interview:

I think the really productive sessions were when we and the students prepared our work together. Yusef [Komunyakaa] would hear their ideas and he would talk about what he was doing with his piece. We

²⁶ “Atelier,” Princeton University Lewis Center for the Arts, accessed December 17, 2020, <https://arts.princeton.edu/academics/atelier/>.

all would talk about it. This gave me a sense of how Yusef worked, as far as his students were concerned. It was really good for me to sit down at Princeton and have a chance to see him working with student poets, and working with the student composers—all of us working together. Those were very...rich exchanges.²⁷

Though how much of this group-work was truly collaborative? There are at least two groups present. First is the group of the professional composer (Banfield) and professional poet (Komunyakaa). In observing Komunyakaa teaching his Princeton students about group-work, Banfield studied Komunyakaa's ideologies about group-work which better enabled Banfield to prepare himself and his creative process for working with Komunyakaa. However, Banfield describes the session in which he observed Komunyakaa's teaching his students as 'collaboration' because he was in the room with the students and ideas were being exchanged verbally.

Later in the interview, Banfield provided more insight as to the true nature of the group-work: "The final project...featured all of the other collaborations. See, the students modeled themselves after us. We were a composer and librettist..."²⁸ One of the most effective ways to teach good group-work habits is to model them, so Komunyakaa was effectively instructing his students, but I would argue that the collaboration here (if one existed) was only present between Komunyakaa and Banfield, and possibly between some of the students with each other. The inherent nature of Komunyakaa as an authority figure with power over the students places an inescapable hierarchy into the situation that prevents students from being true collaborators and able to voice their opinions without reservation. No matter how brave or willing to disagree a student may be, that hierarchy by nature of

²⁷ Michael Collins and Bill Banfield, "On the Phone with Composer Bill Banfield: An Interview," *Callaloo* 28, no. 3 (2005): 641.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

the circumstances would never truly dissipate. This is again a mix of consultation and cooperation that may involve elements of collaboration at certain stages. I would argue this example leans more toward cooperation with an element of consultation due to the group working together throughout the process²⁹ rather than disbanding and creating from separate corners. It seems a dialogue was maintained that introduces elements of collaboration, but not true collaboration from start to finish.

4) Composer John Mackey and choreographer/dancer Robert Battle:

[John] Mackey's first collaboration with choreographer Robert Battle was through a commission by the choreographer himself. In May of 1998, Mackey's piece *Damn*, for amplified clarinet and four percussionists, was premiered at the Pace Downtown Theater in New York. Mackey says the following about the work:

"Robert's request was for a short, dark, rhythmic, angry piece, and this was the result. It was great fun to write, although I failed to consider that whatever rhythms I wrote would have to be learned not only by the musicians, but also by the dancer."³⁰

This recounting leads me to believe that Mackey and Battle entered into this group-work without having established between each other what kind of group-work would be taking place. It appears that Mackey believed the group-work was cooperative in that he would create his portion of the work and send it to Battle and then Battle would create his portion of the work, effectively taking over the creative process. Without further insight into their process, it is impossible to determine specifics, but this quote provides interesting insight.

²⁹ This is conjecture based on my interpretation of the interview.

³⁰ John Mackey, "OstiMusic.com: The Website of Composer John Mackey," <http://ostimusic.com> (accessed on 14 September 2006) Qtd. in Rebecca L. Phillips, "John Mackey: the composer, his compositional style and a conductor's analysis of Redline Tango and Turbine," *LSU Doctoral Dissertations*, (2007): 2749.

First, the importance of communication must be underlined. Words like “short, dark, rhythmic, angry” may imply different artistic choices across different disciplines. It would be vital in a group-work like this for all parties to discuss at length what these descriptors mean in relation to their own art. If a choreographer were to ask me for something dark, as a composer that speaks of timbre to me—what combinations of sound imply a dark timbre landscape. Angry might imply dissonance or it might simply imply volume. Such descriptor words are an effective introduction to a cross-disciplinary discussion of the overall objective for the group-work, but they must be discussed in field-related specifics in order to prevent possible interdisciplinary misunderstanding³¹.

5) Soundpainting by Walter Thompson:

Soundpainting is the universal multidisciplinary live composing sign language for musicians, actors, dancers, and visual Artists. Presently (2021) the language comprises more than 1500 gestures that are signed by the Soundpainter (composer) to indicate the type of material desired of the performers. The creation of the composition is realized, by the Soundpainter, through the parameters of each set of signed gestures. The Soundpainting language was created by Walter Thompson in Woodstock, New York in 1974.

The Soundpainter (the composer) standing in front (usually) of the group communicates a series of signs using hand and body gestures indicating specific and/or aleatoric material to be performed by the group. The Soundpainter develops the responses of the performers, molding and shaping them into the composition then signs another series of gestures, a phrase, and continues in this process of composing the piece.³²

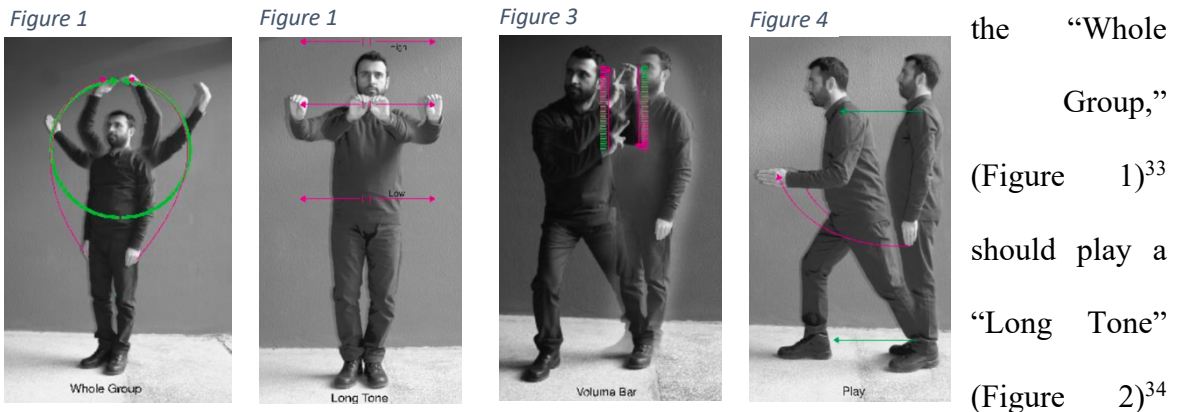
Soundpainting is a relatively new system of organized improvisation designed to explore the depths of how effectively an ensemble can create organized, unprepared sound in a

³¹ The concept of interdisciplinary understanding is explored in depth in a later chapter.

