

Rewilding Music: Improvisation, wilderness, and the global musician

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates how being in the wilderness affects group improvisation and in which ways the wilderness can be a potential learning environment in the education of global musicians. It starts by constructing a theoretical framework around improvisation, the wilderness as a place, mindfulness, and what a global musician is, and uses a case study to connect artists' experiences to the theoretical framework. Looking at place and at artists as emplaced beings is a starting point for a discussion of the wilderness environment and how it is qualitatively different to an urban environment. A short interlude on mindfulness, in relation to improvisation and to the wilderness, is followed by an overview and analysis of *Immersive Listening*, an artistic research project with six improvising artists (three musicians, three dancers). The participants spent three days near a wilderness location in late summer 2015 and returned to Helsinki for a performance and open discussion. An analysis of the participants' discussions, reflective diaries, and performance documentation connects insights from the project to the previously constructed theoretical framework. Main insights concern participants' listening, presence, and acceptance of difference, as they relate to cosmopolitan listening. A discussion of the case study shows that experiences in a natural environment can have a positive impact on the interaction of urban performers from different artistic and cultural backgrounds. In fostering key qualities fundamental in cosmopolitan listening in qualitatively different ways than in urban contexts, the

wilderness can potentially be a valuable resource in global musicians' education.

Keywords: improvisation, wilderness, global music, mindfulness, education, fudo-sei, embodiment, cosmopolitan listening

NOTE: British English spelling has been used throughout this writing. Where material has been quoted from external sources, the spelling of the original text has been used. Videos, images, maps, or other visual elements or text extracts that are under copyright have been used in this essay for academic research purposes only.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

A. Introduction

This research investigates group improvisation in its relation to, and as a function of, the environment, specifically the natural environment or *wilderness*. Nature writer Barry Lopez, in the introduction to *Arctic Dreams*, asks “How does the land shape the imagination of the people who dwell in it?” (2014, p. xxxiii). This research explores the ways in which the land *shapes* group improvisation—in other words, how the environment is expressed, immediately and after the experience, in group improvisation. The aim is to further investigate potential ways in which wilderness experiences can be valuable in the education of global musicians.

The topic is approached through the construction of a theoretical and philosophical framework of the concepts and practices revolving around improvisation and the wilderness. These ideas are connected to reflections and insights from an *Immersive Listening research project*. *Immersive Listening* is a series of excursions lead and organised by myself, which take place in the wilderness and in urban environments, the focus of which is on improvisation as it relates to environment. A three-day Immersive Listening project, which took place in late August 2015, is used as a case study. This particular project involved a group of six improvising artists spending three nights in the wilderness and culminated into an improvised performance back in Helsinki. Prior to this larger excursions, there have been shorter Immersive Listening sessions (2014–2015) with different participants.

Though these shorter sessions have helped develop the idea and execution of this larger excursion, they do not constitute case study material for this research directly.

The obvious sources of concepts and ideas for the theoretical framework come from the fields of musical improvisation, nature writing, psychology, ethnomusicology, and ecomusicology. Some less directly evident sources include Zen philosophy, phenomenology, mindfulness and meditation, and ecology. The nature of this research demands an interdisciplinary approach in order to illuminate the various dimensions of the research question, and to arrive at insights which lie beyond each individual discipline's reach. Recent advancements in some of these fields have made possible the construction of a framework within which the research question can be explored.

As mentioned earlier, the aim of this research is to determine in which ways being in a natural environment affects group improvisation. There already exist improvisational practices which draw inspiration from the natural world and the processes that govern it (see *emergent improvisation* in Sgorbati, 2005; 2012). What is specifically of interest to this research, rather than a development of an improvisational practice model which is inspired by an intellectual understanding of nature, is studying how physically being in the wilderness affects improvising artists, that is, in which ways the wilderness environment is embodied in group improvisational practice. This is done through looking particularly at the skills, knowledge, and attitudes which are useful in trans-cultural/trans-disciplinary/trans-genre improvisation—which are later grouped under *trans-idiomatic* improvisation—and how the development or engagement of these competencies may be positively

affected by spending time in the wilderness. In investigating improvisation through the lens of the natural environment, this research examines the inherent relationship between improvisation and space: the ways we both comprehend intellectually and embody physically our emplaced experiences, and the specific ways the wilderness may affect improvisation, both in interpersonal interactions and artistic content.

The starting point and continued focus for this research has been informed by my own prior personal experiences of being in the wilderness for extended periods of time, being involved in improvisatory music-making, and reflecting on the ways my experiences in the wilderness have influenced and informed my music-making. Beyond the ways I have been affected as an individual, I became interested in how similar experiences can affect working together within a group, due to its relevance in the context of global music and the interpersonal character of a group interaction.

My interest in exploring the effects of the natural environment in improvisation was greatly enhanced and amplified at the Ecomusicologies Conference 2014 in Asheville, North Carolina, USA, a trip supported financially by the Sibelius Academy. Together with Alicia Burns, a fellow musician with an interest in music-making and the natural environment, we visited the conference and attended the vast majority of lectures, discussions, and workshops there. We also had the opportunity to lead two *Active Rewilding* workshops as part of the conference programme (see Appendix B1, p. 171). These were one-and-a-half to two-hour workshops, exploring tuning into our environment and improvising in the natural environment, followed by a discussion on our experiences. We employed exercises and ideas from Keren Rosenbaum's *Active*

Listening Playground practice (Rosenbaum, n.d.), and Pauline Oliveros' *Sonic Meditations* (1974).

Being surrounded by people from a large range of disciplines, joined together by their passion for researching music in relation to nature, instilled confidence in my ideas. For the first time, I encountered researchers and performers from fields such as acoustic ecology, soundscape ecology, bioacoustics, biomusic, zoomusicology, ecopsychology, and was present in discussions of political, environmental, and social issues in relation to music and nature. The ethics of sourcing wood for violins and marimbas, the environmental impact of touring or people coming from far-away places just for a concert, or how a local band has mobilised a community to act towards preventing an environmental threat to their area through songs, gigs, and protest concerts—these are all subject to the field of ecomusicology, which is interdisciplinary in nature.

Listening, presence, acceptance, assumptions about other group members, non-judgementality and going beyond one's own comfort zone are all elements of working together in improvisation that will be looked at in this research. Looking at the function and importance of such skills in trans-cultural and trans-disciplinary work, this research explores how the natural environment can be a conducive environment for developing such skills. The potential applications focus on, though are not limited to, the education of the global musician, as a music practice that responds to contemporary challenges arising from globalisation. Interesting points for future research are touched upon, as well as the implications of embracing the natural environment as a place for facilitating artistic development.

B. Structure of Research

This research aims to construct a theoretical framework, exploring ideas about improvisation, the wilderness, and mindfulness, followed by an analysis of data from a case study (Immersive Listening research project) and an examination of the insights from the case study drawn against the previously constructed framework.

Chapter I is an introduction to the research. Key concepts are laid out and defined in order to facilitate understanding of the research. This chapter also includes my personal background and motivations for writing this paper, as well as a statement of the research question.

Chapter II, *The Nature of Improvisation*, takes a more detailed look into what improvisation is, learning it, and its relation to global music. Embodiment, listening, attunement are recurring themes. Because of its intrinsic quality of tuning into the current situation, improvisation becomes a useful tool for exploring issues of emplacement, embodiment, and environment. Having looked at what competencies are important in improvisation and the types of environments in which improvisation can be learned, it is then possible to see whether the wilderness may be conducive to learning such competencies. The second half of this chapter constructs a view of the wilderness from a philosophical, psychological, and acoustic perspective, outlining some ways in which it is qualitatively different to an urban environment. In particular, the wilderness is looked at in relation to indoor urban spaces and how they compare socially, architecturally, and acoustically.

Interlude takes the reader on a small deviation from the main course of the text, to explore the concept of mindfulness, as it applies to improvisation and performance. The concept of a spiritual or mindfulness retreat as a method for personal, or spiritual, development, is also looked at. This is in order to demonstrate how the Immersive Listening research project can be seen as a retreat, in its distance from our habitual spaces and focus on the present experience.

Chapter III, *The Improvisation of Nature*, rather than looking at the ways in which nature improvises, instead explores how nature manifests itself in improvisation through being embodied by the participants. It is centred around the Immersive Listening research project. The chapter starts with a description of the project's context and content, and is followed by an analysis of participants' reflections, discussions, and final performance, as it relates to an embodiment of the wilderness environment.

The case study material consists mainly of interviews with the participants, group discussions, participants' own journal reflections, and my own personal reflections, as both project facilitator and participating artist. This research also draws on short interviews conducted with some of the organisers of *Skiing on Skin Festival 2015*. *Skiing on Skin* (SoS) is an international contact improvisation dance festival, which has taken place every February in Finland for a number of years. Though the location of the festival changes from year to year, there is always a strong connection to a natural environment. I spoke to some of the organisers about this aspect of the festival, and about nature in their work as improvisers in general. Returning to these interviews in the writing of this research, it appeared that some of

these dancers' thoughts and experiences with regards to improvisation and being in the wilderness resonate with insights from the analysis of the Immersive Listening project.

Chapter IV, *Rewilding Music*, ties up together loose ends. The insights from the Immersive Listening project are discussed and connected to the previously constructed theoretical framework, looking at the particularities and qualities of embodying the wilderness and how these experiences may be conducive for improvising or collaborating in unknown and unfamiliar contexts. It revisits the global musician's responsibilities and roles, and, through a discussion on cosmopolitan listening, it aims to demonstrate the possibilities of the wilderness as an educational environment for global musicians.

This final chapter ends with conclusions, in which the insights are summarised and the research question revisited in light of the research and its findings. There is an element of self-reflection with regards to my own artistic identity, in other words how I have personally changed through this project and research. The discussion also contains questions for future research, an overview of the limitations of this research, and closing remarks with regards to my personal beliefs about music, society, and education.

C. Personal Background

I think of myself as a creative artist and wilderness guide. I have been trained as a composer and pianist in my studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (2007–11), and as a wilderness guide at Tampere Vocational College (Tampereen

Seudun Ammattiopisto). As a guide, I work in Wilderness Youth Centres (Suomen Nuorisokeskukset) for a total of about three months a year.

My main instruments at the moment are piano, electronics, and electric guitar, and I am currently learning the shakuhachi. Though I work primarily with music and have a particular affinity to music-making, I also perform with movement, write poetry, and produce arts events. I see all of these as different expressions of the same process, similarly to how in other cultures there is no differentiation between music and other arts, such as in Tanzanian *ngoma* (Howard, 2014).

As a performing artist I am particularly interested in improvisation, stemming from a wish to be involved directly with sound. Though composition, which I had previously studied, is deeply enjoyable and insightful, it is to a certain degree removed from the immediacy and ephemerality of sound-making intrinsic in improvisation.

Improvisation is a way of being immersed in the moment and of surprising oneself in responding creatively to unfamiliar situations. I see improvisation as a yet unvisited wilderness area: though the exact details of the hike will be unfamiliar and new, the process of embarking on such an unplanned journey is familiar and can be practiced by visiting new and unfamiliar terrains again and again.

I believe improvisation is a healthy and invaluable way of music-making for any musician. The attitudes necessary for and developed through improvising are transferable, and particularly useful in collaborative projects which involve people from different disciplines.

For the past two years I've been studying on the GLOMAS programme at the Sibelius Academy, now part of the University of the Arts. My wish was to deepen my musicianship in a wider sense, and find ways of connecting my experiences in the wilderness to the collaborative music-making that I so enjoyed in my last years in London.

This thesis is the culmination of these two years of studies and personal (re)search into my own artistic identity: as a collaborative musician, improviser, wilderness guide, and researcher. I have a strong belief that the core attitudes we need to embrace as individuals and as societies in order to deal with the crises that face the world today are tightly connected. The othering of refugees and foreign cultures is accompanied by an othering of nature; appropriation of those cultures by an appropriation of the natural environment. The arts have a unique capacity in grounding us to the present moment in all its historical and relational context, and to highlight that in being human we are inherently connected to each other and to our environment.

D. Key Concepts

A number of key concepts and definitions relevant to this study are presented here, in order to facilitate understanding of the main body of this research. Some of these terms, such as *improvisation* and *wilderness*, will be expanded upon later as necessary and only a short overview of the term is presented at this stage.

1. The Global Musician

The Nordic Master of Global Music (GLOMAS) is a joint music master developed by GLOMUS, the Global Music Network (GLOMAS, n.d.). GLOMUS is a network of higher-education institutions whose main aims are stated as “intercultural communication, knowledge sharing, capacity building and organizational development; and musical interaction for mutual inspiration and innovation” (GLOMUS, n.d.).

The GLOMAS programme was initially launched in 2010 among three Nordic universities: Royal Academy of Music, Aarhus (Denmark), Sibelius Academy (Finland) and Lund University’s Malmö Academy of Music (Sweden). It is now continued by the Royal Academy of Music in Aarhus (Denmark) and the University of the Arts, Helsinki (Finland), a merger between the three art academies of Helsinki: Theatre Academy (Teatterikorkeakoulu), Fine Arts Academy (Kuvataideakatemia) and Sibelius Academy (Sibelius-Akatemia). The programme is currently in its sixth year and will include bachelor degree studies as of Autumn 2016, expanding to a full 5.5-year degree in Finland. The scope of the master is to train global musicians. In the course’s own description:

“The programme embraces cultural diversity and aims to educate innovative transcultural musicians and pedagogues with a strong sense of global responsibility. Through the GLOMAS curriculum, [musicians from a diverse range of musical and cultural backgrounds] will develop the ability to perform, communicate, collaborate and lead in a wide range of musical, cultural and socially-engaged contexts.” (GLOMAS, n.d.)

Rather than striving to produce a walking lexicon of the world’s various musics, the Global Music programme aims to equip musicians with the skills and attitudes to respond meaningfully in any given context.

Peter Renshaw, a creative learning consultant with a keen interest in the arts and lifelong learning, has put together an extensive list of competencies necessary for artists working in cross-sector, cross-arts, and cross-cultural settings, which shares much common ground with the skills relevant to a global musician’s work (Thomson, 2013). These competencies are broken down into **values** (e.g. “honesty; compassion; integrity”); **interpersonal skills** (e.g. “empathy; trust; openness; [...] confidence to share one’s vulnerability”); **communication skills** (e.g. “framing appropriate questions; active listening [...]; being open and non-judgemental”); **personal skills** (e.g. “time-management; reliability; [...] managing stress”), as well as **performance** and **creative skills** (e.g. “technical skills on instrument or voice; musical versatility and flexible approaches to performance; [...] quality of listening

and sensitivity to sound; [...] fluency in improvisation; [...] understanding different approaches to arts practice”) (Renshaw 2010, pp.66–71).

Renshaw also includes what is not typically considered artists’ skills, such as **leadership skills** (e.g. “creating an inspiring, enabling environment; [...] having the capacity to respect, listen to and act on other points of view; [...] to be able to work collaboratively”) and **management skills** (e.g. “having a realistic timescale; [...] being pragmatic about logistical challenges; [...] managing an experienced team of workshops leaders and supporting musicians; [...] helping to build up and nurture appropriate partnerships”) (Renshaw 2010, pp.66–71).

Moreover, global musicians ought to widen their understanding of what music is and can be, in order to interact with people who share different ideas about music. Looking at music-making through a lens inclusive of other cultures, the idea of “music,” often taken for granted within the same culture or subculture, becomes subject to discussion and reflection. What is music? Do people from other cultures share the same idea about music as I do? What is important in their music? How do they understand or listen to my music? In which ways am I biased listening to theirs? Ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl, who has been a very prolific writer on this very topic, points out that

“we are overwhelmed by the multitude of musical sounds extant in the world and perhaps even more by the variety of ideas about music, the variety of ways to conceive of (what we in our culture call) music, promulgated by the world's peoples and the components of any one society.” (Nettl, 2010, p. 216)

These are naturally all too familiar questions for ethnomusicologists. In fact, any global musician will have to embrace an ethnomusicologist's mindset in working with the other: this certain openness and willingness to communicate and understand from another person's point of view.

2. Ecomusicology

Ecomusicology as a term appeared in the literature in the 1970s, though it only gained wider recognition at the turn of the millennium (*ecomusicology*, n.d.). Rather than "ecological musicology," the term stands for "ecocritical musicology." That is, a musicology which adopts a critical and aware attitude towards the connections between its subject matter—music—and the environment, similarly to what ecocriticism is to literature.

Musicologist Aaron S. Allen, in his definition of ecomusicology, explains that "[it] considers the relationships of music, culture, and nature; i.e., it is the study of musical and sonic issues, both textual and performative, as they relate to ecology and the environment" (2011, p. 392).

Like ecocriticism, ecomusicology is by nature an interdisciplinary field. Although the connections between music and the environment have been around since at least Ancient Greece, there has been a revival in this interest partly due to an increased awareness of environmental issues in the last decades. It is naturally connected to disciplines with a similar interest in the inter-relations of their subject matter and its context, such as ecology, ecocriticism, and so on (Allen, 2011, p. 391).

Furthermore, a number of fields have emerged out of—or were later attached to—the field of ecomusicology, such as biomusics, acoustic ecology, soundscape ecology, zoomusicology and so forth.

Likewise, this research lies comfortably within the realm of ecomusicology, exploring exactly the relationship between natural environment and improvised music-making.

3. Improvisation

Improvisation is an elusive word, as virtually any essay or book written on the topic reaffirms. Japanese composer Jo Kondo used to say that “there are as many kinds of music as there are people on this planet” (Paul Newland, 2008, personal correspondence). Replace “music” with “improvisation” and the words are equally apropos to the question at hand. In spite of a pleasant elusiveness of the term, it is nevertheless necessary to delineate what improvisation is for the purposes of this research.