³² “Soundpainting,” <http://www.soundpainting.com>.

communicative manner. To create a Soundpainting, both the conductor and ensemble must be able to utilize Thompson's extensive visual language of Soundpainting communicatively—all gestures must be understood quickly in order to propel the act of a Soundpainting forward. The leader (Soundpainter) provides the ensemble with gestures designed to act as suggestions for the creation of sound. Those gestures range from very loose (the gesture to simply "Go" or start playing) to somewhat specific (the gesture to improvise a musical idea in the style of a traditional March).

Though the website refers to a Soundpainter as the composer of a work, I would argue that the role of the Soundpainter and the ensemble are more complex than that. The Soundpainter is signaling gestures to the group, and each signal is bound within a performative category (a group of gestures each for volume, pitch, motion, style, etc.). However, each ensemble member has tremendous freedom in shaping what the sound is within that category. For example, if the Soundpainter performs the gesture indicating that



roughly in the gestured range at a low "Volume" (Figure 3)³⁵, and then the "Go," (Figure

³³ Mahir Yerlikaya and Sonat Coskuner, "Analysis of Soundpainting Sign Language Visuals," Arts and Music in Cultural Discourse, Proceedings of the 6th International Scientific and Practical Conference, 2016.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

4)³⁶ gesture indicating to start playing. The Soundpainter acts as a guide, but the ensemble members still have the freedom to choose what pitch, what timbre, what ‘long’ means in the moment, and what ‘soft’ means in that moment. There is very little prediction from the Soundpainter about what will happen other than a general set of parameters³⁷. The art of Soundpainting is in the Soundpainter and ensemble engaging in a provocative dialogue that (with experienced Soundpainters and performers) will result in an interesting musical landscape over the course of the structured improvisation.

I would argue that though the improvisation is organized by the Soundpainter, this is an example of collaboration. In allowing the performers so much freedom, the Soundpainter has relinquished much control over the final product and can only contribute a contextual suggestion that the ensemble then responds to with a musical idea. A Soundpainting is very much a discussion rather than a lecture: “In Soundpainting, the separation of conductor from performer (a necessary element in orthodox conducting) dissolves into a collaborative experience of musicking.”³⁸ Just because the Soundpainter is standing in front of the ensemble does not mean they are not a collaborator. In this case, the collaborators are all in one room (physical or digital) contributing to the final creation together in real time utilizing an agreed-upon set of structures with no one individual making dictatorial decisions.

Collaboration is a necessary stage along the path toward a successful execution of group-work. This stage often occurs at the very beginning of a creative group-work process

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Experienced Soundpainting ensembles may follow a series of predictable patterns that are not quite as unpredictable as what is described here.

³⁸ Marc Duby, “Soundpainting as a System for the Collaborative Creation of Music in Performance,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Pretoria, 2007), 1-20.

and may be repeated as the group-work unfolds. These recountings also imply that the nature of a group-work may evolve over time into a different type of group-work. For the remainder of this paper, I will focus particularly on what I am calling the collaborative stage. Rather than consider cooperation, consultation, and collaboration as three different processes, I would argue that each of these acts is instead part of the larger process of co-creative group work and each stage should be understood in detail. Most of the parameters through which a group-work unfolds are established in the collaboration stage. The more effective that stage, the more successful the group-work can be.

Chapter 3: THE INITIAL STAGE OF GROUP-WORK AS COLLABORATION

“What should it be about?”

“You know...I really don’t know. Let’s try this—I’m gonna just start dancing with the lyre in kinda how I’m feeling and you do the same on the piano. What do you think?”

“I’m no pianist but I’ll give it a try.”

She positioned herself at the edge of the massive blue mat while I scooted around the piano bench to find a comfortable spot. Toes barely touching the side of the mat, she suddenly straightened and angled her head. A moment before she had been a college student with dark circles under her eyes and wisps of her long brown hair poking out of a messy ponytail. But at that moment she became a bird ready to take flight, poised and graceful and powerful. I didn’t look once at the piano keys—I watched her. A single note under my thumb, again, then again, pulsing, repeating—everything in time with her feet and hands and knees. Then she took to the air. She glided and spun elegantly like quick-moving smoke. I plunked out something sometimes lonely, sometimes harsh, sometimes sweetly sad, but always in rhythm with her. I wanted to cry and I didn’t know why. I knew what she was dancing about. I don’t know how I knew. In a single moment stretched over 5 minutes, we both knew.

She came to a small, sudden stop. Silence. No one smiled.

“What were you dancing about?”

She closed her eyes. “My husband—we’re getting a divorce and it’s terrible.” She opened them again. “That’s what you were playing too, wasn’t it?”

I nodded. “I could see it. I was playing about the first man I ever loved. He broke my heart too many times to count.”

She nodded. “I know. I could hear it”³⁹

³⁹ Personal Recollection.

In his discussion about different theories to describe group-work, one portion of a quote by Alan Taylor touched on what may be a true definition of the collaboration stage—“Where there is an agreed framework or scenario, perhaps produced collaboratively...”⁴⁰ Artists pursue group-work when they cannot (or do not wish to) create a project that involves factors outside their areas of expertise or that would benefit from creative contributions from others. This process almost always begins with a conversation. I would argue that this initial conversation (or conversations) is where true collaboration takes place and that collaboration is actually part of the larger creative group-work process. Creative processes can be collaborative but it is likely that a creative group process includes elements that blend together collaboration, consultation, and cooperation.

This is not a new idea—it is that feeling when you connect with another artist, when you know that the other artist is thinking as you are. It is exceptional and beautiful and nearly impossible to describe. However, researchers who have happened upon this experience (like my recollection at the start of this chapter) refer to such moments by many developing terms. One such term is The Artistic Moment:

This Artistic Moment can be seen as working through cross-cultural artistic richness using interlock systems across its materials; its key supporting concepts include connection/nexus, cross-cultural influences, ritualised contexts, and blurred boundaries. This nexus can occur in the rehearsal room, on stage or in the recording studio – it can be cultural, geographical or time based, and it can have spiritual and/or physical qualities.⁴¹

de Vilder presents this point of connection and understanding as a single moment, but the collaboration stage of group-work may occur over the course of a single glance, a minute,

⁴⁰ Taylor, 569.

⁴¹ Yantra de Vilder, “Towards the Artistic Moment: A Personal Exploration at the Nexus of Improvised Inter-disciplinary and Cross-cultural Collaborative Performance through the Metaphor of *Ma*,” DCA Dissertation, (Western Sydney University, School of Humanities and Communication Arts, 2016).

an hour discussion, or even periodically over months and/or years. Those who frequently participate in the collaboration stage of group-work may argue that this early stage of group-work is a series of these moments that de Vilder refers to as The Artistic Moment. Such discussions can be filled with a succession of Artistic Moments, each flowing inescapably and crashing into the next, an endless current of idea. Those moments can also occur over time as consecutive collaboration stages may or may not occur as the group-work progresses.