At the etymology of the word lies *improviso*, Latin for “unforeseen; not studied or prepared beforehand” (*improvisation*, n.d.). In its broadest definition, therefore, improvisation is a performance in which the performers do not know what’s going to happen. Arguably, they know what is going to happen in terms of the attitude they bring into the performance from moment to moment, the process. However, the artistic outcome—the content, in terms of material, forms, structures, interactions—is unknown: unrehearsed and undefined until the very moment it is brought into existence.

4. Soundscape

Soundscape is a term first established by R. Murray Schafer in the 1970s, which has since shaped entire disciplines studying the world through sound, such as soundscape ecology (Schafer, 1977; Krause, 2015). While innovative in the 1970s when Schafer first started using the word soundscape, it has since entered standard English dictionaries (e.g. Oxford Music Dictionary or Dictionary.com).

In his writings, Schafer highlighted a tendency in “our” culture¹ to focus on the visual, rather than the aural. He spoke of “eye culture” (Wrightson, 1999, p. 10), and while he is neither the first nor the only person to identify such a tendency to focus on the visual (see McLuhan, 1962; 1967; Berendt, 1988), he was a prominent thinker in understanding the implications of this tendency: an impoverished knowledge about, and experience of the world through sound (Schafer, 1977, p. 10).

The word *soundscape* is defined as the “acoustic environment as perceived or experienced and/or understood by a person or people, in context.” That is, if acoustic environment is all the sounds which are produced in an environment, soundscape is the perceived sonic environment. It is the aural equivalent of a landscape. A landscape is what we are able to perceive of a land. Similarly, a soundscape is our own limited perception of an acoustic environment. Definitions of acoustic environment and soundscape have both been since standardised by the International Organisation of Standardization (ISO 12913–1:2014).

¹ Presumably North American and European, as well as other cultures in a process of “modernization” in the sense of embracing values and attitudes of these cultures.

5. Soundwalk

Soundwalk is a term originating with Schafer and the World Soundscape Project, which refers to walking with a focus on listening to sounds and one's relationship to the environment through sound. Hildegard Westerkamp, associated with the World Soundscape Project, explains that a "sound walk is any excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment. It is exposing our ears to every sound around us no matter where we are" (1974, p. 18). Schafer (1977) makes a distinction between a *listening walk*, essentially any walk focused on listening, and a *soundwalk*, "an exploration of the soundscape of a given area using a score as a guide" (1977, p. 213). Throughout the Immersive Listening project, we have been using the word soundwalk to refer to Westerkamp's definition of *soundwalk* (which is closer to Schafer's *listening walk*) and will thus be used as such in this writing.

Schafer (1967; 1977) treated listening walks and soundwalks as crucial in ear-cleaning, a process of opening the aural sense to sound around us. Ear-cleaning was for Schafer a necessary part of education, the foundation for rediscovering "improvisatory and creative abilities" as "the student learns something very practical about the size and shape of things musical" (1967, p. 1).

Others, such as Pauline Oliveros, have developed similar practices (see *Deep Listening*, Oliveros, 2005) which refer to being similarly focused on one's relationship to the environment through sound, as well as being aware of the nature of sound itself.

Soundwalking was one of the core activities we engaged with during the Immersive Listening projects. As will be discussed in detail in a later section, each

day of the Immersive Listening research project would start and end with a soundwalk, followed by a reflection on the soundwalk. This provided a forum for discussion with a shared set of experiences and allowed us to enter a space of listening intently to our surroundings.

6. Wilderness

The terms nature, environment, and wilderness have all been used to mean a range of things over the years, depending on the field and context.

The term “natural” has been used in research in the humanities to describe an environment other than urban (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Rohde & Kendle, 1994; Wrightson, 1999; Allen, 2011) in order to study the qualitative differences of such spaces and our relationship to them. In Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) *natural* was also applied to park areas (or “green” areas) within urban environments, pastures, fields, and forests alike. Some of the effects they were studying were present even in such instances of forest or “nature” within urban environments, with the degree of the effect varying between these places and a solely natural environment, that is, an environment with no built structures or human interference.

In popular terms, the word has often been used in the context of *nature protection* or *nature conservation* to mean an environment that is primarily non-urban. A discussion about plans for a local park in a big city is not typically referred to as “nature conservation.”

This othering of the environment by humans—treating nature as an object to be manipulated rather than as part of one’s identity—is, in fact, central to Small’s

dissection Western culture's assumptions about the world (1978). In a chapter titled *The Commanding of Nature*, music educator and philosopher Christopher Small examines how these assumptions—the Cartesian mind–body, or the Christian human–nature dichotomies, which have dominated much of European thinking and philosophy—are expressed in education and the arts, and their implications with regards to the health of society at large.

Another word is the word “environment” as in “environmentalism,” “environmental crisis,” “protect/save the environment” and so on (e.g. as used by Slater, 1994). Etymologically, *environment* means *that which environs*, or surrounds (*environment*, n.d.). An environment is thus ever-present, for nothing can exist but within an environment. In this light, the word is useful in identifying a larger context within which we exist, and which exists within us in our perception and understanding of it.

The simplest definition of the wilderness, employed in this research, is that of the wilderness as a “self-willed land” (Vest, 1985, p. 324). This is in contrast to urban or rural environments, characterised by, and organised according to, human intention and agency. A wilderness is a place which is self-organised and which features an *emergent* order, not an order *established* from one species in it.

For the purposes of this research, the terms *natural environment* and *wilderness* are employed. A slight difference in meaning can be discerned, whether the focus is on the *environing quality* of a place with unbuilt features, or on the particular qualities of such an unbuilt environment, but the terms will be used for the most part interchangeably, depending on the literature that is being discussed. The usage of

the word will also depend on whether the discussion is about psychological studies (which typically refer to “natural environments”) or the Immersive Listening project.

7. Rewilding

Rewilding is a process of restoration of natural environments, in contrast to the idea of *nature conservation*. It was coined by Dave Foreman in the 1990s and has since entered standard English dictionaries (*rewild* n.d.). *Conservation* of nature often aims to preserve a landscape as policy-makers decide that it ought to be, at the same time disregarding its own tendencies: essentially “[freezing] living systems in time” (Monbiot, 2013, p. 9). The conservationist approach seeks to extend control to areas outside the urban, and is well in line with the *museum* mentality, whether in the form of a physical museum of artworks and artefacts, or an intellectual museum of patented ideas, that pervades European and Europe-influenced aesthetics.

In harmony with the definition of wilderness as a self-willed land, *rewilding* recognises the agency of the land itself and seeks to return will to such agents, allowing the land to be shaped into whatever it wills to be: “[Rewilding] understands that to keep an ecosystem in a state of arrested development, to preserve it as if it were a jar of pickles, is to protect something which bears little relationship to the natural world” (Monbiot, 2013, p. 9). Human rewilding can then be thought of “as an enhanced opportunity for people to engage with and delight in the natural world” (2013, p. 11). Political and environment author George Monbiot talks of rewilding as a means of allowing ourselves to feel once more at home, rediscover a set of

relationships with our immediate environment and find more meaningful ways of connecting to it: in other words, to “escape from ecological boredom” (2013, p. 11).

8. Flow

Flow, as described and studied by Hungarian psychologist Mihály Csikszentmihályi and his associates, is a state of optimal experience in which a person is immersed in the activity they are performing (Csikszentmihályi, 1990). It is usually defined as an activity in which the individual’s skills are in balance with the challenges of the activity and is characterised by a heightened and seemingly effortless concentration in the activity, a distorted sense of time, and experiencing the activity as being intrinsically rewarding, among others (Nakamura & Csikszentmihályi, 2001).

The concept is often associated with “peak performance” and creativity (Ivtzan & Hart, 2016, p. 15), and flow has been shown to be more enjoyable when attained within, or with, a group (Walker, 2010). *Group flow* may be linked to has been described by improvisors as “group mind” (Borgo, 2006, p. 2): the feeling that the performance takes a direction for which no individual member is making the executive decision.

9. Embodiment

Embodiment is a term that has emerged out of the European phenomenology scene in the works of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty, in embracing the concept of *embodiment* over *body* sought “to overcome the practical

and theoretical limitations of a metaphysical mind/body dualism” (Weiss & Haber, 1999, p.xiv). Embodiment means that the body is not an independent part of our identity, but it is through the body that we exist and act in the world as subjects.

Related is the concept of *embodied knowledge*, which is defined as “a type of knowledge in which the body knows how to act. [...] One of the important features of this knowledge is that the lived body is the knowing subject” (Tanaka, 2013, p. 47). This is not an entirely new concept—a similar concept was indeed formulated and developed by social philosopher Polanyi (1966), which he called *tacit knowledge*. Polanyi asserted that “we can know more than we can tell” (p. 4), and as such probed into this kind of knowledge that we definitely have, though cannot verbalise.

Embodied knowledge can, therefore, be seen as an elaboration on this idea of knowing more than one can tell, which involves the body as the primary means through which exist in the world and know things about it, rather than an independent entity which our self inhabits and is in control of. It is embodied knowledge as such, and the ways it is expressed through group improvisation, that this research is concerned with.

E. Research Question

The purpose of this research is to investigate the possible effects that being in a wilderness setting may have on group improvisation. Specifically, this research looks into the skills required for improvisation or collaboration which is not limited to one particular discipline, culture, or genre, and how development of such skills may be useful for a global musician’s education.

In the Immersive Listening case studies, improvisation is used as a medium to study these effects, due to its intrinsic directness and openness to the current situation, as opposed to a performance mode which focuses on stylistic elements. This is accompanied by verbal reflections on those immersive experiences.

The research question, therefore, can be formulated as such: “How does being in the wilderness affect us, physically and cognitively? In which ways are these experiences embodied, and how do they manifest themselves in artistic creativity, as expressed in improvisation?”

The above question forms the core of the research's impetus, which is further concerned with a second question: “What implications do these findings have in an educational context for global musicians?” Exploring, in other words, potential applications in global musicians' education.

F. Artistic Research

In attempting to construct an understanding of the ways improvisation is affected by the imminent environment, this research makes use of artistic experience and expression in investigating and exploring the research question. In conjunction with a verbalisation of these experiences and other reflections, there is an acceptance—and embracement of the fact—that certain knowing exists experientially and manifests itself in and through artistic practice.

The nature, therefore, of this research is an artistic one—that is to say, this research constitutes *artistic research*. Artistic research is generally defined as

research in which the artistic experience is integral to the knowledge produced. “The knowledge that artistic research strives for, [sic] is a *felt* knowledge” (Klein, 2010, p. 6). In this spirit, artistic research is artistic practice in which “the artist produces an artwork and researches the creative process, thus adding to the accumulation of knowledge” (Hannula et al., 2005, p. 5).

The theoretical framework constructed from examining concepts and ideas in related disciplines is done side by side with artistic practice, in which we experience ourselves (as artists–researchers) the effects of being in the wilderness in our art-making. As participants in the case study, we reflect verbally about the experiences, both in discussion and in written reflections. At the same time, there is an understanding that “artistic experience” is itself “a form of reflection” (Klein, 2010, p. 5) which is irreplaceable by words. Reflection, both verbal and artistic, is a form of understanding these processes and is vital in artistic research. In some aspects, the knowledge itself is unmanifestable except *through* improvisation.

As such, the knowledge that is arrived at through this research cannot be separated from the artistic experience which led to this knowledge, such as the personal and artistic backgrounds of the participants. Nor can it be considered independently of the specificities and particularities of our experiences or the environments we have been exposed to.

The text is thus accompanied by videos related to the *Immersive Listening* excursion into the wilderness, such as documentation of some of the exercises and extracts from the final improvisation/performance. The improvisation itself, as well as all the exercises we performed during our time in the forest, form part of the

research, and their documentation provides a more direct insight into the expression of this embodied knowledge through improvisation.

CHAPTER II: THE NATURE OF IMPROVISATION

A. Improvisation revisited

Improvisation was defined earlier as performance which is “unforeseen; not studied or prepared beforehand” (*improvisation*, n.d.). Beyond a working definition, it is also vital to understand certain processes and modes of being that are engaged in improvisation, and the difference in character compared to other forms of performing, or, in fact, the various forms of improvising, such as solo vs. group.

Improvisation is primarily a process, rather than a product, and in its manifestations in different cultures it is “a vast network of practices, with various artistic, political, social, and educational values” (Solis & Nettle, 2009, p.xi). All of the diverse range of practices which can be termed improvisation feature certain basic principles of improvisation: of creating in the moment, of not knowing what’s coming ahead; of being (in the) present.

Essentially any act of music-making is an improvisation: no one ever knows quite exactly what is going to happen, no music performance is exactly identical to any other (Nettl, 1974). We find that improvisation—rather than a binary categorisation, the opposite of which is usually assumed to be composition—is a continuum, in which one can have more or fewer degrees of freedom: playing Chopin, Feldman, Brazilian choro, free jazz, or gamelan are different only in degree, not in character.

While a very valid definition ethnomusicologically, for the purpose of this research it is to a certain extent useful to differentiate between performance and improvisation in terms of *intention*, and the relationship of the identity of the performance’s content

to the performers. In other words, in musical performance, like in a dance choreography, the focus of a performance is on authentically (re-)producing an already existing work. The work's identity as a work exists more or less independently of who is performing it and where, and the parameters of authenticity and judgement of the performance depend on the idiom and context.

An example from European classical music is Beethoven's 5th Symphony, which exists regardless of who plays it. Similarly, in Brazilian *choro* the song "Carinhoso" exists independently of the configuration of musicians playing it or the occasion. The Zimbabwean song "Ndakuti Sara," or Japanese folksong "Kurokami" share the same quality, among others. Within this practice there is music which allows the performer to make more or less creative decisions with regards to certain aspects of the final product. This brings forth the individuality of the performers, such as in the case of jazz standards, Feldman's open scores, or Cage's aleatoric music. The performers are free to creatively engage with the content, yet the identity of what is produced, the form, lies elsewhere.

In more improvised performances, the product or performance in its entirety is inseparable from the people involved in it, and, in fact, from the situation—temporally and spatially—in which it is performed. The performance has no substance, no identity, other than the one created in the present moment, by the people creating it. Form and content are forged in the moment as a function of the present situation. Participants create both form and content unforeseeably.

Improviser Bailey delights in this ephemerality of music, for whom "the essence of improvisation is probably as elusive as the moment in which it finds its existence,"

and finds that “this nature of improvisation exactly resembles the nature of music”—that is to say, that it is “essentially fleeting; its focus is its moment of performance” (1992, p. 153). Bailey’s perspective is shared by other prominent thinkers on improvisation and improvisers themselves, such as Stephen Nachmanovitch, a student of Gregory Bateson’s and improviser himself, who believes that “to improvise is to be completely present right here in this place and this time” (2010, p. 7).

It is in this sense of the word improvisation that the interest of this research lies, because of the creative responsibility the improvisers have with regards to creating a space in which they can be interact creatively. The function of the situation (spatially and temporally) is maximally expressed in this specific artistic form, exactly because of a lack of idiom, which would in other instances provide a form and structure within which one could make creative and aesthetically appropriate decisions.

Composer Cornelius Cardew, in his handbook for *Treatise*, mentions briefly his experiences with the AAM improvisation group. He wrote that, as improvisers,

“we are *searching* for sounds and for the responses that attach to them, rather than thinking them up, preparing them and producing them. The search is conducted in the medium of sound and the musician himself is at the heart of the experiment.” (1971, p. xviii, emphasis in original)

Cardew speaks of the process of searching and exploring as the sine qua non of improvisation, a valid apprehension of the explorative aspect of improvisation coming from the point of view of an improviser, rather than a theorist. When improvisers

approach music-making as such they are open to the moment, to their being here now, and the current situation is expressed through them in performance. It is a mode of art-making which explicitly connects performers to each other, to environment, and to the audience. Cardew focuses further on the subjectivity of the experiencer—the musician or improviser—as being at the heart of such musical (re)search.

This research study is concerned with group improvisation. Group, or collective, improvisation is different to solo improvisation in that the performers need to be aware of their fellow improvisers, and be in conscious interaction with them. In solo improvisation, one does not need to negotiate any musical choices with anybody else: the entirety of musical choices depend on that one person. In group improvisation, however, the performance almost has a life of its own. Moreover, in solo improvisation, one does not need to negotiate “space,” in the sense of letting things develop without being involved in them, or “silence,” stepping back from being an active creator of material and simply observing for a while.

Borgo (2006) has written how developing a “group mind” is integral to collective composition (p. 2), evidence of an emergent order which permeates the group and its creative decisions in the course of performance. This *emergent order*, in group improvisations or creative processes where there is no underlying structure or leader guiding the group (Sawyer, 1999), is contrary to an established order, defined respectively by a structure (e.g. idiomatic, cultural, notational) or leader (internal, within the group; or external, such as a conductor).

A defining difference between a group improvisation and a group performance of a set piece are “silences,” or entries and exits of performers into and from play. Such decisions are negotiated in real time by the group and are not dictated by a structure external to the group, or at a time prior to the performance, such as by a composer, choreographer, or formal idiomatic structure. The responsibility for this, and other creative choices lie entirely within the performers, regardless of whether the sonic outcome falls within an idiom (e.g. free jazz) or not (e.g. Murayama’s non-idiomatic improvisation or the AMM group in the UK), and are taking place in real time, as the performance unfolds.

The research is further concerned particularly with improvisation between people who do not share a common improvisational framework or genre, for example, jazz or contemporary dance. The framework referred to can be cultural, disciplinary, or a genre (different genres within the same culture or discipline).

For all its clumsiness as a word, the term *trans-idiomatic* is employed here as a potentially useful concept: a group improvisation whose contentual (e.g. musical) outcome transcends the individual cultural, linguistic, or disciplinary idioms which the individual improvisers are familiar with or trained in. Improvisation between a Ghanaian percussionist and a Tuvan throat singer; between a classical musician and a jazz musician from the same cultural background; between a folk dancer and a contemporary poet. There are common elements that cut across all these different forms (content-wise) of improvisation, competencies that one could put into use in a very wide range of contexts and situations, regardless of one’s own idiom or preferred discipline. Learning to improvise expertly only in a jazz idiom does not

necessarily equip one with the right competencies to engage in a meaningful improvisation with a dancer, a folk musician, or a poet.

Trans-cultural and trans-disciplinary improvisation seem, therefore, to be essentially much more similar than they are different. What is different is the *idiom* they are concerned with: cultural or disciplinary, respectively. The core underlying processes in which the improvisers go through—the acts of empathising, connecting to something other than what they are, letting go of assumptions and judgements—are common to both, and integral to creating a meaningful experience for performers and audience alike. It is exactly these processes that this research is interested in exploring, because of their transferability and relevance to the work of global musicians.

The word *trans-idiomatic* has been previously used by jazz saxophonist and improviser Anthony Braxton and followers of his teachings and ideas. Braxton uses the term to essentially describe drawing inspiration from many different sources or idioms, rather than only one idiom, during the course of performance (Lock, 2008). At the time of writing, Braxton is unwilling to talk in-depth about his ideas, and neither he nor his followers have specified or discussed the amount of blending of different idioms that needs to take place to qualify as trans-idiomatic, or the process in which the blended idioms come out as trans-idiomatic, rather than simply *fusion* music, which is a well-established term. In Braxton's use, the term *trans-idiomatic* is more ambiguous than it is useful. In the inferred use which appears in the interviews

where it is mentioned, it does little more than essentially describe any artist, anywhere in the world, at any point in history.²

Terms and definitions, however, are only valuable insofar as they bring clarity to communication. The scope of this research is not to try and propagate a new meaning for the word *trans-idiomatic* or to be a provocation of Braxton's term. However, for the sake of clarity, any instances where the word *trans-idiomatic* is used in this paper it acts as an umbrella term for trans-disciplinary/trans-cultural/trans-genre improvisation in the interest of clarity and simplification. The focus of the discussion will be the commonalities of all these kinds of improvisation, rather than their individualities, and as such the word trans-idiomatic is used to refer to the shared elements across these different kinds of improvisation.

The essential and working definition of improvisation for the purposes of this essay, therefore, is that it is a practice of unpremeditated music-making rooted in the present moment; a function of the relationship of improvisers to their histories, present state of mind, other improvisers, audience, and environment, as expressed in creative processes. Furthermore, it is an improvisation that occurs with other improvisers (as opposed to solo) and whose resulting content does not fall comfortably within any one of the individual improvisers' idioms or practices. In its totality, the content of the performance transcends the individual performers' idioms, and the identity of the performance is inseparable from the present situation.

What will be explored in a later section is the ways in which being in the wilderness provides a common starting point, an embodied structure which can

² Keith Jarrett, when asked whether he takes inspiration from other arts rather than music, without hesitation asked back "do babies come from babies?" (Dibb, 2005). Arguably any artistic practice is informed by other artistic and non-artistic experiences the artist has had in their life.

inform the interactions of a group in improvisation, both in terms of content and in terms of the relationship of the participants to each other and the process of working together.

1. Improvisation and Embodiment

In the industrial world, art has often been spoken in terms of objects, or artworks. This is reasonable in the plastic and literary arts, where the final product is indeed an object. In relatively recent years this has also been applied to music. This happened first with the advent of notation when music became the notated work, of which the audience experiences versions, performances, or executions. A more recent shift was with recording technology, where the performer is no longer tied to the music: one can enjoy music without the presence of musicians. Blaukopf (1992), social musicologist and author of *Musical Life in a Changing Society*, speaks of the “transformation of musical activity into a *real object*” (p. 175, emphasis in original) and describes its impacts on music-making practices.

A view of art as being primarily a product, an object, or a commodity, is limiting an understanding of artistic practice. Art tends to be viewed as an artefact, rather than an experience. As American philosopher John Dewey points out, whose book *Art as Experience* (1934) presents an aesthetics based on the experiential nature of arts, “since the actual work of art is what the product does with and in experience, [identifying art with the object apart from human experience] is not favorable to understanding” (p. 1). This view is embraced among others by Christopher Small, who believes that art is not about objects meant for contemplation, but is “essentially

a *process*, by which we explore our inner and outer environments and learn to live in them” (1978, pp. 3–4). Small, a music educator and performer himself, indeed wrote an entire book on *Musicking*, a gerund of the noun *music*, which he uses to highlight the fact that “music is not a thing but an activity, something people do” (1998, p. 2).

Viewing music-making, particularly improvisation, as primarily a process allows us to consider the ways that this process is affected by its immediate environment, both directly and indirectly, rather than considering art as independent of its context. Nothing in this world exists independently of its environment and we are, in fact, an immediate function of our environment. In Dewey's words:

“Life goes on in an environment; not merely in it but because of it, through interaction with it. No creature lives merely under its skin. [...] The career and destiny of a living being are bound up by its interchanges with its environment, not externally but in the most intimate way.” (1934, p. 12)

In the European phenomenology scene of the 20th century, embodiment has been a central theme. Since Merleau-Ponty's development of the idea of *embodiment* as a replacement for the Cartesian mind–body dualism, it has since been adopted and developed by many other thinkers around the world (Weiss & Haber, 1999). In fact, the idea that in thinking and knowing we utilise the entire body, and not only our brain or mind, has since taken a central role in cognitive sciences (Kahneman, 2011, p. 51). Through the lens of embodiment we can construct an understanding of the ways in which the environment affects the creative expression of improvising artists.

Embodied knowledge, as discussed earlier, is the kind of knowledge that most directly relates performer to environment. Wilson (2002) presents a further subdivision of embodied cognition: *on-line* embodiment and *off-line* embodiment.

On-line embodiment is essentially a type of embodiment that happens in the present situation: when we are underwater we hold our breath; indoors we tend to speak more quietly than outdoors because walls and reverberation amplify our voice; and so on. On-line embodiment is the direct influence of the environment on us as living bodies. Off-line embodiment “include[s] any cognitive activities in which sensory and motor resources are brought to bear on mental tasks whose referents are distant in time and space or are altogether imaginary” (Wilson, 2002, p. 635). Off-line embodiment allows an observation of any experiential residues, which manifest themselves at a later stage and in a different context than the one in which they were imprinted.

Through these two different types of embodiment, the aim is to arrive at a more thorough understanding of how improvisers embody the wilderness in the Immersive Listening case study. Looking at on-line embodiment, the reflections and experiences of improvisers during their time in the forest gives an insight into how the environment affects performers while they are immersed in it. Through off-line embodiment, we can construct an understanding of how these experiences affected improvisers beyond the immediate moment and environment. Essentially, looking into how the improvisers and their interactions in working together were continued to be affected by these immersive experiences in the natural environment *after* these experiences, and once the participants had returned to an urban environment.

Improvisation is a direct interaction with the situation, which includes the physical environment in which improvisers find themselves. Improvisation's intimate relationship with embodiment renders it an ideal tool for exploring the research question.

2. Teaching improvisation

The question of whether improvisation can be taught or not is arguably at least as debated as the definition of improvisation itself, and is a continuous source of debate among musicians today (Borgo, 2005, p.8). The issue with the debate seems to lie more with the definition of *teaching* than the definition of improvisation. Hickey (2009) looks at the education of improvisation through ideas on education by Tishman et al. (1993). He presents learning as a continuum: on one side of the scale is the teacher-directed transmission model; on the other side is learner-oriented enculturation (Figure 1). Schooling typically finds itself on the transmission side of the spectrum. On the other side of the scale are, for example, competencies related to cultural behaviours: learning to eat with hands in India, for example, is something no one is schooled in, but children pick up as they grow up (Hickey, 2009).



Figure 1. Continuum of 'teaching' (adapted from Hickey, 2009, p.287).

The various methods employed in improvisation and its education have been outlined before (see Pressing, 1987; more recently Thomson, 2008; Hickey, 2009). What is of interest and relevant to this research is understanding what constitutes a conducive environment for learning to improvise, and by extension whether the wilderness, as a place, has some of these qualities.

Everyone is improvising to a certain extent in going about their daily routines. Activities such as keeping a conversation or walking down a busy street are not

usually labelled as improvisations, yet they are very much improvised acts (Sawyer, 2000). Unforeseen, unpremeditated expressive acts, they are improvisatory in nature, in the idioms of language or walking respectively. In walking to work, although one might take a similar route every day, the specific route of the commute will be different every time. At rush hour, pavement space needs to be negotiated rapidly between fellow commuters, shoppers walking in and out of buildings, people on the phone, travellers with luggage, the occasional cyclist, and so on. Everyone moves at different speeds, towards different directions, and though we do not always pay conscious attention to each and every person around us consciously, very rarely do we bump into each other. Seijiro Murayama, in a workshop on non-idiomatic improvisation, called this a walking “dance” and commented that observing such a walking dance one can see how harmonious it looks as a total—almost choreographed—though there is no overarching order imposed from outside the participants (Murayama, 2015).

Improvising, in that sense, seems to take place all the time. This is not a kind of improvisation we are trained in—we pick these behaviours up from everybody else, through a process of enculturation into these patterns of behaviours. It is, therefore, not unreasonable that an education of non-idiomatic or trans-idiomatic improvisation is likely to veer towards *enculturation* rather than *transmission*. Instead of transmitting particular skills with regards to improvising, paraphrasing Tishman et al. (1993, p. 148) it could be said that a more apt method would be to teach students to respond creatively in appropriate contexts. In an enculturation model of learning improvisation, the potential students of improvisation are expected to be immersed in

the stuff they will be working with, for there is no substitute for the artistic experience itself. In Schafer's words, "[...] one learns about sound only by making sound, about music only by making music. All our investigations into sounds should be verified empirically by making sounds ourselves and by examining the results" (1967, p. 1). This indicates the importance of being involved directly with the material of the artistic practice.

At this stage, it will be useful to distinguish between two different elements of an education of improvisation: the environment, the space in which the education takes place; and the skills needed to respond creatively in improvisation. The environment implies both a physical and mental space, potentially created or facilitated by a teacher. With regards to skills, Pressing (1987) had compiled an extensive view into the methods and models of improvisation. Of most interest to this research is Pressing's last category of improvisation and improvisation education, "allied to the self-realisation ideas of humanistic psychology" (1987, p. 144). This is this kind of improvisation that is closest to practices embraced in music pedagogic systems such as the ones developed by Shinichi Suzuki, Zoltán Kodály, and Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (Hickey, 2009).

a. Environment

An environment which is conducive to learning to improvise needs first and foremost to be a safe space. This includes both *physically*, that is, being a space where the improviser can physically relax and not have to worry about injury, damage to instruments, and so on; and *mentally*, a place in which the improviser is

unoccupied with information and worries irrelevant to the task at hand, and a place in which the student can be unhindered by worries and judgements about the content of one's imagination. Theatre improviser and educator Keith Johnstone (1981) mentions numerous times the importance of providing a model of reassurance and calm for students, and speaks that the role of a teacher is to be "living proof that the monsters are not real, and that the imagination will not destroy you" (p. 84).

The space also needs to be stimulating, rather than stifling. As mentioned earlier, Schafer (1967) talks about the importance of *playing* with sound when learning about sound, and being immersed in music-making when learning about music. One learns by doing, and having an opportunity to engage one's senses in the process of improvising is paramount to the practice itself. The challenge of the task at hand should constantly reflect the skills, abilities, and curiosity of the performer, in order to facilitate what was earlier described as a flow experience (Csikszentmihályi, 2009).

Another quality of a learning environment for improvisation is that it needs to be a non-judgemental environment. The improviser should not feel inhibited in their creative expression by the presence of strangers or exposure to a critical audience, who may be judging—verbosely or silently—the improviser's performance.

Johnstone touches upon this again and says that the role of the teacher is to allow the improviser to be uninhibited in their creative responses: "In life, most of us are highly skilled at suppressing action. All the improvisation teacher has to do is to reverse this skill and he creates very 'gifted' improvisers" (1981, p. 95). In a non-judgemental environment, a performer may behave in ways they would not otherwise, making unplanned discoveries about themselves and their practice.

Furthermore, a non-judgemental environment encourages making mistakes. In fact, it nurtures a mindset in which there are no “mistakes” (i.e. unacceptable or inappropriate content) and the participant is encouraged to focus on this inner process of *searching*, without thinking about the approval or disapproval of certain material by a potential audience, or teacher.

b. Skills

Many of the skills that are practiced through, and are valuable in, improvised practice are much in line with what Peter Renshaw lists as “the qualities, skills and attitudes perceived as central to effective creative practice in participatory settings” (Renshaw, 2010, pp. 66–67; 2013, pp. 56–58), as listed earlier (see p. 10).

On top of these interpersonal and artistic qualities that Renshaw lists, specifically in improvisation the two commonly listed core skills are the capacity to *listen actively* and to *be present* in the current situation and together with other people (Childs et al., 1982; Bailey, 1992; Kossak, 2007; Sgorbati, 2012; Hannula, 2015; Nachmanovitch, 2010). In all the complexities of these words, there is contained a range of many related skills, and though very closely related, the two terms are different:

Listening, apart from focused hearing, means the capacity to listen to one’s own impulses, to be aware of what others are doing, and how the environment affects one, including the audience, reverberation, weather, and so on. Listening means being perceptually open to what is happening around.

Being present means being acutely aware of the particularities of the present moment, the here and now, and accepting whatever is happening as part of how things are. It means being fully present with other people in the same situation, and aware how each person's presence affects the others, as well as sensitive to the ways in which the environment, including the space and its acoustics, the audience and its mood and participation, informs and affects the performance; and that the performance is, in fact, a *function* of such parameters, rather than independent of them.

3. Improvisation and the Global Musician

Group, trans-idiomatic improvisation can be a rewarding process for the global musician to be involved with. The dimensions in which the global musician can benefit from improvisation are outlined below:

a) The competencies needed for, and developed through, improvisation, such as listening, openness, honesty, vulnerability, sharing, giving space, letting go, and so on.

b) An understanding that learning (and, therefore, musicking) is not an achievement, but a *process*, and that relevant competencies should be developed continuously throughout one's practice.

c) Moving away from models and focusing on transferable skills. In musical terms, moving away from relying on a structure which takes on some of the

responsibility for the quality of the performance, and creating one's own structure, taking full responsibility for the course of the performance.

Arguably, the single most common “trap” for an improviser, or in fact any creative artist working in diverse contexts, is the “formula,” or the tendency to hold on to something that has worked before in the hope that it will work in a new context. Improvisation focuses on developing the skills necessary to respond creatively in new contexts, trusting that the process will work. It requires trust in oneself and one's skills; trust in others; and an uninhibited mind from assumptions and preconceived ideas of how things should turn out, in order to be able to respond as creatively as possible to the current challenges.

d) Learning through enculturation: because of a necessity to familiarise with a mode of learning closer to enculturation rather than transmission, the global musician gains confidence in creating their own learning experience independently of available transmission possibilities (and, where possible, in conjunction with them). The reality of doing field work and engaging with musicians from a diverse range of backgrounds is that there is not always a teacher with whom a global musician can study formally. The global musician needs to be able to respond to such situations independently and be responsible for learning about and learning to interact with a person and their cultural/artistic background.

Olga Witte, an ethnomusicologist and teacher at the Royal Academy of Music in Aarhus (Denmark) has previously lead a class on *Singing, Dancing, Playing* as part of the GLOMAS programme. In one of those classes in 2014, she approached

music-making and improvisation through an ethnomusicological lens and spoke informally of “modes” of improvisation. A *mode of improvisation* (unrelated to modes as tonalities and scales) is essentially the way a performer apprehends improvising: for example, in what parameters does one primarily think about music (in terms of pitches, scales/modes, motifs, textures?); what is significant in their music-making (story-telling; silence; movement; tonality); how are they communicating their music; what do they pay attention to when they listen; and so on. In other words, a mode of improvisation is akin to a person’s *Weltanschauung*³ (world-view) of music, or a *Musikanschauung* (music-view).

A *mode of improvising* or *Musikanschauung* can be verbalised, though more often it is something one knows but cannot verbalise: an embodied knowledge about one’s own practice. In Witte’s class we were asked to write on a piece of paper what we perceive as the central element of other people’s *modes of improvising*; we then swapped papers and attempted to improvise while performing through another person’s mode of improvising. In this exercise, we became aware of the existence of such modes of improvisation, and the ways in which we embody an understanding of other people’s modes of improvisation.

It is a vital skill for the global musician, therefore, to be able and develop empathy towards other people’s modes of improvising or art-making. There will, in fact, be cases where “music” is not an appropriate word, such as when encountering Tanzanian *ngoma*, a tradition which includes “music, drumming, dance, and storytelling” (Howard, 2014). This openness towards one’s own generally assumed

³ The word *Weltanschauung* (from German “Welt” world, and “Anschauung” view/outlook) is used to describe a person’s collective beliefs, assumptions, and perspectives on the world, and may include philosophical, spiritual, existential, and ethical values or beliefs (Naugle, 2002, pp. 64–65)

concepts, ideas, beliefs—in other words, an ethnomusicological, in character, curiosity—is essential in creative interactions between artists from unfamiliar backgrounds.

Improvisation also provides a model of music-making that is centred on process, rather than product. In an era dominated by musical objects such as CDs, scores, tracks, video clips, and so on, focusing on music as a process rather than a product enables one to have a more rich understanding of the variety of musical practices around the world. Rather than asking what kind of scales, instruments, pitches, patterns, etc, this music is “made of,” one is encouraged to ask instead the more complicated, and more relevant, question of “how and why is this music played; how do people who play it understand it?” which is sociomusicological or ethnomusicological in nature. This opens, rather than closes, possibilities for conversation and allows an interaction removed from politics of apprehension and exploitation.