A particularly effective test for this theory of the collaborative stage would be to isolate it among a group of co-creators that tend to disagree. Another article by Taylor explores group-work between composers group-working with other composers. Taylor refers to the term Collaborative Concept-Development⁴² as a method to incorporate collaboration into part of all creative group-work processes: "...developing a shared concept for a piece...to which the composers contributed as equals. The composers then divided the notational work between them."⁴³ This is a prime example of collaboration as part of the overarching creative group-work process. Combining Taylor's terms, this group-work began with an effective collaboration that moved on to a cooperation: "...groups of composers found different ways of collaborating to develop overall concepts for their pieces. In neither case did they share notational work..."⁴⁴

Last, one of the most effective and thorough investigations into this stage of the creative group-work process is from authors R. Keith Sawyer and Stacy DeZutter. These researchers observed an improvisational theater group over the course of several

⁴² Alan Taylor, "Composer-Composer Collaboration: Ways in which Composer are Able to Produce Music Together," (unpublished manuscript, March 2020, typescript), DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.35122.35528.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

performances in an attempt to analyze the group's process of generating interactive creative material on the spot in a reliably replicable manner. In this article⁴⁵, Sawyer and DeZutter are developing a concept called Collaborative Emergence⁴⁶:

...we are specifically interested in collaborating groups that are relatively unconstrained, such that unexpected creativity could result. We use the term *collaborative emergence* to refer to these group processes. Collaborative emergence is more likely to be found as a group becomes more aligned with the following four characteristics:

- The activity has an unpredictable outcome, rather than a scripted, known endpoint;
- There is moment-to-moment contingency: each person's action depends on the one just before;
- The interactional effect of any given action can be changed by the subsequent actions of other participants; and
- The process is collaborative, with each participant contributing equally.⁴⁷

These concepts are familiar and correlate with Wood and Gray's initial concepts of collaboration, but Sawyer and DeZutter have achieved greater specificity in their conclusions in application of these points to a specific collaborative act within the process of a group-work. There are several key points here that can apply the concept of collaborative emergence as a specific outline to how the collaborative stage of group-work takes place.

First, Sawyer and DeZutter note that the activity will produce an unpredictable result. In the case of the collaborative stage, the collaborators must enter into the activity

⁴⁵ Sawyer and DeZutter have developed several articles about Collaborative Emergence.

⁴⁶ R. Keith Sawyer and Stacy DeZutter, "Distributed Creativity: How Collective Creations Emerge from Collaboration," *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* 3, no. 2 (2009) 82.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

without pre-conceived notions of what end will be achieved. Collaborators must allow for ideas to develop based on group-member contributions that stretch beyond the scope of each collaborator's original designs and intentions. Ideally, artists enter into a group-work specifically in search for an outcome they could not conceive of alone. As John-Steiner specified, that desire for expansion of ideas is one of the main motives to collaborate⁴⁸.

Second, the passing of ideas and/or actions back and forth across the group. Though Sawyer and DeZutter are not music professionals, they refer to this improvisational process that is so familiar to musicians. Consider the practices of jazz musicians—a general structure is understood but there is an inherent unpredictability in how the structure will specifically unfold. One can apply this point from Sawyer and DeZutter's definition of emergence collaboration not only to improvisational performance, but improvisational idea-generation or brainstorming. Honing the process of idea-generation to contribute effectively to a collaborative discussion is a skill that requires development. The more experience a collaborator has in passing ideas around and reacting effectively as a member of the collaborative conversation, the greater the artist's ability to contribute to the emergence collaboration.

Third, contributors must be willing to adapt their paths of creative thinking and idea-generation in response to the contribution of others. This elasticity between when to embrace an idea or when to question an idea (no matter whose idea it is) asks a great deal of artists, especially those who are accustomed to being in complete control of their artistic decisions. Imagine a composer who is collaborating with a chef: the composer and chef discuss in general what type of joint experience they wish to create for the audience in

⁴⁸ John-Steiner.

pairing a new piece of music with a new culinary dish. Tone, color, weight, density, length, and intended emotion are all agreed upon between the two artists in the collaboration stage. However, perhaps the chef suggests a combination of ingredients that the composer fears will be ineffective in communicating the desired density of the joint work. The composer, though, does not have the expertise in the culinary arts that the chefs does. The composer would do well to both take a leap of faith trusting the chef's skills and allowing for the possibility that the audience will find the dish provocative and interesting even if the composer does not care for the taste.

Last, it is the job of those wishing to create emergence collaborations to break down any hierarchies, real or perceived, through careful reassurance that all members' contributions are welcome, regardless of status. Participants in emergence collaboration must be allowed to contribute equally. If at any point a dictatorial hierarchy forms, the emergence collaboration likely shifts to a cooperation or consultation and loses the advantages inherent within the collaboration stage. Since most creative group-work members create subconscious hierarchies in their minds for a multitude of reasons, emergence collaboration may be a difficult goal to accomplish. Perhaps two professionals are collaborating but one is more famous. The less famous artist may feel that the more famous artist should have the final say as the 'higher up' in the field. It is incumbent on both the more and less famous artist to verbally dissolve the hierarchy together as a joint goal.

In my experience, these final two points, by far, are the most difficult to achieve for those wishing to participate in the collaborative stage of group-work. It seems that those who are unable (or unwilling) to create emergence collaboration at the initial stage of

group-work do not wish to surrender to the likely unforeseen outcome of an emergence collaboration. One particular viewpoint from a choreographer/dancer who was participating in group-work with a composer demonstrates how the importance of this point and how not achieving it can color someone's opinion of group-work permanently:

When asked to define co-creation, the necessity of an equal input was ubiquitous amongst choreographers' answers... The composer's definitions were more diverse and for them, as long as a piece is created together, equal input is not a requirement for co-creation; since this trend was amongst all of the composers, it suggests that they do in fact have a more negative or indifferent attitude toward achieving an equal input in a collaboration. It is worth noting that authority is not evenly distributed throughout these standard methods; generally, choreographers have the role of director.

One possible reason for this, highlighted in the interviews, is that choreographers tend to learn the fundamental language of other disciplines more than any other collaborating artist. Therefore, they are able to listen, understand and direct multi-disciplinary projects with more sensitivity than other artists may be qualified to do.⁴⁹

Equal input and freedom of input are not necessarily synonymous. Rymer's description of composers' disregard of equal input begs the query if equal input during the collaboration stage is a requirement or if freedom of input is sufficient for all members of the group-work to feel heard. Such an issue might also relate back to hierarchy. If there is a perceived or established hierarchy, the group member acting as the top of that hierarchical ladder may monopolize their input during what would be hopefully-collaborative discussions. Therefore, part of those initial discussions (before any talk of the group-work product itself is mentioned) should focus on the nature of how the group-work itself will take place. Guidelines can be established about how often a group member may hold the floor or if a

⁴⁹ Jess Rymer, "An Argument for Investigation into Collaborative, Choreomusical Relationships within Contemporary Performance: A Practical and Theoretical Enquiry into the Distinct Contributions of a Collaborative, Co-creative Approach," *AVANT* 8, Special Issue (2017): 185.

system of hearing each member in succession around the table. More importantly, this difficulty harkens back to earlier definitions of collaborative acts—the members of the group need to want to hear from each other. If that desire is present, likely the question of input levels disperses without effort.

When emergence collaboration is successful, all members tend to find it satisfying. Such collaboration lends itself to invention with the joint task force of at least several minds. Taylor outlines the positive results:

When artists create together, there are three potential effects on their work which will not be experienced when an artist creates alone, which are:

(1) That their work may be limited by the need to find areas of overlap or agreement between their different ranges of knowledge and influences. This may lead to a process of negotiation to establish areas of common ground, and to the exclusion of ideas or approaches which are not acceptable to all the between the partners.

(2) That new ideas, which none of the participants would have developed alone, may emerge... creation through sharing or interaction is distinct from creating alone, and that it is likely to result in different outcomes. It is different in nature from the process by which one artist creates meaning in dialogue only with their own knowledge and experience.

(3) That the resulting art will to some extent at least be authored by more than one person.⁵⁰

As long as those who wish to create effective group-work based on initial collaborative development are sensitive to the nature of group-work and its requirements (specific to how their own group-work will unfold), then an initial stage of collaboration can be achieved.

⁵⁰ Taylor, 565-566.

If the assumption that collaboration is not a group-work process in and of itself but rather the initial stage of group-work in which artists seek out other artists to co-create something new is embraced, then the following parameters should be established for the collaboration stage to be at its most effective:

- 1) Collaborators should be in the same immediate space, either physical or digital, with the ability to read other members' faces and body language
- 2) Collaborators should be generally informed about the creative process of their co-creators, preferably through discussion at this initial stage (especially if collaborators are from different disciplines)
- 3) Collaborators must, to the best of their collective ability, dismantle any perceived or established hierarchical structures between themselves and their fellow members
- 4) Collaborators must be willing to amend ideas, opinions, and artist contributions based on good faith input from fellow collaborators; they must also be willing to engage in similar good faith with fellow collaborators' ideas, opinions, and artist contributions
- 5) Collaborators must be willing and eager for the equal participation of all members
- 6) Collaborators should have enough control over their individual idea-generating process to contribute to the collaborative discussion in real time effectively

Chapter 4: AN ANALYSIS OF THE COLLABORATION STAGE IN GROUP-WORK

Why is the back wall covered with canvas? A fair question at a concert specifically billed to premiere contemporary pieces of music. No explanation is given until the last moment. The director of the new music ensemble, as he did before every piece on the concert, turned toward the audience to provide insight and perspective into what we were about to hear.

“This piece is a little different,” he said.

As he spoke, a line of 10-15 college students filed into the back of the hall to stand in front of the long canvas. The director went on to explain that the musical portion of the piece would not include any melodic material in the traditional sense, and he advised the audience to relax their attention and allow themselves to drift back and forth between what they see and what they hear. The students perched alongside their sections of the joint canvas took up brushes and charcoal and thick pencils.

“As the ensemble plays, these art students are going to listen and react on the spot, creating whole new original pieces of art as they visually respond to what they hear.”

The music began so soft it was imperceptible from the back, where I sat. It was just a drone, the same chord sustained. From a traditional musical perspective, it did nothing. No harmonic motion, no articulation, nothing. Then, ever so very slowly, like watching a drop of water move down a petal, the volume and timbre intensity of the drone intensified.

As instructed, my eyes flitted back and forth between the ensemble and the visual artists. At first, they stood still as the pillars holding up the ceiling. Then, one by one, they gently and timidly (at least that was how it looked to me) put pencil or brush to canvas. Just as imperceptible as the music, gentle shapes emerged across their joint canvas. There was no perceptible moment that the drone intensified; In the true style of minimalism, the change was too gradual to pinpoint. However, as though watching live the sped-up film of a blooming rose, the art students swallowed that gradual intensity and refreshed it on canvas. The harsher the timbre, the darker the color. The louder the dynamics the heavier the stroke.

Then, after 14 minutes, a huge swell of thick sound erupted into silence.

The audience emerged as if from a trance. The silence became emphatically pregnant waiting for clapping to start. The trance fractured, clapping started, and the art students filed out just as they had filed in. What had been a wall of white indistinguishable from the painted brick rear of the theater was gone.

What emerged was a violent sunset of all colors, all strokes, all shapes. It made no sense together and yet perfect sense. It had never been done before and it would never be done again.

In this chapter, I present a series of five examples of my own creative group-work experiences followed by an analysis to conclude if a collaboration stage took place, how the collaboration stage (if present) affected the outcome of the group-work, and how the collaboration stage (if present) affected my personal experience as a member of the group.

Language Department Storytelling/Acoustic Music Composition

My first group-work was also my first collegiate composition. I was fortunate to work with a composition professor at Grand Valley State University in West Michigan who encouraged participation in group-work and who organized group-work opportunities for his students. This collaboration was with the Foreign Language Department. The goal was to pair two students taking a foreign language course with a composer for the creation of a story in that foreign language told through verbal and musical communication.

A collaboration stage was attempted for this project and took place as an initial meeting between the two students from the foreign language department and me, the composer. During this meeting, the two students and I discussed how we should go about achieving the goal of this group-work. I entered into the collaboration stage without an idea of how the final product would materialize and my impression was that my collaborators were of a similar mind as their attitude and body language mirrored my own—one of curious excitement. The meeting took place in a computer lab unfortunately surrounded by other groups engaged in their own initial-stage conversations. The public nature of the conversation made the airing of ideas slightly uncomfortable, but we as a group persisted anyway and eventually our excitement about the project outweighed any embarrassment

about voicing opinions. At this point, parameters 1, 3, 4, and 5 were all met for the creation of a collaboration stage in the artistic group-work project.

Having no experience with artistic group-work outside of the composer/performer relationship, my immediate instinctual assumption was that one part of the project would have to 'come first'. In my mind, the story held greater authority over the music in the overall experience. This may have been an instinctual assumption for many reasons, but most likely because words are a translatable language while music is not; the audience would be able to understand exactly what the foreign language students said in their story that was read aloud, but would only feel what was being heard musically. No matter the accuracy or inaccuracy of my assumption, the group decided that the story would be created first, then would be sent to me to create a musical counterpart. At this point in the group-work, it morphed from collaboration to cooperation. As one of the collaborators, this shift did not feel like a change in relationship of nature of the group-work, but rather a progression to the next stage of realization.