Furthermore, and as will be seen at a later stage, many of the skills and competencies involved in improvisation are transferable and very valuable in interacting in unfamiliar contexts. As such, improvising as a practice offers an opportunity to develop such skills, which the global musician may then use in non-improvisatory contexts dealing with responding creatively in new and unplanned situations.

B. The Wilderness as Place

1. Place

Every living thing is in constant interaction with its environment—“no creature lives merely under its skin” (Dewey, 1934, p. 12). This is a fact that is often taken for granted, and the places in which we usually are do not gain a second look or thought (Casey, 1997). Archytas of Tarentum, in what is probably the earliest writing in Western philosophy to consider place, indicates that place is everything: place is where everything is, and where everything happens: “to be (at all) is to be in (some) place” (Archytas, quoted in Casey, 1997, p. 4).

Bringing attention to space and its qualities, and becoming aware of the fact that “place is an a priori of our existence on earth” (Casey, 1997, p. 4), is a first step towards understanding our existence as a manifestation of relationships with the environment, as opposed to independent and isolated existences. It is from this perspective that we can begin to understand the effects of our immediate (and historic) environment on our being, in order to be able to examine how an environment manifests itself through our artistic creative expression.

Place, moreover, is in certain ways part of our identity, in the way it is expressed through human activity. Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō’s work revolved around his term *fudo* (風土), which is typically translated as “climate” or “climaticity” (Mochizuki, 2006) and which he used “as a general term for the natural environment of a given land, its climate, its weather, the geological and productive nature of the soil, its topographic and scenic features” (Tetsurō, 1961, p. 1). *Fudo* is thus the

entirety of the environment in which a human being finds oneself, and which, expressed in human activities (e.g. the arts), behaviours (e.g. going fishing), and customs (e.g. building a house out of bamboo), is part of one's personal and cultural identity (pp. 7–8). His term *fudo-sei* (風土性) means just that: “the function of climate as a factor within the structure of human existence” (p. v).

Fudo-sei defines exactly what it is this research is attempting to observe. In essence, and through the Immersive Listening research project, the aim is to look at improvisation as *fudo-sei* (“a function of climate or climaticity”), and construct an understanding of how the different immediate environments (forest, urban) manifest themselves in improvisation.

2. The Indoors

Indoor spaces, in which urban people arguably spend most of their time, are insulated from the outside world and conditions inside them are to a certain degree controllable, centrally or individually. The indoors is often insulated from heat, sound, and, with the use of blinds and curtains, the surrounding landscape or cityscape. Surfaces are usually flat and rooms usually cubic in shape. There is a door for entering the room which can be closed in order to isolate inside from outside so that the activity that takes place indoors is not disturbed.

There are numerous benefits to such an arrangement. Inside a room, one is protected from the elements, and it's possible to work consistently regardless of time of day, season, or, in fact, location. The room, acting as a sort of “blank canvas,” can

be re-arranged according to the needs of the user(s), and support the activities that take place therein.

Though people living in urban settings spend the vast majority of their time indoors, there have been no conclusive studies with regards to adverse health effects of indoor spaces (Evans & McCoy, 1998, p. 85). Though, as Evans and McCoy suggest, the number of studies considering the issue are small, there are specific areas in which further research should be focused, and the pervasiveness of indoor spaces in urban life is a reason to take such studies into consideration.

Beyond any adverse psychological or physiological effects indoor spaces may have, the implications of the nature of indoor spaces can be briefly approached from a phenomenological point of view. For anthropologist Marc Augé, for example, such indoor spaces, including also supermarkets, airports, and so on, are *non-places*. That does not mean they are not places—as seen earlier, everything that exists is *emplaced*. By the word *non-places*, Augé means that as spaces they are ahistorical, non-relational, and are not concerned with identity (Augé, 1995). Indoor studios and practice rooms, which is where most hours are spent practising and rehearsing by performing artists in the industrial world, are, therefore, largely non-places. A studio in Australia in the heat of the summer and a studio in a basement in Svalbard Islands in the dead of the winter—given that window blinds are switched off—are impossible to tell apart by their intrinsic properties: the smells, looks, size, shape, and sounds of the room. Only by engaging with elements outside the indoors can one be reminded of where the building is located.

Indoor spaces insulate from stimuli of the outside world, urban or natural, with increasing efficiency. Whereas double-glazed windows do not let the trains, buses, or construction sounds seep through, they also do not let birdsong, sounds of the rain or wind, or children playing. The effects of the environments we are (re-)exposed to, therefore, upon exiting the indoors are to be looked at in the following sections.

3. The Outdoors

Anthropologist Florence Kluckhohn posited that each culture needs to address certain “basic human problems,” one of which is “man’s relation to nature” (quoted in Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989, p. 72). While a culture–nature, or human–nature, dichotomy may be perceived as obvious, and in line with the Cartesian body–mind division of experience, it is not culturally universal. In a case study of the Hagen people of Papua New Guinea, for example, Strathern (1980) discusses the danger of this seemingly unchallenged assumption. She discusses the wild–domestic dichotomy in the Hagen, and how wild elements can exist within what we identify as “culture,” and domestic elements can exist within what we call “nature”—demonstrating that a direct association of wild–domestic to nature–culture is impossible. A culture–nature dichotomy is not universal, nor can it be assumed that similar dichotomies exist in other cultures.

It is evident from Strathern’s comments that any discourse on nature, especially as it relates to anthropocentric constructs such as culture, society, and so on, is more complex than just a matter of choosing the right word. For this discourse, it is

accepted that both the wilderness and the urban are natural, in so far as they are both *of* this world. They differ qualitatively and in the ways these qualities affect us: physically, mentally, and in terms of our identity. Snyder points out, in the same spirit, that whereas big cities can be called *natural*, as they follow processes of nature just like anything else in existence, they are not *wild* places:

“They do not deviate from the laws of nature, but they are habitat so exclusive in the matter of who and what they give shelter to, and so intolerant of other creatures, as to be truly odd.” (Snyder, 1994, p. 12)

Earlier *the wilderness* was defined as a “self-willed land” (Vest, 1985, p. 324). Now it is time to examine how a self-willed land differs to urban environments. This analysis will start comparatively, looking at qualities of the wilderness juxtaposed to qualities of the urban environment, and then experientially, seeing how the wilderness is perceived differently by artists in the case study. The purpose of such a discussion is not to arrive at a judgement of whether one place is better than the other, but to understand the ways in which they differ qualitatively. The participants in the case studies came either from a background of music or dance, the creative materials in question being sound and movement. The wilderness is, therefore, examined in the following sections *sonically* and *spatially* respectively.

4. Sonically

Schafer (1977), who was earlier discussed in the definition of the word soundscape, further subdivides soundscapes into *lo-fi* and *hi-fi* soundscapes.

A soundscape is hi-fi when “discrete sounds can be heard clearly because of the low ambient noise level. [...] Sounds overlap less frequently” (p. 43). Pre-industrial town soundscapes are more hi-fi than an industrial city’s soundscape; daytime is more hi-fi than night-time; winter is more hi-fi than summer; and so on.

A lo-fi soundscape, on the other hand, is characterised by opaqueness and density, in which what would otherwise be foreground sound signals are obfuscated and lost (Schafer, 1977, p. 43). A big waterfall, the hum of the highway, being in the metro: in all these situations there is a density in sound which makes it difficult for other sound signals to be heard, and, therefore, more difficult for information to be carried through sound, as anyone who has tried to say something to another person in the aforementioned soundscapes can attest. Within the field of soundscape ecology, there are three more useful terms related to the composition of soundscapes: *geophony*, *biophony*, and *anthropophony* (Krause, 2015, p. 12):

Geophony consists of non-biological sounds: the wind, a river, waves, a volcano, and so on.

Biophony consists of sounds created by living organisms: the obvious examples are birds, mosquitos, dogs, and the less obvious are the snapping shrimp (producing bubble-like sounds in salt marshes), giraffe hums, or a beaver smacking its tail on the water.

Anthropophony, lastly, is exactly what it seems: sounds generated by humans. This includes speech and music, as well as what we call *noise*.

Krause makes a gross categorisation of all human-related sounds under “anthropophony.” This includes sounds of music and theatre, conversations, construction works, a busy highway, an aeroplane engine, radio shows, a train whistle, and mobile phone ringtones. One further distinction could be made between anthropophony, sounds produced by humans directly, and technophony, sounds produced by humans through technology—though, again, this brings with it further complications, such as whether *music* is anthropophony or technophony. Perhaps Krause himself wanted to avoid embarking on such a journey. However, there are many fundamental differences between all these sounds which Krause bundles under anthropophony in terms of how we relate to them, and whether we perceive them as pleasant or unpleasant; as wanted or unwanted; and so on. One certain aspect of anthropophony, which distinguishes it from geophony and biophony, is that all anthropogenic sounds bear with them a human agency: they are either created for another human being; by another human being; or are a side-effect of a function or technological artefact designed by a human being or serving another. As such, and like architecture, an environment saturated with anthropophonic sounds indicates an anthropocentrism, in terms of intention and agency, which is what distinguishes it from biophony and geophony.

Krause has also coined what he calls the *niche hypothesis*. Through reflecting on his own experiences and observations and building on the idea of Schafer's hi-fi soundscapes, Krause posited that there is an inherent balance in the frequency spectrum of sounds in a natural soundscape, which lacks in city environments (2015, pp. 39–40). He theorised that in a natural environment with a specific geophony, living organisms which use sound as means for communicating had to find an available frequency bandwidth which was “free,” or unoccupied by the already existing geophony. This behaviour maximises communication while minimising energy, and naturally such a behaviour is to be preferred to behaviours less efficient and more costly. As more and more species end up living in the same biome, each will tend to find its niche, creating what is perceived as a harmonious or balanced soundscape. Krause's *niche hypothesis* aims partly to explain why people report feeling that natural soundscapes are more relaxing and sound more harmonious, even though there are no pitches or traditionally perceived “harmonies.” This is evident, for example, in the abundance of “natural sounds” in alarm clocks and relaxation tapes.

In an urban environment, the tram, the pneumatic drill, the bus, the car's horn, an aeroplane: the sources of these sounds are not particularly picky about the frequency they produce because the sound is a side-effect of another function. Whereas car horns or alarms, for example, are designed to stand out against the general soundscape, and are thus louder and of higher frequency than other sounds in the acoustic environment, horn or alarm sound designers do not consult each other and agree to occupy a different frequency than all others, nor would such an

endeavour be practical. As such, there is a larger confluence of sounds than in a lo-fi natural soundscape, in which all sound-making animals have had to negotiate a part of the available frequency spectrum in order to communicate efficiently.

5. Spatially

Particular places and objects encourage or stimulate a particular kind of behaviour: a chair invites sitting; a door, opening; an amphitheatre, observing the stage; a library, being quiet and reading; and so forth. Architecture and design are both words closely related to urban environments and they are primarily concerned with *function* and *intention*. Architecture is concerned with space, *in* which things happen, and is in essence the art of rearranging material to create functional spaces. Design deals with objects, *with* which things happen, and constructs artefacts which can then be used for a specific function.

Whether it is cities, like London, which over the centuries have grown organically, or cities built decisively and with a plan, like Manhattan, any city planning has to take into account the behaviour that needs to be facilitated through architecture. Human intention permeates urban life.

This strongly affects the way we interact with our environment and our behaviour within it: we are only allowed to perform certain kinds of behaviours in certain kinds of spaces. One cannot drive a car in a library, or read a book in the middle of the highway. These structures determine the patterns of behaviour that urban dwellers become accustomed to, and (re)play every day in their daily routines. The sign warning people that “loitering is prohibited” is a stern reminder that spaces exist for a

purpose. Purposeless being may take place in designated areas: a park (though late at night it's suspicious), a beach, and other areas associated with leisure.

As architect Koolhaas (2002) portrays in his seminal essay *Junkspace*, urban environments are rife with patterns of waste, consumption, pollution, and the intention to perpetuate the system which produced these structures (social and architectural) in the first place: a modernised world centred around the corporate and the entertaining, the political and the private. Civilisation has moved from a direct contact and interrelation with the wild, the self-willed, the non-human, towards the human- or self-centred world. As Koolhaas comments (bleakly, comically, or both), “The cosmetic is the new cosmic” (2002, p. 190).

The wilderness is therefore, in a sense, the opposite of architecture: the uncontrolled and mysterious. It is that of which we are not in control, and in which are not the sole solicitors of function. The word *unbuilt*, as in *unbuilt environment*, was one of the terms that participants in the Immersive Listening research project used to describe the wilderness and differentiate it from urban settings, and from green areas within cities, such as parks.

Lacking in architectural structures, the wilderness also lacks social structures that both are the source of, and exist within, architected space. S. Kaplan and Talbot (1983) touch upon this aspect of the wilderness in their “psychologically oriented definition of what wilderness must be.” They put out three dimensions of the wilderness: a) dominated by the natural; b) there is “a relative absence of civilized resources for coping with nature;” and c) “there is a relative absence of demands on

one's behavior that are artificially generated or human-imposed" (S. Kaplan & Talbot, quoted in Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989, pp. 148–149).

Returning to the definition of wilderness as a "self-willed land," it is clear that a core characteristic of a wilderness is the fact that it is a non-intentional, or, rather, a pan-intentional place. It is a place where no one species, in particular, makes executive decisions with regards to the arrangement of living and non-living beings in the environment to satisfy that one species' needs. In contrary, the resulting order *emerges* from a constant interplay and negotiation of the needs of all the participating organisms. This wholeness or interconnectedness is what Gary Snyder calls the "Assembly of All Beings" (1990, p. 12). This does not mean that humans are excluded from the definition of wilderness: where humans are in such a place, their living becomes part of the assembly of all beings. It happens, however not in hierarchical terms, and not at the expense of the majority of other beings (Griffiths, quoted in Moss, 2007).

The wilderness is also characterised by a lack of flatness of surface: there are no straight lines. The ground is rarely flat, there are no squares, and few clearly delineated borders. Touch is engaged, rather than protected: we fall out of balance, we go up and down, and around, we push branches away with our hands, we get wet, even with shoes we feel the softness of the moss as opposed to the hardness of open rock, we feel branches cracking under our step, and so on. For Barry Lopez, the wilderness is, in fact, a place that makes us stumble (2014, p. xi). In the wilderness there are no elevators and no automatic doors: the space itself, in all its

complexity and three-dimensionality, stimulates senses—such as balance and touch—in ways that an urban environment usually does not.

6. The Healing Wild

Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) reviewed a number of studies which investigated the psychological effects of natural environments in various settings. An interesting observation they made was that, although there is a great variety in preferences amongst people, the preference of natural environments was remarkably consistent “despite demographic differences and across diverse settings” (p. 40).

The positive experiences that natural settings offer has been studied extensively (e.g. Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Capaldi et al., 2014). Though these effects are not limited to being in the wilderness as such this will be the focus of this brief overview, because of the immersive nature of the case studies which constitute part of this research.

The expression of “getting away” or “escaping” is commonplace when people seek a place in which to relax and be rejuvenated. Whereas one can escape from habitual spaces, from work (mentally and physically) by going to a cellar or a phone booth, these are not typically viewed as restorative places (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). In contrast, in natural environments people report feeling at ease, a certain kind of compatibility with the space, despite the fact that an urban environment may actually be more familiar (1989, p. 193). Another characteristic of natural environments which may contribute to the restorative qualities of such settings are the fact that: “aesthetic natural environments give pleasure,” as shown through their review of studies with

regards to aesthetic preference earlier in their book; and that natural environments “provide a context in which people can manage information effectively; they permit tired individuals to regain effective functioning” (p. 196).

Beyond the cognitive relaxation which a natural environments offer, however, they distinguish between three benefits specifically connected to restoration: a) “clearing the head”; b) “recovery of directed attention”; and c) “soft fascination” (p. 197). Being immersed in the tasks and demands of everyday urban life, there is often “cognitive residue” left which accumulates into mental clutter which then inhibits the optimal functioning of our mental and cognitive capacities (p. 197). Their idea of *soft fascination* is a fascination not with something dramatic, large, and overwhelming, but a fascination which “permits a more reflective mode,” such as fascination with “clouds, sunsets, scenery, the motion of the leaves in a breeze” (p. 192). Such a fascination facilitates a cognitive quietness, which adds to the restorative effect of natural environments.

Although Kaplan and Kaplan’s review of studies is psychological in nature, they also briefly discuss the more spiritual sensation of “feeling at one” (1989, p. 197) which often surfaces in studies about people’s relationship to natural environments. They attribute this to a physical and conceptual feeling of interrelatedness and connectedness, which they call “extent” (p. 184). While they acknowledge that this feeling of physical or perceptual *extent* is not limited to experiences in natural environments, Kaplan and Kaplan’s study indicates that such states are commonly perceived in natural settings. This feeling of *wholeness*, of *being at one* was also prominent in participants’ experiences at the Outdoor Challenge Program, where

“unity of purpose, lessening of distraction, emphasis on the basics of survival” were potentially responsible for generating such feelings (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989, p. 145).

Research has also shown a positive correlation between people who have a subjective connection to nature, or *nature connectedness*, and a range of personality and behavioural differences, such as increased extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness, as well as “emotional and psychological well-being” (Capaldi et al., 2014, p. 2). Beyond the more general restorative effects, other studies have focused more specifically on the effects on the positive effects on creativity (Atchley et al., 2012), and with the advent of more portable electroencephalography (EEG) scanners, there have also been more direct observations of the positive impact of natural/green settings on the brain neurologically (Aspinall et al., 2013).

Whereas there exist individual institutions and organisations (e.g. GreenCare in Finland) offering a platform for utilising the restorative and healing powers of nature, this healing potential of natural environments has yet to given serious consideration in public health policies or urban planning in the industrial world. One significant exception to this is Japan, where a practice called *shinrin-yoku* (森林浴, literally “forest bathing”) is commonly prescribed for stress reduction and has been shown to have a diverse range of health benefits.