As the project progressed, it became clear that points 2 and 6 were never achieved either in this initial collaboration stage or any other collaborative talk. Both side of the group-work made assumptions that damaged the members' relationship. When the storytellers sent me their first draft of the story, I carefully composed my musical work to align perfectly with the amount of time it would take the storytellers to read their work aloud⁵¹, as the project demanded. It did not occur to me that this draft was not final and I did not think to ask. I misunderstood the nature of the storytellers' creative process and made a faulty assumption. The storytellers made a similar error. I composed and rehearsed

⁵¹ The storytellers sent a recording of themselves reading the script aloud as well as a written copy.

the piece with an ensemble for roughly a month before the performance, however, two days before the show the storytellers contacted me to request that another two minutes of music be added to the four-minute piece. The storytellers did not understand my compositional process and the time it would require for a freshman undergraduate composer to write an additional two minutes of music, not to mention asking her undergraduate non-performance-major performers to learn an additional two minutes on such a short timeline. These misunderstandings soured the relationship between the members of the group.

It is my belief that this series of misunderstandings occurred because point 6 was not executed effectively at the initial collaboration stage. Both parties of the group-work did not leave the initial collaboration stage with a firm understanding of the ideas that would drive the project. If the storytellers had created a general outline for their story with me during this stage, I could have foreseen the need for flexibility in the creation of the composition. If I had outlined for the storytellers the formal framework of the kind of piece I was conceiving of, they might have kept that form in mind while revising their story.

The final production was an overall success due to both parties contributing their best work with determination, but the emotional connection of the collaboration was never reestablished and while I stayed connected with the performers, I never again met or had opportunity to speak with the storytellers, nor did I attempt to contact them or they me.

Videographic Poetry/Electronic Music Composition

Near the end of my undergraduate program, an unexpected group-work project arose, ironically, from my determination to study outside the music program to better understand other artistic disciplines. I met a videographer in a poetry class who, upon

learning that I was a composer, asked me to write the music for his capstone project—two poems presented as videographic readings.

At the initial meeting for this project, the videographer and I successfully established all six points for an effective collaboration stage. We met in the music studio specifically reserved for composition students that gave us both access to a computer and me access to a DAW to demonstrate concepts. The videographer, with passion and without prompting, specifically outlined the process he intended to enact to achieve his desired artistic goal. He was also, to his great credit, unafraid to share his inspiration for the project—his father’s suicide when the videographer was a teacher. In return, I shared with him the story of my mother’s battle and eventual succumbing to cancer when I was a teenager. The videographer and I connected on an emotional level outside the requirements of the collaboration stage, but these emotional revelations strengthened our bond as collaborators, better enabling us to secure an ongoing point 2 and point 4. The emotional connection had an influence on all future interactions throughout the life of the group-work.

During that initial meeting, which lasted roughly three hours, the videographer showed me some preliminary images of sites he had scouted for filming and initial poetic text while I showed him some ideas for sounds that occurred to me as he described the tone he envisioned. Over the course of the meeting, his ideas changed as he learned about my craft and mine changed as I learned about his in a perfect example of point 4.

The final product was an emotional, evocative creation that laid bare the trauma of both our losses. There was a catharsis in the creation of this work for both of us. The collaborative relationship remained positive and, even though I have fallen out of contact

with the videographer, I look on the experience fondly and would be happy to work with him again. Finishing out stories with ending

Flute Solo/Live Sound Processing

As the establishment of a collaboration stage at the start of and throughout the life of a group-work is a learned process, it is my belief that students who pursue co-creative opportunities will continue to hone the process and discover others who have done the same. As I progressed into my master's degree, I encountered more musicians who were interested in pursuing artistic group-works. A flutist with whom I had several classes inquired if I had written any works for solo flute. Indeed, I had composed a piece for unaccompanied flute during my undergraduate years. When she suggested that she perform the premiere, I was naturally pleased but I wanted to create an experience that would be more integrated than a typical unaccompanied performance. I suggested to the flutist that we work on creating a live-processed version of the piece using the DAW⁵² Ableton Live. Though she would be performing the piece as notated, I would be concurrently live-remixing the piece through the use of gently-applied digital processing. This particular group-work was unusual because its product was a particular performance atmosphere rather than the composition of a new piece.

The initial meeting of this group-work was quick since the flutist and I already knew each other from other school-related social interactions. Therefore, part of the meeting was social. This state of already-established relationship also highly effected the nature of the group-work and its collaboration stage. The flutist was a kind, funny person

⁵² Digital Audio Workstation.

with whom I was glad to be friends and I did not wish the group-work to damage our friendship in any way. My observance of her behavior over the course of the project led me to believe she felt the same. Similar to the group-work with the videographer, the nature of the emotional relationship influenced the process of the collaboration stage and group-work as a whole.

During the initial meeting, when we finally meandered to talking about the project, I suggested that I live-remix the piece as she perform and she casually agreed while admitting that she had no knowledge or experience of such performance practices. To help her envision the final product, I played her a video of a popular New York new music violinist⁵³ who often performed with live remixing, then explained how our performance would differ from his. Knowing her to be a friendly and cooperative person, I was unsurprised that she was excited about the idea. This was another initial meeting that successfully executed all points to establish an effective collaboration stage, partly due to our already existing friendship. Since this group-work took place within the context of an already-existing relationship, Van Steifel's metaphor of collaboration like a marriage can be applied here. That relationship was advantageous in establishing certain parameters for effective group-work quickly. However, it is my belief that this element is not necessarily required for the execution of an effective collaboration stage. Rather, an existing relationship can solidify group members' desire to be open to the parameters required for a successful collaboration stage in order to avoid damaging the existing relationship.

As the project unfolded over the next month, the flutist's work consisted of learning the technical aspects of the piece. On one occasion in particular, she asked me to listen to

⁵³ The video was of renowned new music violinist Todd Reynolds.

the product of her preparation and offer my opinion. This was an instance of a consultation stage: she wanted my approval of her performative decisions. As she explained her process, she told me that she had created a story to help her establish a sound character as the piece progressed. The story was dark and frightening and not at all reflective of my original intention in writing the piece. However, I was interested in her ownership and interest in the performance and not that she reflect my intentions. One of the most attractive elements of a collaboration in my work is to watch existing ideas (whether they have existed for years or seconds) evolve into something new as a collaborator contributes their perceptions. Therefore, this was an example of collaboration stage point 4 despite the nature of the interaction being a consultation. It goes without saying that I happily encouraged her to continue experimenting as her creative instincts saw fit.

As we continued to prepare for the performance, we met several times for what I would call additional collaborative stages. We rehearsed the interaction of the acoustic and electronic elements and collaborated in refining the final sound. A great deal of this process was improvisation in the collaborative sense. We experimented with sound ideas together and decided together what was or was not effective.

The performance was a great success and, in essence, was also a collaborative improvisation as we both adapted our structural sound ideas to suit the performance space when it was filled with an audience. The performance was exciting and intense. Neither of us were exactly sure how the sound would behave but we were both invigorated in that uncertainty in a performative embracing of collaborative stage point 4. We were obviously in the same physical space for all of our interactions. Due to our friendship, we were eagerly open and enjoying learning about each other's processes. There was no hierarchy to

dispel—we were both graduate students at the same point on our respective programs. We were obviously eager to embrace each other’s ideas. We both were able to contribute innovative solutions in an effective and timely manner during all collaborations. However, one of the most interesting aspects of this group-work was the progression: collaboration → cooperation → consultation → collaboration. There was a collaboration stage both at the beginning at the end of this process.

Poetry/Vocal Performance/Electroacoustic Composition

This example demonstrates how the breakdown of many (if not all) of the points to establish an effective collaboration stage can destroy a group-work. At the initial meeting for this co-creation, the first of many misunderstandings occurred. This meeting took place at a coffee shop in an unfamiliar part of the city during an uncomfortably hot and humid day. I have often wondered if the discomfort of the initial meeting contributed, at least in part, to the breakdown. I met with a poet and vocalist with whom I was unfamiliar—the project had been created by another graduate student who invited all members to participate, like an arranged marriage. Unlike the previous two group-works, I had no relationship with my fellow members.

At the initial meeting, it seemed that the majority of the collaboration stage points were met, with the exception of point 3—one of the members made clear that they thought themselves at a higher social, creative, and professional level than the other two members. As previously stated, if this condition occurs the collaboration is destroyed and indeed it was, though I did not realize it at the time. As myself and the other member suggested ideas, it became clear that this third group member felt all decisions should be approved by

them. This clearly caused myself and the other member discomfort but I had never encountered this situation in an attempted collaboration stage before (and the discomfort of my fellow led me to believe she never had either) and was unsure how to proceed successfully.

In my naiveté, I proceeded as usual to explain what my capabilities and intentions were when my turn came to contribute music composition ideas to the conversation. Both members seemed excited and eager to embrace these compositional ideas and I hoped that my earlier discomfort was unfounded. All members departed the meeting with a seemingly positive and mutual understanding of how the group-work would progress.

As the process continued, unfortunately the earlier signals indicating the breakdown of collaboration accurately predicted how the work would proceed. At the initial meeting, we agreed that the group member who believed themselves at the head of the hierarchy would contribute their work first, then I would compose, then we would all work together to develop the work during rehearsals. Despite repeated attempts to contact the first group member, I received no starting material for several months, even with the concert deadline looming. This was a breakdown of point 2—the first group member's process took longer than I assumed and said member did not realize the time I needed as the composer to create the music.

Further breakdowns in communication led to the first group member's decision to not participate in the rehearsal process, citing no time to do so. With this information, the other group member and I continued forward while giving the first group member periodic updates. Here, there was a breakdown of point 1—had all members of the group-work been present at these further collaborative stages, the project could have been salvaged. Near the

end of the creative process, I sent a copy of the final score (the product of nearly one year's work) out to all members of the group. The second group member offered congratulations that this large endeavor had been completed—the group member had been involved in all the details of the project. However, first group member was enraged at how their work had been restructured to fit the final product. At the initial meeting, I indicated my intention to perform this restructuring. I wanted to be precise about my intentions since it would affect the contribution from another group member. If the first group member had indicated at that meeting that they did not approve of this restructuring, I would have suggested something different out of respect for that request. However, no such request was made at the opening discussions. It is still unclear why the first group member did not adhere to the parameters established at the opening discussions.

This reaction was the result of a breakdown of all collaboration stages: 1) the absence of a member from rehearsals kept them uninformed about the progression of the project, 2) there was a breakdown in communication between myself and the first group member about each other's creative processes, 3) the presence of a perceived hierarchy, 4) good faith contributions were never established amongst all members, 5) no atmosphere of eager participation ever materialized due to the perceived hierarchy, 6) the lack of effectively communicated ideas both at the initial stage and throughout the process.

Immediately before the premiere of the piece, the first group member forcefully stated that their name was to be removed from the piece and desired all association to be cut off. The emotional trauma of this reaction made the premiere agonizing and I always recall the piece with pain, despite its growing success and consequent performances. There were breakdowns initiated from all sides of this group-work and it effectively demonstrates

the danger of allowing the collaborative stage points to break down. However, it cannot be denied that this was a valuable lesson in the importance of concretely establishing those collaboration stage points.

Videography, Acoustic, Electronic, and Electroacoustic Composition

As my career has progressed, I have embarked on increasingly expansive artistic group-works. This has culminated in my dissertation work, entitled *Re-Singings*, in co-creation with Puerto Rican visual/audio/installation artist Nayda Collazo-Llorens.⁵⁴ Nayda and I have worked together before so our group-work habits have transformed over time. When Nayda and I worked together for the first time in 2015, several collaboration stage points were not fulfilled. First, I was quite intimidated by Nayda since she is an internationally recognized artist while I had just completed my master's degree and had very few performances to my name. However, it soon became evident that Nayda had no desire to create a hierarchical curtain between us and was solely interested in the co-creation of art. In this case, I perpetuated the perceived hierarchy as I remained intimidated by her, but Nayda was able to break that barrier down in her ongoing encouragement of my contributions and enthusiasm for my ideas. The 2015 collaboration was a tremendous artistic and emotional success, and I am ecstatic to be working with Nayda again.

The collaboration stage of *Re-Singings* began with an initial discussion in 2018. I met with Nayda at a little coffee shop in Michigan where we discussed two possible projects, one of which was a reinterpretation of her 2016 installation work, *Re_Sightings*.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Nayda Collazo-Llorens has specifically stated her approval of using her name along with my recollections in describing our joint creative process.

⁵⁵ Nayda Collazo-Llorens, "Projects: Re-Sightings," www.naydacollazolllorens.com.

I described my experience when I attended the installation, how enrapturing it was, and how it inspired me to conceive a musical version of the work. Nayda embodies the philosophies of the collaboration stage and is always happy to hear about possible group-work ideas, but she is also firm in her opinions and contributions making her a strong and effective collaborative partner.