Shinrin-yoku was first proposed by the Forest Agency of Japan in 1982, and has since grown to become a very popular activity: over a quarter of the people questioned in a public opinion poll had participated in a forest bathing trip (Li, 2010).

These trips take place in a number of accredited forest areas around the country, 67% of which is covered with forests.

Among the effects studied in recent years, comparing taking a “forest-bath” to a leisurely city visit as a tourist, are an increase in immune function (Li, 2010); lower pulse rate, pressure, and cortisol (Park et al., 2010); chronic stress relief; and benefits to dealing with acute emotions (Morita et al., 2007; Tsunetsugu et al., 2010; Miyazaki et al., 2011). These effects were not only observable during these trips, but in certain cases remained for up to a month after the participants returned to the city, indicating that the positive benefits of immersion in a natural environment are embodied and remain beyond the *on-line* experience (Li, 2010).

These effects are facilitated through *being in* the wilderness environment, and it is the embodied experience that affects us: *feeling* differently, *living* differently while immersed in this qualitatively different environment. An experience accompanied by the realisation that this environment is shared with other living beings (plant and animal) and of which people are not the sole proprietors. As Kaplan and Kaplan state in their discussion of the Outdoor Challenge Program and its range of positive gains from the wilderness excursions, “the role of the natural environment is inherent to these experiences” (1989, p. 146).

It has been seen that being in natural environments can have considerable benefits to mental and physical health. As seen through the review of studies above, the restorative power of being immersed in the wilderness manifests itself in a lack of stress, a physical and mental relaxation, an openness to the experience, a sense of well-being, and an awareness of interconnectedness. Some of these effects are

attributed specifically to the qualities of a forest environment, such as the research in *shinrin-yoku*, and some others originate in a distance from habitual places and routines.

INTERLUDE: THE HERE AND NOW

A. Mindfulness

Mindfulness is, in its most straightforward definition, “moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness, cultivated by paying attention in a specific way, that is, in the present moment, and as reactively, as non-judgmentally, and as openheartedly as possible” (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p. 24). In the work of meditator and researcher Jon Kabat-Zinn, mindfulness is a secular practice which has its roots in Buddhist meditation practice. In its secular form, it has been shown to be efficient in reducing stress and having benefits for people dealing with depression, research that has led to such programmes as the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and are, in fact, offered as an actual treatment at the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) in the UK (Williams & Penman, 2011, p. 3).

Another element that features prominently in Kabat-Zinn’s mindfulness practice is the identification of two modes of living, the “doing” mode (which is also described as an auto-pilot), and the “being” mode. In our everyday life, we find ourselves in the “doing” mode more often than not, and more often than necessary (Williams & Penman, 2011). A busy day passes by, and by the evening we have barely become aware of the details of what happened during the day. For Kabat-Zinn, an aspect of mindfulness is to bring focus to these two states of being, and to enter the being mode consciously, for it is in this being mode that we can open up to the experience

of being alive fully, as well as get in touch with an authentic, unjudged version of ourselves (Williams & Penman, 2011).

Ellen Langer (2005) has also developed a mindfulness practice, which is not based on Buddhist philosophies or ideas. For Langer, mindfulness is characterised strongly by non-judgementality, which she sees as the foundation of creativity and arts (2005, p. xix; p. 19).

Mindfulness, both in the secular frameworks by Kabat-Zinn and Langer, and in a more Buddhist context, is primarily concerned with presence: a rootedness and grounding in the present moment and place. As seen earlier, improvisation is an activity which feeds off and exists fully in the present situation. It is also concerned with listening—not a purely aural listening, but a “perceptual openness” (Hannula, 2015) to the sensations, and thoughts, here and now. Jack Kornfield calls meditation the “art of inner listening” (2002, p. 62), an openness and receptivity to the present experience, which is not too far from Nachmanovitch’s description of improvisation: “to be completely present right here in this place and this time” (2010, p. 7).

A very recent publication edited by Amy Baltzell examines thoroughly studies of mindfulness in sports and arts performances, among others (Baltzell, 2016). Whereas mindfulness and flow are two separate concepts, recent studies have shown that there is a correlation between the two and that mindfulness can, in fact, facilitate the attainment of flow states (Jackson, 2016).

In Baltzell (2016), the positive effects of mindfulness on performance are summarised as follows:

- 1) Emotional regulation, specifically tolerance of “aversive performance-related emotions” (p. 522), such as stress, stage fright, embarrassment, and so on.
- 2) Attentional control, that is, mindfulness “helps the individual anchor her attention where she chooses to place it” (p. 522).
- 3) “Ability to reduce and let go of negative thoughts,” which Baltzell links explicitly “to the ability to accept mistakes more quickly” (p. 523).
- 4) “Primer for flow,” as mentioned above (p.523).

From personal accounts, such as that of mindfulness researcher Shauna Shapiro,⁴ as well as a range of studies on nature connectedness (how much nature is part of one’s identity) and mindfulness, there are indications that being in a natural environment is conducive to states of mindfulness (Howell et al., 2011; Wolsko & Lindberg, 2013; Capaldi et al., 2014).

B. Retreat

A retreat is a way to separate oneself from the everyday world, physically or mentally, for the purpose of seeking solitude, quietness, and simplicity, and is in nature a restorative, reflective, and rejuvenating activity (Cooper, 1992).

⁴ “The combination of the mindfulness teachings and the simplicity of living in nature, allowed me to connect with a deep knowing and reverence for this way of living – this way of being.” (Shapiro, quoted in Schwartz, 2008)

Though a retreat is often associated with Eastern religious practices, it has been part of every major religion (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism) as a serious practice for becoming aware of how we function in the world and how we are related to the rest of existence (1992, p. 11).

Mindfulness retreat leader and author David Cooper describes a spiritual retreat as “a large magnifying glass, excluding many of the details of life that distract us, filtering out extraneous material and revealing the base elements” (1992, p. 5). An important aspect of a retreat is an inevitably slowing down, as one no longer needs to busy oneself with the typical tasks and responsibilities of everyday life, or “doing mode.” External silence fosters internal silence, and it is then that one notices how much of one’s own experience is muddled through the incessant thinking and doing that characterises urban life.

For Cooper, an ideal time for a retreat is between three and ten days, both in terms of what is *practical*, with regards to leaving one’s normal life behind for a number of days; and in terms of *practice*, that is, how much time is needed to settle into this new mindset and the routines of a retreat. Interestingly, from my own experiences in the wilderness and discussions with more experienced wilderness guides, it seems that a minimum of three days is also an agreeable length for a trip into the wilderness: it is how long it usually takes until one is used to how things are arranged in the backpack, to get used to sleeping outdoors, to the increased amount of exercise, and to settle in and enjoy the trip.

Upon a closer look, a trip into the wilderness is in certain respects similar to a retreat. The simplicity, distancing oneself from one’s habitual places, and the silence

which accompanies being in the wilderness are all characteristic of mindfulness retreats (Cooper, 1992). It is thus not entirely unexpected that words and expressions typically associated with spirituality, such as “being at one” or “interconnectedness,” appear commonly in people’s descriptions of their experiences in the wilderness, for example, as seen earlier in the analysis of participants’ responses to the Outdoor Challenge Program (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989).

The case studies outlined in Chapter III can, therefore, be characterised as a sort of retreat, perhaps with a more artistic focus than spiritual. We spent time together (rather than in solitude) and there were no strict rules regarding specific social behaviours such as talking, using mobile phones, and so on. We were, however, removed from our familiar places and practices, engaged in lengthy silent and mindful activities daily, and our time in the forest was characterised by simplicity and a feeling of “just being there.” Though nothing was explicitly agreed, mobile phone usage was limited to our time in the cottage, and even then at least half of the participants lacked access to social media. There are, therefore, some important analogies between the Immersive Listening research project excursion, a “retreat” of an artistic character, and a mindfulness or spiritual retreat, of the kind that Cooper (1992) describes.

CHAPTER III: THE IMPROVISATION OF NATURE

A. Immersive Listening Research Project

1. Introduction and Background

“We are currently looking for up to four improvising artists to join an immersive listening research project. This project is an investigation in how spending time in/near nature affects improvisation within a group, and application is open to any improvising artists who are open to working with sound (e.g. music, speech, movement). The project will end with a performance at Vapaan Taiteen Tila, an event co-hosted by Helsinki Meeting Point.”

Immersive Listening is the title of a research project that took place in August 2015, the focus of which was to explore how being in the wilderness informs improvisational practice. This was a three-day project with six participants (three dancers, three musicians), during which participants spent time near the wilderness and returned to Helsinki for an improvised performance open to the public.

The main ideas and structure of the Immersive Listening project were influenced by shorter excursions of similar character, daily trips into forested areas nearby Helsinki, which took place earlier in 2015, as well as a series of workshops that we planned and led with Alicia Burns at the Ecomusicologies Conference 2014 in Asheville, North Carolina (see Appendix B1, p. 171). Reflections and insights from these experiences, together with my own personal experiences of being in the

wilderness and collaborative music-making, later informed the frame and structure of this project, which was realised in the end of the summer in 2015.

During the project the group would participate in certain improvisation-related exercises and scores, and then return to Helsinki and see how improvising together has been affected by spending time in the wilderness. Participants were asked to keep a reflective journal throughout the duration of the project. Our time in the forest also included a number of discussions on our experiences throughout the day, as well as an open discussion with the public after the performance in Helsinki.

The project took place in late August. The reasons were logistical and practical: late summer was ideal because students, who could be potential participants in the project or audience members at the performance, had by then returned from holidays. It is also comfortably warm, and spending extended periods of time outdoors is agreeable. The specific weekend was chosen because of space availability and Helsinki Meeting Point (HMP) were able to host the event on that Friday. The length of this excursion was three days and three nights in the wilderness, with a performance in Helsinki on the evening of the final day. The schedule was as follows:

Arrival day: Tuesday 25.8: Picking up all participants from various places around Helsinki, and driving to Koivikko (arrival in the late evening).

Day 1: Wednesday 26.8: the first full day in the forest.

Day 2: Thursday 27.8: the second full day in the forest.

Day 3: Friday 28.8: morning in the forest; packing and returning to Helsinki; evening performance in Vapaan Taiteen Tila.

In the following sections, insights from this project will occasionally be accompanied by a set of short interviews with some of the organisers of *Skiing on Skin* Festival 2015. *Skiing on Skin* (SoS) is an annual contact improvisation dance festival that takes place in Finland, and since its early years, it has taken place in a location close to the wilderness and far from urban centres. As a SoS participant in February 2015, I interviewed some of the organisers about the reasons behind such a decisions, as well as about their personal perspective on wilderness and dance improvisation. The project days will be henceforth referred to as Day 1, Day 2, and Day 3 respectively.

2. Area

For this project we were staying at a simple cottage-like house in Perämaa, an area approximately 220km to the north from Helsinki, or a two- to three-hour drive, consisting mostly of farms and seasonal residences. The cottage where we stayed is located approximately seven kilometres into the forest from the nearest paved road, which was itself not a busy road in terms of traffic. Although there are other houses nearby, as well as farms and meadows, these are unfrequented forest roads. At the end of summer there are no tractors moving around the area—in fact, during the time we were there there was virtually no agricultural activity, thus anthropogenic sounds were at a minimum in the surrounding soundscape.

The cottage, Koivikko (number 1, blue circle in Figure 2), was where we slept and ate breakfast and dinner. The rest of the day, usually from ten in the morning until six in the evening, was spent outdoors in *Ahvenusjärvi Nature Reserve* area (number 2, red circle in Figure 2), which was located approximately a ninety-minute walk away from the cottage.

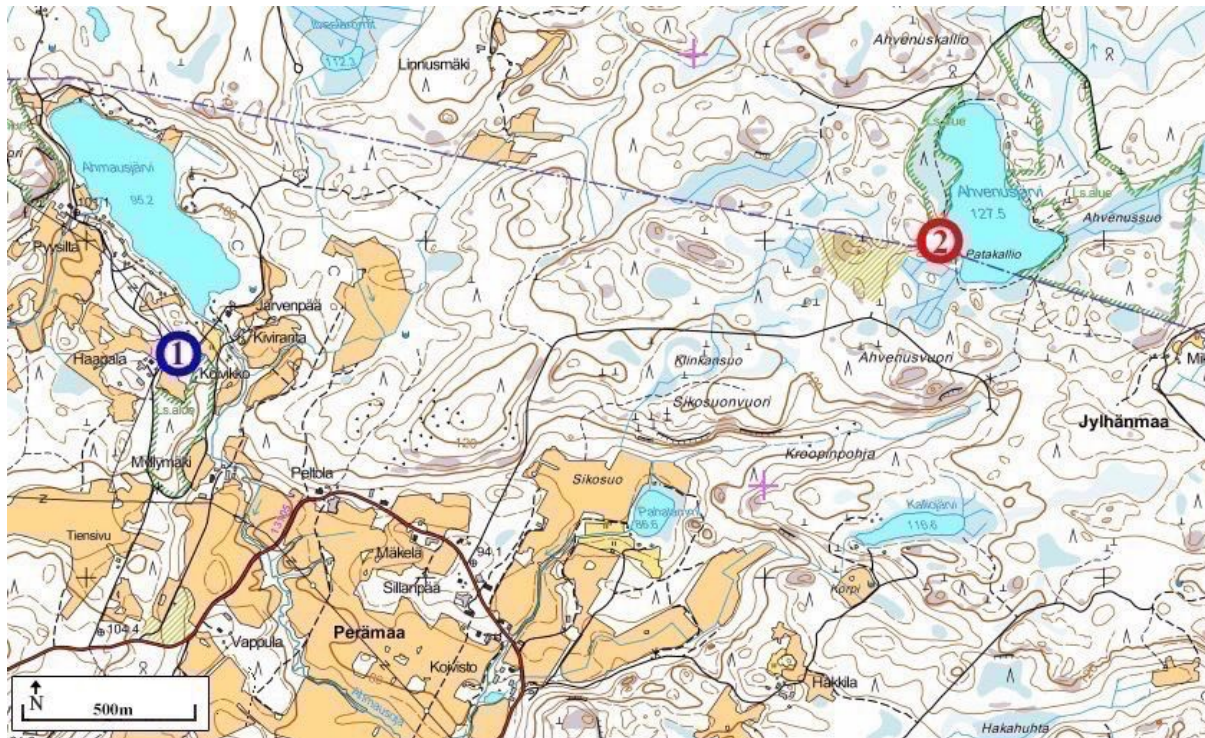


Figure 2. Map of Perämaa. The cottage (blue circle on the left, marked as number 1) and Patakallio (red circle on the right, marked number 2). Legend: orange is farmland; thick red lines are unpaved roads; black lines are forest roads; area surrounded by the slanted-dash green border is nature reserve); white area on the map is forested. Source: Retkikartta.fi

I first visited the area with Timo Järvenpää, teacher at the International Wilderness Guide programme at Tampere Vocational College, to whom the cottage belongs. Timo kindly allowed us to use the premises for the purposes of this research, and took me on a trip to Ahvenusjärvi Nature Reserve to show me the area

so I could see if it would be suitable for the project. The distance of the cottage from urban centres and the proximity to large forested areas, especially Ahvenusjärvi Nature Reserve, was very convenient. While the Ahvenusjärvi Nature Reserve is not particularly large, it is still characterised by thick forest (see Appendix A1, Figures 1–3, p. 159), some areas with very old trees, and a few forest paths we could use. The only building in the nature reserve area is an old and derelict scouts' cabin, which we visited on our last day.

The area where we spent our days with the group in the Ahvenusjärvi area is called *Patakallio* (from *pata* “cauldron” and *kallio* “open rock/hill with little vegetation”). Patakallio is a small area on the edge of the nature reserve which was relatively open, compared to the thick vegetation surrounding it (see Appendix A1, Figure 4, p. 160). In older times, when the surrounding areas were inhabited permanently by small settlements (rather than seasonal farming, which is the case more typically today), *Patakallio* was a meeting place for locals. On special occasions, villagers from the nearby settlements would gather, play music, dance, and eat to celebrate (Timo Järvenpää, personal correspondence, 2015). Patakallio was an ideal place for such a project.



Figure 3. Ahvenusjärvi Nature Reserve (enclosed in green); *Patakallio* is marked with a red circle.

3. Participants

The artists who took part in the project were all people with an interest in improvisation and with some experience of spending time outdoors. The group consisted of three musicians (Alicia, Katarina, Laonikos) and three dancers (Heidi, Heini, Nadja). Except for myself and Alicia, they were all Finnish. The participants' ages ranged from twenty-four to thirty-one years old and, at the time, they were all based in Helsinki. Though certain members of the group had previously improvised with one or two other members, the participants had not previously improvised as a group.

All participants, except for myself, were interviewed before and after the project (see Appendix A5 for interview questions, p. 170). From the interviews prior to the excursion, it became evident that there was a shared expectation amongst the participants to have ample time to work with whatever it is we're doing, without hurrying. Everyone exhibited to a large degree a certain openness with regards to the activities and potential outcomes of the project, and they had all had experience with improvisation, alone and with others. This also meant that there was a common understanding in terms of what helps a group work better, and a certain awareness about the sensitivities of working with people from other fields. For the musicians there was a shared awareness that during improvisation there is more focus on the bodily experience; that focusing on oneself takes place more easily in improvisation.

More individual expectations included a curiosity about how we will transfer our experiences into Vapaan Taiteen Tila for the final performance (Alicia); a sense of

“getting back to oneself” (Heidi, Heini, Alicia); that the environment will make us slow down (Nadja); and that working with others entails working with one’s own vulnerability (Katarina). As part of the final performance marketing, all the participants were asked to write a short text describing their relationship to improvisation and the wilderness, which are presented below as a means of describing the participants:

Heidi Seppälä (FI, dance): “Changing scenery, experiencing extremes, and pushing boundaries, all inform my artistic work. I use improvisation to generate movement for my work. When I take myself to a rehearsal studio the result is often as random and surprising as my life is and my need for travel, challenge the reality and push any boundary has taught me to expand the restrictions of the usual dance space.”