When time came to begin work on my dissertation composition, I contacted Nayda and relayed to her my initial thoughts:

AB: I've been thinking about *Sightings* for the last few years now. If it is alright with you...I would like to create a musical component to add to the project...What do you think?

NC-L: exciting! do you mean *Sightings*, as in the text based video, or *Re_sightings* as in the multichannel video installation? Both were in the same show at UICA that you visited. I have the feeling it would be *Re_sightings* since that's the one I remember you getting really into and we talked quite a bit about it. Anyway, yes. Regarding that one work, it exists right now as the multi-channel video projection installation you saw, and I am not particularly attached to the sound I included in it, so I'd be super curious as to what you'll come up with.

As I may have mentioned, I've thought about reworking that piece as well into a slightly different version, perhaps for a single channel work, with a single light/form on each video channel, as opposed to several different ones on the same channel as the version you saw (I think you have a mov file, right?). My intention is for the light/form to be larger in size and almost take over the screen, even if it changes in size and moves around a bit, but the point is to encounter that one, almost as a being with which one might be having a conversation (without words). Well, I still haven't gotten to work on it, but just so you know in case that might also be of interest to you.⁵⁶

This opening communication, though including several ideas particularly from Nayda, is not quite at but rather preparation for a collaboration stage. Both parties updated each other regarding past and current thought processes about the possibility of a group-work. We

⁵⁶ Ashlee Busch and Nayda Collazo-Llorens, Email Communication, "Proposal," September 2019.

each continued our own creative processes separate from each other to better prepare ourselves for point 6—effectively and quickly contributing our own ideas from exploration into our individual creative ideas about the project.

The true collaboration stage occurred on April 24, 2020. Nayda and I met via Zoom call to discuss our thoughts on the project. Over the course of that meeting, Nayda and I fulfilled all points to create an effective collaboration stage, partly due to our familiarity with each other's collaboration practices on a past project⁵⁷. Point 1 was met in the form of the Zoom meeting. After having met with Nayda in person, I found the use of a Zoom meeting roughly as effective as a joint occupation of the physical creative space. I could see her face and read her reactions, and she could do the same with me. Point 2 was easy to predict, again due to our familiarity with each other's processes: I knew I could rely on Nayda to work effectively and efficiently while providing me with regular updates. She knew she could expect the same from me. Due to Nayda's persistent efforts in our previous collaboration, point 3 was also easily met: I am not an internationally recognized successful artist like Nayda and, therefore, in that sense she absolutely 'outranks' me in artistic status, but Nayda's insistence that I be an equal collaborator has long since dispelled any perceived hierarchy. In a collaboration sense, we are equal contributors.

Both Nayda and I are dedicated in co-creative work to completely embrace point 4—we welcome the addition of unforeseen ideas and support each other in experimentations that may or may not be used in the final project. Point 5 is also easily met as Nayda and I both pursue co-creative projects with vigor. There is never any doubt that contributions are equal and input from either of us is embraced. Our collaboration stage

⁵⁷ Extremely Low Frequency, ELF, naydacollazollorens.com.

meeting was an effective example of point 6—Nayda and I improvised immediate responses to each others’ ideas in rapid succession over the course of the meeting with both of us taking notes to record those improvised ideas.

Over the course of developing the project, the group-work relationship morphed into a cooperative group-work; the general idea of the final product was initiated by me in 2018, so the first step was to incorporate parts of the inspirational project (*Re_Sightings*) into this reinterpretation. I worked with Nayda’s original text to create demo recordings that I then sent to Nayda for her to create video. One of the interesting effects of this cooperation was as Nayda sent videos to me in updates, I revised my musical ideas based on the videos—Nayda and I collaborate so effectively together that the ongoing drafts influenced our separate work in a way that creates seamless synthesis between the two art forms. It is my belief that Nayda’s and my shared dedication to the collaboration process greatly influences our individual processes and creates a particularly effective co-creative flow.

There is a point referenced in this most recent group-work that is alluded to in much of the literature but not necessarily required for an effective group-work—trust. Many of my group-works have taken place with people who are strangers at the start of the work and I only become slightly acquainted with over the process. I often enter into group-work on faith rather than the establishment of trust. However, it cannot be denied that the presence of trust in a group-work is highly effective in encouraging and maintaining the collaboration stage practices:

As collaborative partners interact and build reputations for trustworthy behavior over time, they may find themselves moving away from the more contingent I-will-if-you- will reciprocity to

longer term commitments based on institutionalized “psychological contracts”...based on trust.⁵⁸

The key, naturally, to this occurrence is that trust is built over time and the required time and circumstances to build that trust varies infinitely across group-works and the circumstances of their co-creative projects. Trust does not need to exist but, recalling Van Steifel’s creative marriage again, it is certainly only advantageous in co-creative work.

It is the job of those who preach the values of group-work to emphasize the importance of dispensing with aesthetic assumptions and allowing for the possibility of developing trust. We must each examine the cultural predispositions and prejudices associated with our art forms and make a deliberately conscious effort to overcome them:

Dancers trust a choreographer and their colleagues with their physical wellbeing and ultimately, with the very blessings of their youth. Dance resembles athletics in this way. When a composer arrives to collaborate on a piece, he or she is, in a sense, a permanent outsider. Choreographers spend much time building dancers’ loyalty, convincing dancers that their talents are being well used. It is easy to imagine a choreographer’s reluctance to relinquish what he or she must, in allowing musicians to impact the quality and design of any major piece.⁵⁹

If such an attitude is adopted and perpetuated, then trust cannot be achieved. Collaboration does not necessarily need trust, but if emotional fulfillment of creating with another artist is part of the goal, we must take a hard look at ourselves in an attempt to establish trust.

⁵⁸ Thomson et al., 28.

⁵⁹ Stiefel, 21.

Chapter 5: CONCLUSIONS

“What if we were to do a kind of Steve Reich thing with this fragment?”

“Nice! I like it! As in add in one note at a time?”

“Maybe for the first few phrases, after that we should change it up a bit so it doesn’t become too predictable.”

“Good point.”

He played in the left-hand piano part while I played in the right-hand part. Each of us plucked at the keys like harp strings, our fingers like little trapeze artists occasionally swinging toward each other and away again. We kept playing until one of us made a mistake and we laughed for the sheer fun of it. He selected all the data in the MIDI piano roll, quantized it to the eighth-note, then we listened back.

“I like it.”

“Me too. But I think this pattern should wait until here.” He highlighted a group of data points. Neither of us could remember who played them in. “What do you think?”

“Can we hear it first before we decide?”

Me, a minute later—“Perfect!”

Defining collaboration is like defining love. The definition is so broad that it exists as a collective cultural understanding rather than a definable concept. It is my belief that collaboration is one step of the co-creative group-work artistic process rather than an all-encompassing process in and of itself.