Heini Harjaluoma (FI, dance): “What drives my improvisation is allowing for “thoughtlessness” and surprising oneself through it. The richness of improvisation wells from not judging oneself, continuously allowing, continuously finding. In my work I explore how nature works as a partner, person and otherness; I want to know how nature dances.”

Nadja Pärssinen (FI, dance): “In improvisation I am fascinated by the question of what inspires me right now and how can I define that through movement. When I am in the forest, something gets me to pause and become sensitive. When I swim in the

sea, at some point I feel how the waves have the ability to take me with, any time. As a dancer I am fascinated by the question, how can nature support my moving?”

Alicia Burns (USA, singer): “There is dance in the movement of a branch in the wind, emotion awakened by the deep blue colour of the sky reflected in a lake, music in the sound of the wind in long grass. Improvisation warrants the freedom vital for exploration of nature's music, and sensations awakened in the wild, and for creating dialogue.”

Katarina Sjöblom (FI, violinist): “Nature is interesting in that it has always been a kind of solid ground for me, a home, a place to return to. At the same time it's full of spontaneous activity and something you cannot take for granted—simplicity and complexity in one. It's like the fusion of freedom and intention in improvisation.”

Laonikos Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis (GR, el. guitar, movement): “What fascinates me about improvising and being in the wilderness is that they both almost demand a certain presence, a being in-tune, listening. I see improvisation as a yet-unvisited wilderness, with its surprises and risks, the need for a certain humility and honesty; a landscape unravelling moment to moment as one treads through it.”

In the project I acted as both *facilitator* and *participant*. The decision to arrange all the logistical details—driving, shopping food, cooking, marketing, guiding the group in the forest, and so on—was so that the participants could focus on the experience

of being there as much as possible, rather than worry about the practicalities of the excursion.

To a certain degree, this meant that my experience of being in the forest was more inhibited due to taking care of the practical responsibilities and arrangements. However, this is a role into which I have grown comfortable in my professional work as a wilderness guide, and I was therefore able to go through a similar process as the rest of the participants by being in the forest and improvising together in the final performance. I felt it was important to be involved in the same process that the participants were going through, in order to better be able to communicate with them, understand their experiences, and allow artistic decisions to be taken by the group, rather than imposed from outside. This double nature of my role also meant that I had to reflect on my role as a facilitator and my role as a participant, and I often kept separate entries in my notes.

4. Exercises

Apart from doing a soundwalk to and from Patakallio, where we would spend the entire day working, the two main exercises or scores that we practised while in the wilderness are the *tuning meditation* and *walking improvisation*. The reason for deciding to use these two scores in this Immersive Listening research project was because of their simplicity and directness with material. Similarly to many of the exercises in improviser and educator John Stevens' book "Search & Reflect" (1985), these exercises focus on the very bare essentials of improvisation. They are hence less inhibiting for artists coming from different backgrounds, meaning dancers can easily join in and improvise with their voice, and musicians can comfortably walk around and improvise bodily, regardless of previous training or experience. The inclusivity of these exercises was important because it enabled all participants to be able to engage with them and share their experiences regardless of their familiarity with the subject matter—music and dance respectively.

These exercises were a starting point, often modified or developed according to the group's interests and curiosity. We repeated exercises under different conditions, reflected on our immediate experiences, and continued working.

a. Soundwalking

The hike from the cottage to Patakallio is a good ninety minutes at a leisurely pace, which we decided we would do as a silent soundwalk every day. The instructions were to not talk from the moment we walk out the door until we arrived at Patakallio, and to be aware of the sounds around us: sounds we produce, sounds

produced by other humans, sounds produced by animals, by the wind, and so on.

Similarly, at the end of our activities in Patakallio, we would pack up and then make our way back to the cottage, again as a silent soundwalk.

This helped us separate the two places: the cottage, where we would cook, sleep, relax, and reflect individually; and Patakallio, where we consciously explore improvisation in this environment, and reflect as a group on our experiences. Furthermore, our individual experiences during the soundwalks offered us with some material to begin our discussions. Upon arriving at Patakallio we set our things down and sat under a spruce tree, which protected us from the rain. I usually placed the audio recorder in the middle, rolling, and we would sit there silently for some moments, maybe having some water or a snack, before one of us started talking about an experience they had during the soundwalk. The routes of the soundwalks taken can be seen in Figure 4.

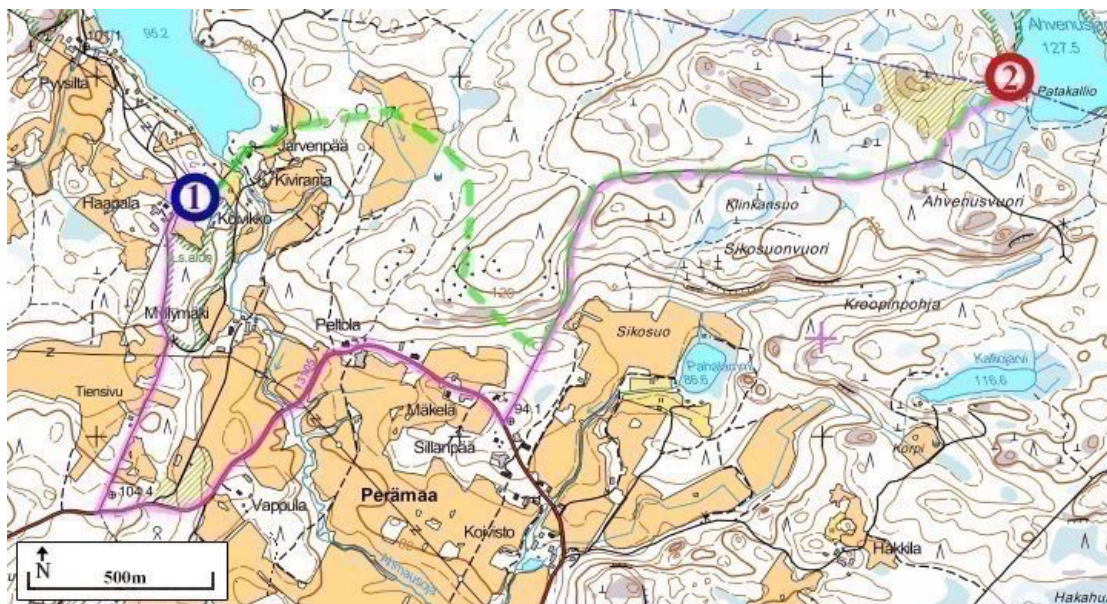


Figure 4. Koivikko cottage (number one, blue circle, left); Patakallio (number two, red circle, right);

first-day route (green, dashed); subsequent soundwalk routes (pink, solid).

The first day I attempted to lead the group to Patakallio through the forest (green route, dashed). Despite my best intentions and the motivation of the group, the forest proved to be unexpectedly thick, to the extent that at certain places we would proceed at a rate of one metre per second, if not less. I decided to take a shortcut, up a hill with less thick vegetation, and down towards a forest road, which would take us very close to Patakallio.

The first soundwalk through the thick forest, although rewarding and pleasant as an experience in itself, proved to be demanding on the participants' capacity to concentrate on sounds. Therefore, for all subsequent soundwalks we decided to use the forest roads, which allowed us to focus on the listening. (See Appendix A1, Figures 2 and 6, p. 159.)

All the participants were outdoors barefoot at some point during the project. Some even decided to be barefoot during the soundwalks, as well as during our time in Patakallio.

b. Tuning Meditation

This is an adaptation of a score by Pauline Oliveros, called "World Tuning Meditation," which was performed on June 8th 2007 in New York. The instructions were distributed as a handout before a concert the same evening (Midgette, 2007):

"Inhale deeply; exhale on the note of your choice; listen to the sounds around you, and match your next note to one of them; on your next breath make a note no one else is making; repeat. Call it listening out loud."

This score is, in fact, very similar in character to “Sustain,” an exercise devised by improviser and educator John Stevens (see Appendix B2, p. 172). It is found in a book called “Search & Reflect” (1985), a compilation of exercises and scores that John Stevens had used with his work in improvisational ensembles in the 70s and 80s.

Though it is perhaps unimportant to seek out the origins of an exercise which, in its simplicity, may have plausibly appeared independently in the work of two or more individuals (in which case the case for authorship is moot), it is important to acknowledge the sources of this exercise with regards to my own work.

The variation we used was that we all inhale at the same time, and upon exhalation we pick a pitch which feels comfortable and stay with it for the duration of our breath; we take another breath, at which point we may choose to either a) tune into another person’s pitch; b) repeat our pitch; or c) sing a new pitch which feels comfortable at this point. Dynamics are not explicitly defined, though there is a general rule that you should be able to listen to everybody else at any one point: if you feel you cannot listen to every other person in the group, you should sing at a lower dynamic.⁵ Dynamics are also free to fluctuate, so the group volume may go a lot louder and a lot softer, and we agree to let this happen if it goes that way, and at the same time there is no need to force any such changes if they do not seem to happen. The focus is not so much on showing one’s creativity, or virtuosity, but in “listening out loud” (Midgette, 2007). One is offering the rest of the group a sound

⁵ This is an instruction that appears in Stevens’ book, and as a guideline helps create an internal balance within the group.

source to listen to, rather than the sound being a form of emotional, virtuosic, or creative expression.

I have seen variations of this score lead in a variety of different contexts such as a Joint Music Masters NAIP summer school in Skálhólt, Iceland, 2010; Continuing Professional Development workshops by Paul Griffiths and Sigrún Sævarsdóttir-Griffiths in London, 2011; and during rehearsals for Terry Riley's *In C* led by Juho Laitinen in Helsinki, 2013. The instructions vary slightly, but the experience is consistently powerful in its simplicity and directness with its subject matter: listening. The effect is akin to having a "sound bath" or clearing one's ears and is an activity that virtually anyone can partake in, making it an inclusive activity in which non-musicians may participate as well as musicians. (See Appendix A3, "Tuning Meditation," p. 167, for a video of a tuning meditation, performed with audience members during the open discussion after the performance on Day 3.)

c. Walking Improvisation

This is a score I first encountered in a workshop in non-idiomatic improvisation with Seijiro Murayama (26 June 2015, Vapaan Taiteen Tila). Whereas this was the first time I encountered this score, the simplicity of the score makes definitive authorship of the exercise elusive.

Murayama's premise for improvising was that we all improvise, in various idioms. A conversation is an improvisation, in essence, in the idiom of the English language, and so on. His interest, however, lies in non-idiomatic improvisation, "improvisation that does not repeat or rely on existing patterns (styles, structures, social

organisation...)" (Murayama, 2015). He explained that watching commuters walking in a public space can be as enjoyable as watching a very delicately choreographed dance performance; all the participants act in total interrelationship with everything else in the space, and it works because no one is trying to "make it look" like a performance.

This was the starting point of the workshops I attended, and the principle of the "walking improvisation" is as simple as it sounds: walk within a given space (Vapaan Taiteen Tila, in Murayama's workshop; a patch of forest, in Patakallio), being aware of how others move, but do not be forceful; just walk casually, like one would walk to work, though without *performing* "walking to work" in that sense. This exercise was surprisingly challenging during Murayama's workshop, yet also fascinating in its simplicity and depth of experience: by stripping away all potential creative or artistic "material" (such as dance, musical instruments, voice, speech, words, and so on) and focusing on something as mundane and daily as walking (which no one is more or less talented than anyone else), the focus falls on the experience and the interaction. Patterns, tendencies, mannerisms, judgement, reliance on the external (the genre, style, idiom) to absorb some of the responsibility of the performance—all these elements become very visible, and it is easy to become aware of losing focus and sliding into "acting" a casual walk, rather than actually walking casually.

The aim of using the walking improvisation exercise was to focus on how this very simple form of improvising is affected by being in this particular situation, geographically, temporally, seasonally, and socially, that is, with this particular group

of people. (See Appendix A3, “Walking Meditation (unedited),” p. 167, for a video of a walking improvisation, performed on Day 1.)

d. Ask a Tree

On the morning of Day 3, it was raining considerably more than the previous days. We had breakfast, packed all of our belongings into the car, and performed a shorter soundwalk in the Nature Reserve area directly south of the cottage (see Figure 2, the green area under number 1, on the left). We paused by a stream, where the next task was given to the participants: Find a tree that seems, for whatever reason, inviting. While in physical proximity or contact with the tree, close your eyes, and ask the tree a question which you do not have an answer for. Wait for an answer. An answer may or may not come—in either case, return to the starting spot whenever you feel you are ready.

The first time I participated in this exercise was during a course in Sibelius Academy led by Outi Pulkkinen. Whereas this exercise might superficially seem like a tree-hugger’s New Age favourite, it is surprisingly valuable in its simplicity and distance from our behavioural habits.

In urban environments, inanimate objects tend to be considered as void of any kind of intelligence or agency. In fact, anything other than human is treated as if lacking an intelligence akin to humans’. In “delegating” responsibility for answering the question to the tree, the mind relaxes; it is the equivalent to asking a deity for an answer and, just like praying, is a form of *contemplative meditation* requiring both “the capacity [...] to focus, and to remain open” (Iltzan & Hart, 2016, p. 8). One

becomes more mindful of the thoughts that come to mind, as one's mind is less judgemental of whatever comes into awareness. This often makes it easier to become aware of thoughts which might appear surprising—and indeed, the effortlessness with which these thoughts come to awareness makes it seem as if they came from somewhere else than our own mind.

The participants were told that they do not have to reveal either what they asked the tree, what answer they received, or whether they received one. They were told, however, they are free to do so if they wanted. This exercise was performed only once in the morning of Day 3, and before leaving the cottage and wilderness to return to Helsinki for our performance. It lasted a total of between fifteen and twenty minutes until all the participants had gathered back, at which point some shared their experiences, some did not, and then we continued our soundwalk. Shortly afterwards we were in the car and on our way back to Helsinki.

5. Final Performance

The title given to the performance by the group was *Kuusen Perse* (“The Spruce’s Ass”). This is a colloquial idiomatic expression, likely limited to the vocabulary of hikers and other outdoor enthusiasts in Finland. It refers to the branchless area at the base of a large spruce, whose thick foliage protects one from the elements, and is the easiest kind of natural shelter one can find. *Kuusen perse* is very typical in the thick, boreal, coniferous forests that are characteristic of much of central Finland’s wilderness.

On Day 1 it was raining significantly. Upon arrival to Patakallio, we left all of our belongings at the base of a big spruce, where we also sat, as it was naturally dry compared to the surrounding area which was wet. It became the place we would have all our conversations, short breaks, and where we would gather upon arriving to and before leaving from Patakallio.

The performance took place at 19:00 on Friday 28 August 2015 in Vapaan Taiteen Tila (see Appendix A2, photograph 1, p. 162). Vapaan Taiteen Tila (VTT) is a space managed by the University of the Arts, of which Sibelius Academy is one of the schools, and available for free to the University's students. Formerly it has functioned as a bomb shelter and has now been converted into a multifunctional space where students are free to set up performances or exhibitions of any kind.

It is approximately twelve metres wide, two-and-a-half metres tall, and seventy metres long. The surface, although flat, is not level and there is a downwards slant of approximately 4° (~ 1%) from the entrance to the other end of the space. There is no separate stage level, though there is a metal rig onto lights are attached and which is used for performances (see Appendix A2, photograph 2, p. 162).

The final performance was planned and co-hosted with Helsinki Meeting Point (HMP), a grassroots community based in Helsinki whose aim is to support and promote improvisational performances in the Helsinki area. Giorgio Convertito, one of the main organisers of HMP, met with me on a couple of occasions that summer and was very supportive of the project. He offered some ideas and asked interesting questions, which helped to a certain degree shape the time schedule of the project. Giorgio and Kaisa Kukkonen (the other main organiser of HMP) took care of ticket

sales and offered refreshments before the performance and during the break between the performance and the open discussion.

Giorgio also participated actively in the open discussion following the performance. The purpose of the open discussion was twofold: a) to present to the audience a short outline of our time in the forest, and our experiences, in order to contextualise the performance; and b) to hear from the audience's perspective how they perceived the performance. As external observers who have not spent the last three days in the wilderness, audience members observed details about our improvisation and interaction that we could not.

The performance lasted approximately fifty minutes, followed by a short break and an open discussion. The performance was attended by approximately forty people, of which half stayed for the open discussion, which lasted one hour. A twenty-minute edited extract of the performance, shot and edited by Malak Mroueh is available online. (See Appendix A3, "Immersive Listening: Extracts," p. 167.)

B. Analysis

At the end of this project there was a total of over ten hours of recorded material, consisting of interviews—before and after the project—and discussions, as well as over six thousand words of written reflections. This material has been carefully reviewed, an analysis of which is included in the following sections.

1. Day one

Wednesday 26.8.2015

My intention for the morning soundwalk from the cottage to Patakallio was to go through the forest (see Figure 4, p. 76). We headed off in good spirit, embracing the rain and wet weather. Approximately thirty minutes into the soundwalk, it became apparent that the terrain was unsuitable for the soundwalk: extremely thick forest together with very wet bogs meant that we were progressing at an extremely slow pace, having to fend off branches, be mindful of our every step, lest we end up knee-deep in the bog, and staying within the group. Concentrating on sounds was demanding and having already started late, I decided to cut to the nearest forest road and continue walking from there.

After arriving in Patakallio, we unloaded our backpacks by a large spruce and sat down in the dry patch of land underneath to rest. We sat in silence for some time before the conversation started. The comments that ensued took off from thoughts or experiences that came to awareness during or after our morning hike and soundwalk.

Alicia spoke of a wider sense of space and a more “dimensional” sound. A comment of hers, that one “can hear very far” in the forest, is strikingly similar to Schafer’s description of a hi-fi soundscape (Schafer, 1977). Other participants commented on the experience as a meditation (Katarina; Heidi). Thoughts and memories seemed to be triggered by the variety of terrains we crossed that morning, going through bogs, farmland, thick forest, and ending up by a lake. With regards to the senses and perception, the changing sceneries were visually interesting (Katarina) and senses “opened up” (Alicia; Katarina); the changing geography was fascinating to those who walked barefoot (Heidi, Laonikos), highlighting how we usually protect much of our skin (except for our face and hands), despite the fact that the skin is the largest organ in the human body (Montagu, 1978). Another interesting comment was that, because of the stimulation of many of our senses simultaneously, “feeling and listening became one,” likening listening to a “perceptual openness” (Hannula, 2015), rather than a task focusing solely on sound waves.

Furthermore, the terrain on which we walked and the need to bend, push branches out of one’s way, to jump over streams, directly influenced our body movements. Nadja felt this strongly, noticing how it’s impossible to walk in straight lines in nature and that the unevenness of the terrain means the body twists and bends in unpredictable ways. For Heini, certain feelings of being annoyed surfaced because of the constant sound of rain on her hood, and she spoke of letting go of such annoyances and thoughts. Heini made another comment with regards to social identities: that in the city we are “not closer to ourselves,” and that away from cities, in natural environments, we have nowhere to hide, and no one to hide from and is

thus easier to be accepting, a sentiment echoed by others (Alicia; Nadja). The conversation ended by an agreement that in the forest it's easier to open up one's senses, and that the "forest is accepting."

Following the discussion, we performed a *tuning meditation* (see p. 77), and then moved on to the walking improvisation exercises. The first time we all participated, though after that first walking improvisation it became apparent it was difficult to observe at the same time as be part of it. We decided on a format of four participants and two observers, for a total of six rounds, so that each person had a chance to observe two different walking improvisations, in different formations.

Our reflections from these exercises were not recorded, so as not to interrupt the flow of the exercises, and, therefore, precise analysis of these interactions is not available. The comments, however, were mainly about structuring the exercises, commenting on our individual experiences during the improvisations, and proposing different focuses or ideas for modifying the exercises at a later stage, which were noted and tried in subsequent sessions. We took a lunch break in-between the walking improvisation sets.

We returned back to the cottage doing a soundwalk, this time from the forest roads instead of the forest (see Route B in Figure 4, p. 76). We had agreed earlier, that as soon as we arrive at the cottage we take a few minutes to leave our things, go to the toilet or drink water as needed, and then we lie down in the living room, and have a free word association session: just lying down, our heads towards the inside of the circle with our feet pointing out, and said words or short phrases that came to mind. Words that came up included comments on physical tiredness (Heidi; Heini;

Laonikos; Alicia); quietness (Nadja; Heidi); the soundscape (Alicia; Heini; Laonikos); visual elements from the landscape such as sunlight, the lake, a goshawk, frogs, trees, and fire (Alicia; Katarina; Nadja, Heini); and words and phrases describing movement, such as “sinking,” “arising,” “where do I want to go?” “seeking the smoothest way,” “going through,” “shifting,” “walking,” or “step by step” (Alicia; Heidi; Heini; Katarina; Laonikos; Nadja). There were also more abstract words, such as “acceptance” (Heini); “no straight lines” (Laonikos); “performing, not performing” (Nadja); “bliss” (Katarina); “the spruce’s welcoming” (Heini) and lastly “kuusen perse,” the name of our gathering place in Patakallio (Laonikos; Katarina; Heidi), which was decided was a good name for our performance.

Following this word-association exercise we had dinner, during which we held a second discussion about the day in general. Nadja commented that in the tuning meditation, with her eyes closed, she could visualise “sound as energy” and feel the movement of sound strongly. Another comment was about noticing the *three-dimensionality* of the forest soundscape: that sound is not directed or directional, but comes from all places and goes to all places, which is opposite to what we are used to in a music performance setting, where sound is projected from stage to audience (Laonikos; Alicia). There were ideas thrown around with regards to how we could set up our performance in Helsinki on Day 3, with regards to seating arrangement of the audience (Nadja; Heidi), as well as a discussion on how we could share with the audience our experiences by doing some of the same exercises (e.g. tuning meditation, walking improvisation) with them in Vapaan Taiteen Tila (Nadja; Laonikos; Alicia). The questions that dominated the discussion were: what are the

qualities that we found in the forest, which we could bring back into VTT (Nadja; Alicia), and how do we set up the performance to put the audience and ourselves in the right state of mind to experience the outcome of this research project (Laonikos; Heidi; Alicia).

At the end of this day, we processed the video footage of the walking improvisation and added an edited version of our word association session on top, together with a short recording I made of the water sounds by the lakeshore. The resulting video was posted on the Facebook event page, and it was intended to be a short insight into the type of activities we had been involved in during our first day. (For the edited video, see Appendix A3, “Walking improvisation (edited)” p. 167.)

2. Day two

Thursday 27.8.2015

This morning’s soundwalk was shorter, and we went for the most part over the forest roads, allowing us to concentrate more on listening during our soundwalk. Crossroads were infrequent, which meant I did not have to be in the front leading the way all the time and the group was more free to move ahead or behind others.

Arriving in Patakallio, we sat down by *kuusen perse*, like we had done the previous day. There was a longer conversational silence today (eight minutes) than Day 1 (four minutes) between sitting down and the first words. After the first person’s short comments, there was a further silence of three minutes before the next person spoke. Upon listening to the recordings repeatedly, all of our voices sound more relaxed, with Nadja’s voice considerably so.

Nadja said that the silence and walking back to the cottage on Day 1 allowed certain thoughts and memories from the past to come to mind—“very personal thoughts and memories” that she thought she had dealt with in the city, but for some reason resurfaced. In her own words, they came back “because of the silence and space.” She was content in the end, not because she found an answer but because she approached the same issues with a more open attitude (Nadja).

The idea of silence is one of the main elements that all participants kept returning to, in discussions and their reflections. There was a conspicuous lack of noise, defined as *unwanted sound* (Schafer, 1977; WHO, 1995, 2011; Stansfeld & Matheson, 2003). This was a quality both *acoustic*, that is, a lack of sounds typically identified as unwanted such as traffic, construction work, and so on; and *perceptual*, that is, we did not perceive the wilderness soundscape as containing sounds which we felt were unwanted.

Noise has been the subject of much research, specifically when it comes to noise pollution and noise in relation to health. A study by the World Health Organisation estimated that by 1995 an estimated 26% of all citizens of OECD countries lived in places where noise levels were over the acceptable healthy levels of 65dBA, an increase from 15% of the population in the 1980s (WHO, 1995, p. 355). Apart from studies on the effects of noise on hearing (see Passchier-Vermeer and Passchier, 1998) there have been numerous studies looking into non-auditory adverse effects of noise: in cognitive flexibility (Hillier et al., 2006), children’s cognition in the classroom (Dockrell & Shield, 2006), creativity (Kasof, 1997), speech and communication

(Jones et al., 1981; Makopa Kenda et al., 2014; Chapman & Auburn, 1981), and interpersonal relationships (Cohen & Spacapan, 1984).

An extensive overview of the effects of noise on health is beyond the scope of this research. However, being in an acoustic environment not dominated by anthropogenic sounds, we characterised the envioning soundscapes as being silent, a silence which had a strong impact on the participants in different ways. This idea of nature as a silent place is not new, and is, in fact, encountered often in nature literature, or writings of people who work in the wilderness as guides, retreat leaders, outdoor educators, or as amateur naturalists.

Cass Adams (1996) has put together a collection of writings by a diverse selection of such people. “The silent and still presence that pervades all nature has become far more apparent,” writes Adams himself (1996, p. 2), whereas Michael J. Roads walks in the “deep silence” (p. 23) of an Australian rainforest. For Anne LaBastille, silence is not only “an integral part of every climbing, camping, or canoeing trip,” but it is silence which “helps put us in our place. It makes humans humble and reverent” (pp. 177–178).

Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) quote some participants of the Outdoor Challenge Program (a study on the effects of an approximately week-long trip into the wilderness, such as: “Silence is a funny thing. I don’t hear it often. Last night I think I experienced the most I ever have,” and “The silence was a terrific new experience” (pp. 129–130). In certain ways and situations this is a literal silence: during the winter months, in specific climates and biomes, at certain altitudes, and so on. However, beyond the literal lack of sound, “silence” seems to be used often to describe, not

acoustic lack of sounds, but a sort of “active silence” (Adams, 1996, p. 26): not necessarily a “lack of” something but a “positive expression” of the environment (Laonikos; Alicia; Nadja).

The Mbuti pygmies from Democratic Republic of Congo’s Ituri rainforest, speak of the forest not as a silent place—because there is always sound in the rainforest—but as being *ekimi* (quiet, absence of noise), the opposite of which is *akami* (noise, conflict) (Feld, 1996, p. 2).⁶ It is this idea of *ekimi* that we touched upon, and we found largely defined the soundscapes we spent our time in.

Another topic is that, although on Day 1 we did not do much, in terms of different scores or physical, yet we felt very tired. In our own words, we touched upon the difference between the *doing mode* and the *being mode* (see Williams & Penman, 2011) and realised that we spent more time *being* than *doing* while in the forest (Laonikos; Heini). Other comments revolved around ideas about the performance on Day 3 (Alicia; Nadja), about how identities and personas can sometimes be problematic (Nadja), and even talking about death, and how thinking about death is somehow easier in this place than in a city (Nadja; Laonikos).

The rest of the day consisted of variations of the walking improvisation exercise. Having tried the exercise numerous times the day before where two people were observing, we had discerned that the exercise feels very different when one knows that there is an observer standing at one particular vantage point. This arrangement made us conscious of a “front” and “back” of the space we’re working with, although there were no physical walls, stage or other limiting structures which would imply a

⁶ Though this was spoken at length during our discussions, it is very much in line with Adams’ words: “Nature presents us with a stillness and a silence that is not the absence of movement or the absence of noise, but active stillness and active silence.” (Adams, 1996, p. 26)

certain order. At the same time, having observers helped us concentrate on what we are doing, knowing that we are being observed. In one subsequent variation of the walking improvisation we were all participants, but at any one point, any one of us can step out of action, stand still, and simply observe what is happening, and then join in again when it feels like it. This helped us maintain the concentration of having observers watching the exercise, yet removed the directionality that was created from the observers being the same people at the same vantage point throughout the exercise.

The focus of the walking improvisation was to focus on the walking, positioning oneself physically in relation to others and the environment, and thus other activities—such as snacking on bilberries, which were ripe and in abundance in the area—were not considered part of the exercise and were discouraged. There were comments that, occasionally, the impulse to grab a bilberry (or to sit, lie down, to speak) was so strong, that it was difficult to then concentrate on “just walking” as the exercise required (Heini; Heidi). With Alicia’s suggestion, we performed a “wild” version of the walking exercise: anything goes, we’re actually encouraged to listen to our impulses and go through with them, to even exaggerate them in order to go with them fully. In this “wild” improvisation, there was naturally a lot more complexity in the dynamics, and a much larger variety of patterns and movements, of the improvisation and interactions. Sometimes we would be in physical contact with each other, like dancing contact improvisation, and others we would use words to create short stories and scenes. We were free to eat bilberries—which happened a lot—and

at the same time free to trip, stumble, or fall down, exaggerate “mistakes” or “accidents” in order to incorporate them into the improvisation.

During this “wild” improvisation there was a particularly vivid moment towards the end, in which Heini broke into beatboxing and vocalising rhythmically and I was “stuck” in a repeating pattern of standing up and going down on my knees while shaking my hands and head to Heini’s extemporisation. Although Heini and I were physically separated by a good fifteen metres, the intensity of the duet caused the other participants to slow down and pause, and the scene escalated until finally the entire troupe, including us, burst into uncontrollable laughing, and the exercise was over. Heini seemed, and told the group that she was, indeed, very surprised that she did this, and that normally she is very self-conscious about making “music.” This seemed to have resulted from giving the group permission to accept impulses and “be silly” (Alicia), not worrying about whether what we are doing is dance, music, or if it makes sense at all.

The pace of Day 2 was generally a bit slower than the day before and the breaks tended to be longer. We took a walk to the other side of the lake, where there was a derelict scouts’ cabin, and spent some time there looking back at Patakallio from that side of the lake. It was sunny and pleasant, and we were in a playful mood in general. On our way to the scout’s cabin, Alicia walked on a fallen log, which was half-submerged in the water, and then walked back. When Nadja tried the same, upon turning around and starting to come back, she lost her balance and fell in the water. This was a moment of laughter, but also a moment which Nadja reflected upon in her personal writings, commenting that she then realised how comfortable

she felt in the group. In that place and company, she felt safe and comfortable making mistakes, which in other contexts would be seen as embarrassing, such as a dancer losing her balance and falling in the water.

We returned back to the cottage doing a soundwalk, just like at the end of Day 1. We had decided that as soon as we return we will take our instruments and go outside in the garden, and improvise as if we had to perform to an audience. This improvisation, with Alicia singing, Katarina on violin, and myself on electric guitar, lasted approximately twenty minutes.

The group reaction to this improvisation was one characterised by confusion and uneasiness, which we discussed at length in an intense discussion in the kitchen while preparing dinner. As mentioned in an earlier section (see p. 82), although we had been doing a number of scores and exercises related to improvisation, this was the first time we improvised in our “elements,” or artistic idioms, in which we had prior experience in improvisation as individuals. For some this was an interesting experience which showed that this is the point where we start finding a common ground (Katarina), and at the same time that we have not, as artists in our own medium, improvised together before. Upon discussing on the source of our uneasiness with the improvisation, it seemed that it was caused by a variety of reasons: returning into the predefined roles of dancer, singer, violinist, and so on (Katarina; Alicia); a shift in focus, from the *process* of working together to the *product* that the audience will come to see (Laonikos; Nadja); and from expectations in terms of the final performance, to appear as professional to the audience, who know us as improvising artists in our own fields (Alicia; Katarina; Laonikos). There were

numerous questions and suggestions related to connecting our work in the forest to the performance the following day, and a need was voiced for some kind of structure for the performance (Heidi; Heini; Alicia). A suggestion was that, instead of delivering a final product, we are creating space for things to happen (Katarina) and that we are open about and agree on the fact that the performance in VTT is merely part of an ongoing research (Alicia; Nadja; Laonikos). This, in turn, would help put the audience in the right mindset to observe the performance, and relieve some pressure from having to *deliver* a kind of performance which an unsuspecting audience might not appreciate. During the open discussion we would open up the processes behind the project, so the audience could get an idea of the context, the processes the participants have been going through, highlighting the research aspect of this project.

It was also generally agreed that any structure we come up with for the improvisation would have to connect to our experiences in the forest, as this was the focus of the research project. One decision was that we would not have a typical stage-audience arrangement, because we felt this was distancing audience from performers instead of acknowledging that they are both in the same space. We decided the metal rig in the centre of VTT (see Appendix A2, Figure 2, p. 162) would be the centre of the performance, and we would be free to expand to either direction from that space as we feel, during the course of the performance. We arranged chairs irregularly around the metal rig (i.e. not in straight rows) so there was no front or back and so that the audience could perceive the performance from any vantage point. One idea for a frame for the performance was to treat audience members as if

they were trees in a forest and this seating arrangement facilitated this. Enough space was left between chairs for us to move freely and we placed a number of carpets and pillows on the area around the metal rig, initially for audience members to sit on. We designated one small area within the metal rig stage to be Kuusen Perse, referring to the place in Patakallio which was the physical centre of all our activities while in the nature reserve area.

All of these choices with regards to the performance relate directly to our shared experiences in the wilderness as a group. The group participants had not improvised together previously, meaning these experiences in the forest were our only common frame of reference. As such, we had to find ways of utilising these experiences and find ways of bringing them into the performance space, so that we can recreate the dynamics and attunement that we had experienced in the forest.

The conversation ended in a generally relaxed mood, and potentially part of the excitement were underlined by hunger and tiredness, as well as tension caused by our imminent return to the city the following morning and the uncertainties this entailed. After dinner we had time to relax, reflect, and have sauna, after which we went to sleep for an early start the next day.

3. Day three

Friday 28.8.2015

This was our last morning in the cottage. We had breakfast, packed the car, and then left for a soundwalk in the nature reserve directly to the south of the cottage, only a five-minute walk away. It was raining a lot and was a bit colder than the

previous days. While in the middle of the nature reserve, we did the *Ask a Tree* exercise (see p. 81). This lasted approximately fifteen to twenty minutes. Following that, we paid a quick visit to Timo Järvenpää and some of his friends, who happened to be at a nearby cottage for the weekend. We then returned to the cottage, finished packing, and made our way to Helsinki.

Apart from a short lunch break, we drove straight back to Vapaan Taiteen Tila. We arrived at the space at approximately half-past three in the afternoon, where we met with Johannes Vartola, janitor and manager of the space. Johannes left after he showed us a few things about light and sound, and we started planning the performance. Those hours prior to the performance, which was due to start at seven in the evening, were characterised by urgency, uncertainty, and, to a certain degree, chaos. I remember needing to meet to meet with someone to pick up a tripod for recording the performance—in the meantime there was a technical problem with the lights, which then started flashing incessantly. I could not reach Johannes and he could not call me back because I had no signal inside the underground space, so I had to occasionally run outside hoping to get through to him, and so on. We sat down in the midst of the strobing lights and had ten minutes structuring the remaining two hours before the performance. We agreed that we will take the one hour prior to the performance to warm up individually and that we will work on preparing the space between now and an hour before the performance. Giorgio came in approximately one hour before the performance started and started setting up his stall by the entrance of the space while we were warming up. Malak Mroueh

had agreed to come and shoot the performance and discussion, and she also helped with setting up candles alongside the walls of the space.