It should be noted, however, that collaboration is merely one process by which group-work can operate. Not all group-work needs to take place under these conditions, but other group-works that are enacted under different conditions may not be collaboration but rather cooperation or consultation—both of which can be effective methods for group-work. Indeed, initial collaboration stages can morph into cooperations or consultations if such alterations fill the needs of the group members. In this way, we can narrow the parameters and circumstances of what constitutes the collaboration stage of a group-work.

Consider again Gioia's description of his and Henderson's process. Perhaps this way is indeed the most effective between him and Henderson. The important point is to understand how one's process works and formulate a plan around it. Gioia seems quite comfortable with his process: he describes himself as having—

...at least no abstract theory of how to write a poem. Inspiration is mostly an involuntary process. When poems arrive, I try to let them take the shapes that they themselves suggest. I want my poems to be musical, moving, and memorable. I also try to make them compressed and concise. I rely more on intuition than on any preconceived ideas. I am actually happiest when the poem unfolds in ways that surprise me. My best poems have mostly taken forms that I would never have predicted.⁶⁰

Such a creative process relies a great deal on feel and trusting that inspiration will strike when needed. Some artists find that process comfortable and freeing. Others may find it frustrating. Compare this example to the creative process of composer David Lang:

⁶⁰ Johnson and Gioia, 28.

Once I know the roles of the instruments, once I've made some big decisions about how the orchestration works in each section—how the laws that I've made actually work—then the last thing I do is fill in the notes...

I make up all these rules about how instruments relate, or how registers work, or how tunes work. I take scraps of music I come up with intuitively and subject them to really strange rhythmic processes that pull them apart. If outside ideas come in, if I sing a melody to myself, it's probably something that I'm not allowed to do by my structure.⁶¹

Lang, though still naturally seizing upon inspiration, clearly follows a specific structure in the execution of his creative process. It is likely that Lang is better able to predict when a creative work is finished than Gioia but as long as each of these creators understand how their respective processes will unfold, collaboration may succeed. If two artists with such opposing creative strategies were to come together and propose a joint work, the collaboration stage would be absolutely essential—each point meticulously discussed and an agreement drawn up.

Effective participation in artistic co-creative group-work is a learned skill. This skill can be taught:

Without any presumption to suggest that this is the only solution for the wide division between the areas of Composition and Performance, nor the only way to teach (or learn) composition, we propose that teaching music collaboration can be a path for a deeper integration between the areas, and among individuals who are at once deepening their skills and learning to participate in a more democratic creative process, one that values both theory and practice equally in this new creative ecology of the 21st century.⁶²

⁶¹ Ann McCutchan, *The Muse that Sings: Composers Speak about the Creative Process*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 224-225.

⁶² Luciane Cardassi and Guilherme Bertissolo, "Shared Musical Creativity: Teaching Composer-Performer Collaboration," *Revista Vórtex* 8, no. 1 (2020): 9.

Without delving deeply into a pedagogical approach, there are subtle activities that can be integrated into any classroom that can begin to foster co-creative skills. Asking students to work together on a group projects is always valuable, but often the students are, at the very least, on differing levels of understanding how a co-creative process works for themselves let alone their co-creators. Imagine instead if these stages were outlined specifically for students at the start of group-work and the assignment becomes more an examination of group-work learning than about the project itself. In her article, Stiefel proposes a possible framework for creating such a co-creation-centric opportunity:

I think it would be interesting to bring established choreographers and composers together in contexts that do not entail the creation of a piece right away. That is, I think it is necessary to brainstorm ways of bringing potential collaborators together which temporarily suspend practical concerns, concerns which cause the artists to fall back on tried patterns and processes.⁶³

Stiefel's suggestion encourages choreographers and composers to explore each other's artistic worlds, better enabling both artists to understand why they might wish to co-create, the steps needed for a successful collaboration stage, and how to pursue that co-creation.

Group-work is as complex and dynamic as the individuals who pursue it, and we should continue this research in an effort to better understand that process. Observation will be key to understanding how the collaboration stage of group work unfolds:

When cognitive processes are distributed across groups, they become visible, and scientists can observe them by analyzing the verbal and gestural interactions among the participants. Thus rather than controlled experimental methods, studies of distributed cognition typically use qualitative and observational methods that enable researchers to capture the real-time processes of distributed cognition. Perhaps the dominant methodology is *interaction analysis*—videotaping collaborations over time, and documenting the step-by-step emergence of cognition from the contributions of each group member...Even though creativity scholars and cognitive

⁶³ Stiefel, 22.

scientists both shifted to a group focus during the same time period—roughly the middle 1980s through the 1990s—creativity researchers have rarely used methodologies that allow a real-time analysis of distributed creativity in action.⁶⁴

The establishment of the collaboration stage of artistic co-creative group-work is based solely on the nature of the interaction between group members. Each of the collaboration stage conditions relies on that interaction. If observation of each stage of the co-creative group-work process can be observed and segmented based on the progression of the group-work, we might be better able to understand all the conditions required for successful group-work in any of the forms it takes place.

As more and more disciplines reap the benefits of co-creative group-work, these practices can be applied across multiple fields not only for the creation of art but for the progress of society. Neurosurgeons working with music therapists.⁶⁵ Composers teaming up with architects.⁶⁶ Fire dancers and generative electronic musicians.⁶⁷ The better our understanding of these processes, the more effective work we can co-create together.

So approach any collaboration with an open mind, and be willing to consider all possible ideas that may result, regardless of where they may come from. Don't immediately discard an idea coming from your collaborator even if you may not like it. Instead, ask yourself what you can combine with their idea to create something you might not have thought of on your own. Don't worry about who writes this part or that, and don't fret about how much each person contributes overall. Remember, it's the *music* that counts, not anyone's ego. Think big picture, and you'll find that sometimes one plus one equals three!⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Sawyer and Dezutter, 81-82.

⁶⁵ Monique van Bruggen-Rufi, Irma Jansen, Esther van Zwol, "Multi- and Interdisciplinary Collaboration Between the Music Therapist and Other Professionals in Huntington's Patient Care," *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Psychiatry* 81, (2010).

⁶⁶ Jim Lutz, "Thinking Outside the (Music) Box: Collaborations Between Composers and Architects," (paper presented at the 93rd ACSA Annual Meeting, The University of Memphis, 2005).

⁶⁷ J. Anthony Allen, "Playing with Fire: An Unexpected Collaboration," *Organized Sound: An International Journal of Music Technology* 9, no. 3 (2004): 229-232.

⁶⁸ Rich Tozzoli, "The Power of Music: The Benefits of Collaboration," Last modified April 15, 2019, <https://hub.yamaha.com/the-power-of-music-the-benefits-of-collaboration>.

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