We started the performance five to ten minutes later than scheduled, and the structure was a tuning meditation outside the main performance space; a soundwalk from outside into the performance space; moving towards the metal rig area, and sitting by what we had earlier designated as *kuusen perse*; and letting things emerge from there (see Appendix A2, Figure 3, p. 163). The decided structure of the improvisation was as follows: we would go to the entrance of the tunnels leading to Vapaan Taiteen Tila, outside the main performance area, and perform a tuning meditation for ourselves. After the tuning meditation arrives at an end, we take a soundwalk from the entrance of the tunnel into the main performance space, and towards the metal rig, where we would eventually settle down by Kuusen Perse, like we had done every morning in the wilderness. From there, we expand outwards physically, perhaps go to our instruments, move, or stay at Kuusen Perse, and let things develop from there on their own. By giving ourselves a more concrete starting point structurally although the pace, individual movements, interactions, were still improvised, helped ground ourselves into our experiences of the time we had spent in the wilderness.

Because of the seating arrangement, which meant the audience was placed around the metal rig where the performance would mainly take space, when we entered the space in a soundwalk not all audience members became immediately aware of our presence. Some audience members continued to chat, while others sat up straight, quietened down, and began observing us. The first sounds we made on

our instruments were on the border of audible and stayed within very low dynamics for much of the beginning. Due to the mobility of our instruments, we were all free to move around and interact physically, as well as sonically, with the dancers and the space. General comments with regards to the performance, from memories of it and upon reviewing the visual documentation, is that we were comfortable staying with a particular pattern, or material, without feeling we are getting bored. There were also moments where one or more performers stepped out of the action and withdrew towards behind the audience or near the wall, becoming observers of what is happening. There was a lot of space for everyone to participate creatively. At times, such as the beginning, we were all involved, and in other sections there were more concentrated duos and trios.

One remarkable moment in the performance involved Heini and myself and was very clearly connected to the rhythmic vocalisations that Heini suddenly burst into during the “wild” variation of the walking improvisation on Day 2 (see p. 89). At some point, we started moving rhythmically, and engaged in a beatboxing, bouncing together in rhythm. Alicia, sitting down a few metres away from us, joined in rhythmically, and Heini and I approached Alicia, and circled her numerous times while our beatboxing and moving escalated.

A very interesting element that had not happened in the forest was that Heini at some point started coughing, and almost instantaneously incorporated her coughing into the rhythm. This was a remarkably swift musical reaction to an involuntary vocal reaction, and simultaneously a creative incorporation of it as musical material, in spite of her lack of training as a musician. This entire interaction ended a bit more

than a minute later, when the rhythm dissipated—yet, because of its direct connection to a similar scene we had in the forest, was powerful, and memorable. (The entire interaction can be seen in a video with extracts from the performance, Appendix A3, “Immersive Listening: Extracts,” p. 167, between 16’00” – 17’20”).)

The decisions the group made with regards to the spatial arrangement and structure of the improvisation, by enabling us to attain a state of being close to what we experienced in the wilderness, had a direct impact on the content of our improvisation as well as our interactions. The slow pace, the comfort of not participating and letting things happen, the encouragement Heini had experienced in the forest to engage in rhythmic vocalising, and the non-directional aspect of our improvisations are all such examples. These embodied qualities would not have been such an important part of our improvisation if we had not spent time in the wilderness. Being in the wilderness directly affected, in these and other ways, the dynamics of our interactions and content of our improvisation.

The ending of the performance came about very naturally. After about forty-five minute into the performance, we slowly started moving away from the metal rig where the centre of the action was, and began a soundwalk, this time away from the performance space and towards the corridors outside of it, towards where we had started. Although the ending of the improvisation had not been defined at all during our discussions or decisions about the structure, it was a natural connection to our experiences in the forest: we approached *kuusen perse* every morning with a soundwalk, and we left with a soundwalk.

The idea of “no clear lines,” which surfaced numerous times in conversations, personal reflections, and the interviews, was an element we all experienced to a certain degree in the wilderness and wanted to bring into the performance. “No clear lines” meant that in the wilderness there is an interconnectedness, and boundaries (between organisms, elements of the landscape or soundscape, between seasons, time of the day, and so on) are not discrete. Through our improvisations in the forest, especially the “wild” variation of the walking improvisation, we also discovered a blurring of our own boundaries, in terms of identities as performers: musicians were moving, dancers were vocalising. This element was manifested consciously, for example, in the unusual seating arrangement and moving within and behind the audience; or in the transition from *waiting for the performance to start* to *performance is happening*, a transition typically indicated by an announcement, dimming of lights, and so on.

Most interesting, however, was to notice the ways in which the idea of no discrete boundaries manifested unconsciously. Upon reviewing the photo and video footage of the performance, it was evident that in at least one point during the performance, every performer interacted creatively with an object from the environment: a pillow, carpets, a chair, a scarf. This creative involvement of items into the improvisation, which typically form the backdrop against action takes place, was fascinating, and reflected our observation that in the wilderness there are no “objects”: we do not call a tree, or a stone for that matter, an “object” or an “artefact.” Objects tend to be things that are used by subjects to perform an action, whereas in the wilderness

everything is there of its own accord, not intended for use by anything else. (See Appendix A2, Figures 6–9, p. 165.)

After a short break, we returned, sat in a large circle with the audience members, and initiated a discussion. We opened up the processes and exercises we had been exploring in the forest, as well as explained the title of the performance and certain decisions with regards to the seating arrangement and structure for the beginning of the improvisation. Audience members were curious about our definition of nature, and we opened up the distinction between nature and wilderness (as described earlier in p. 17). Giorgio asked what steps were taken when coming from the forest back to the city in order to readjust to the urban environment, which opened up a discussion on how being in the city affected us. It felt we started stressing up, and though we had little time, we also made very efficient use of that time to set up the performance space. This process, of entering *doing mode* and quick decision-making, felt like it happened very organically (Katarina; Heidi; Heini; Laonikos).

When talking about how we embodied the wilderness, Heini and Katarina pointed out that in a sense it is within us: we do not need to bring much back with us consciously, but we need to understand that certain elements of the wilderness are already embodied in us, and we just need to listen to them, and let them appear. Heini found that a tree can be a great example in listening, something that is also reflected in her writings, whereas for Nadja it was the simplicity of our time in the forest that was most impressive. Nadja's interest was how to stay vulnerable and sensitive while in the performance space, and there was a general sentiment that in

the forest is non-judgemental, and this, in turn, “opens up” people (Nadja; Heini; Alicia).

During the open discussion, there were interesting contributions by members of the audience. Particularly interesting is dancer and choreographer Heini Nukari’s observation with regards to walking, which is worth quoting in its entirety:

“When you entered the space walking I was fascinated by all of your feet—not only how they looked because you saw that you’ve been in the same [*sic*]*—but the feel, how you were touching this concrete floor. There was a softness and aliveness, and I could read somehow that the feet have been experiencing a lot, they were very alive, all of your feet.*”

Although we were unaware of this as performers, it seems that walking barefoot and walking on very soft ground (mud, bog, grass, field, and so on) compared to the typically hard ground found in urban environments (concrete, steel, marble, cobbles, cured wood, and so on) instilled a softness in the movement of both dancers and musicians, which to the eyes of an experienced dancer and improviser was very striking.

Here are some other comments from members of the audience (each quote is from a different person):

“I could definitely say that the listening was really incredible, I think all of us felt that but I certainly felt that from the really, so silent the sound that emerged, in the

beginning, was so sensitive to each other, it was really incredible and there was this big tension between each sound and it was somehow very connected and very, very organic.”

“Personally, I am happiest when I am in the wilderness, I would stay there if I could, and I spend a lot of time weekends just away from the city, in the peace of quiet of the forest, walking. I feel that when I'm there, I calm down.”

“As an artist, it's very important to remember that usually we do need nature to be at peace with ourselves and in order to be creative. For me personally that's where the door comes from, we need something: grounding.”

4. Reflective journals and interviews

The participants kept a reflective journal with them throughout the project's duration and were asked to write down as much as they feel comfortable with regards to their experiences. The main focus was, of course, on improvisation and being in the wilderness, and they were encouraged to use drawings, pictures, or other forms of expression, instead of attempting to keep an academic-style diary. They were also free to write in whatever language was most comfortable for them, and could include poetry, drawings, or other forms of self-expression other than words, which some of the participants did.

By going through the interviews with the participants, both before and after the project, the personal written reflections, and recordings from the discussions we have during the project, I extracted a list of keywords and concepts relating to our experiences. I further looked at the frequency of these words, that is, in how many participants spoke about them considerably, or in how many participants' reflections the word occupied a significant place. The highest number is six, meaning this keyword was mentioned by all of the participants, and a number of three means this keyword was mentioned by at least half the participants. It is hence possible to obtain an overview of what constituted the main essence of our experience as a group during the project. At the same time, in order to respect the personal aspect of the experience and the individuality of each participant, I felt it is also important to look specifically at issues which appeared important to each one of the participants, and may or may not have been shared by others.

The data, therefore, is presented below in two ways: a) an overview of the *most common experiences*, that is, experiences shared by at least half of the group; and b) an overview of the *most important experiences* for each participant.

a. Common experiences

The keywords and frequency, that is, by how many people this keyword, concept, or experience, was spoken or written about, are shown in Table 1 below. Only the keywords with a frequency of three or more, meaning they are mentioned by at least half of the group, will be looked at in detail. Related keywords are grouped and discussed together. (For a complete table of keywords and their frequency see Appendix A4, p. 168.)

Table 1. Keywords and their frequency among participants' conversations and reflections

Keyword	Frequency
listening	6
silence	6
presence	4
space	4
acceptance	3
authenticity	3
being mode	3
confront myself	3
connectedness	3
getting back to oneself	3
increased sensitivity	3

Keyword	Frequency
letting go	3
no clear lines	3
non-duality	3
non-judgementality	3
process	3
sensory stimulating	3
slowness	3
three-dimensionality	3

Listening.

Listening took many forms while in the wilderness. We practised listening to the soundscape intensely twice a day during our ninety-minute soundwalks, and also we listened to each other in conversation.

Listening, however, was not limited to only one sense and was expanded to involve more of the senses, such as touch and awareness. Katarina likened “listening” to “feeling,” and we of course often listened to our own bodies: moving from one activity to another depending on when we feel hungry, tired, ready, rather than going by the clock. Listening was effectively understood as what Saara Hannula, dancer and co-organiser of Skiing on Skin festival (SoS), describes as “perceptual listening” (Hannula, 2015). It is more of a mental approach, an attitude, and a sensory openness, rather than a purely physical act, which refers to the perception of sonic waves through our ear drums.

Listening also meant listening to oneself and one’s own impulses (Katarina; Heini), listening to each other (Alicia; Nadja), and listening to our environment

(Katarina; Laonikos; Heidi). We also found that listening was fostered, rather than forced, in the wilderness setting. This is close to acoustic ecologist Hildegard Westerkamp's observation, that "listening is a continual and gentle process of opening" (2015) and as such it cannot be forced by ordering someone to listen:

"Listening cannot be forced. Quite the opposite: true receptive listening comes from an inner place of non-threat, support, and safety. As such listening is inherently disruptive as it puts a wrench into habitual flows of time, habitual behaviour of daily life." (Westerkamp, 2015)

In this research project, however, it became evident that the opposite is also true: disrupting one's habitual everyday life by moving into a space fundamentally qualitatively different, a space which is characterised by a lack of information and sensory overload, listening is fostered as a result. It is a very efficient way to engage with our faculty of perceptual openness (Hannula, 2015), so necessary in order to "see another human being and encounter him or her, and be present with him or her" (Nachmanovitch, 2010), a prerequisite for improvisation and collaboration across genres, disciplines, fields, cultures, or other borders.

Silence.

Like in the reflections of participants at the Outdoor Challenge Program (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989) and writings of people involved professionally and artistically the

wilderness,⁷ silence in this project too was perceived as a main element of the wilderness and dominated a considerable amount of discussion and personal reflections compared to other keywords. This was expressed verbally, and also more artistically: in Heini's notes there was an interesting repetition of the words "silence," starting large and becoming gradually smaller until the page was filled.

Invariably, participants spoke of the stillness, quietness, and silence that they experience in the forest. As discussed earlier (see p. 89) there was a general agreement that this is not a literal silence (imperceivable or non-existent sound-waves, like in a vacuum), but it was described as an "active silence" (Laonikos; Alicia). This idea was encountered earlier in this writing, in the words of Cass Adams⁸ and the Mbuti people's concept of *ekimi*.⁹ Acoustically, the silence was characterised by a significant lack of noises and anthropogenic sounds, except for the sounds of the group. During our entire stay in the forest, we heard an aeroplane once, and it was such a noteworthy experience that everyone stopped talking and paid attention to the sound of the aeroplane, which was initially mistaken for a thunder.

The trip was further characterised by conversational silence. Though we did have reflective discussions, we spent a lot of time not talking (for example, during the soundwalks) and even our conversations were marked by unusually long silences. Such silences were perceived as pleasant (Alicia; Laonikos), and gave a sense of ritual to our activities further which contributed to feeling more present (Katarina).

⁷ For example: "Silence is an integral part [... it is] the heart and soul of the wilderness experience." (LaBastille, in Adams, ed., 1996, p. 177)

⁸ "Nature presents us with a stillness and a silence that is not the absence of movement or the absence of noise, but active stillness and active silence." (Adams, 1996, p. 26)

⁹ "quietness," rather than silence (see Feld, 1996).

Presence, being mode.

The silence was not only perceived physically but also as a lack of *doing*. There was general agreeableness within the group regarding the lack of hurriedness, of doing a lot of things, and of running from one place to another, which we realised typically characterise our urban lives as artists in the city. For choreographer and dancer Mirva Mäkinen, a co-organiser of SoS festival, in the nature one is in “a different way of being.” Specifically, Mäkinen (2015) feels that “it’s easier to be in the present moment.” This is similar to the distinction in the mindfulness literature between a *doing mode* and a *being mode* (Williams & Penman, 2011), and we felt we spent more time in the *being mode* while in the forest. For Nadja, for example, the experience was rich and tiring, not because we did a lot of things, but because we were simply being more present, and each interaction was deeper than it was superficial.

The idea of presence was discussed by all participants; this proved to be such a characteristic element of our time in the forest, that when Alicia was asked to summarise the entire project in one word, she used the word “presence.”

Space, three-dimensionality.

The word *space* was used by participants in various ways, but always indicating a lack of narrow and crowded qualities. There was space visually and acoustically—Alicia, for example, commented that she can “hear very far.” Metaphorically this meant there was “space to be myself” (Heidi; Heini; Katarina), a lack of otherwise

typical or ever-present demands and constrictions which do not allow one to fully express oneself.

Physically this was expressed as becoming more aware of the dimensionality of the environment, both sonically (Alicia; Katarina; Laonikos) and spatially (Laonikos; Nadja; Heini). The perception of sound as being projected—from speakers to listener, from stage to audience, from earphones to ear, from one person to another, and so on—was less prevalent, which led to a widening of perception, and speaking of “three-dimensionality” with regards to sound and movement.

For Mirva Mäkinen, being in nature makes one more aware of the three-dimensionality of their own body, with all its irregular and interesting surfaces, curves, and shapes (2015). This spaciousness, both physically and sonically, is an important element in her work, a reminder that space (in movement) and silence (in music) are also part of our material as performers.

Acceptance, non-judgementality, letting go.

The concept of acceptance can be broken down to acceptance of one’s own thoughts, positive or negative (Katarina; Heini; Laonikos); acceptance of oneself (Nadja); and acceptance of others (Heini; Nadja).

This acceptance seemed to emanate from a perception of the wilderness as a non-judgemental environment. Although this anthropomorphism of the wilderness may seem poetic at first, it can, in fact, be interpreted very literally, as the lack of social and architectural structures in the wilderness relieve behavioural expectations. As an environment, in the wilderness one does not feel judged by society against a

set of spoken and unspoken criteria, such as laws and regulations, or cultural norms and habits respectively.

Being in such a non-judgemental environment it is easier to accept difference: “when you accept yourself you can accept others” (Nadja). This attitude of openness to, and acceptance of, difference went side by side with an attitude of letting go of expectations, habitual patterns, and our roles and identities. By letting go of such elements, typical of life in urban settings, “we learned to know each other, not as dancer and musicians, but as human beings” (Alicia), effectively facilitating communication across disciplines, fields, or cultural backgrounds.

Moreover, the lack of anthropocentrism in a natural environment is part of the definition of wilderness as self-willed land, in contrast to urban environments that are “exclusive in the matter of who and what they give shelter to, and so intolerant of other creatures” (Snyder, 1990, p. 12). This may be one aspect of the wilderness which makes it a healing and restorative environment:

“The beauty of turning to wilderness as teacher and healer is that wilderness is entirely impartial to our human affairs and struggles. It just is; disinterested, unattached and, yet, totally in relationship to itself and to us.” (Adams, 1996, p. 26)

As the quote by Adams and review of studies by Kaplan and Kaplan (1989), this, and other observations, may not be exclusively related to the qualities of the

wilderness as an environment, but to a combination of facts: an urban dweller willingly visiting a qualitatively different environment, namely a forested wilderness.

Authenticity, getting back to oneself, confront myself.

Variations of the phrase “get back to myself” appeared repeatedly in our reflections and conversations. This idea is of course not entirely unrelated to the previous keyword, non-judgementality, and it implies that there is a certain part of our identity which lies beyond the roles and cultural identities which we are immersed in and grown up into.

Studies of participants at the Outdoor Challenge Program revealed that most of the gains from spending time in the wilderness were largely in “self-concept” (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989, p. 126), that is, the concept one has of themselves. This may be related to a natural environment’s potential for physical and mental restoration. Restorative experiences can often be accompanied by “reflections on one’s life” (p. 197), which indeed appeared to happen to at least half of the participants in this project, as it appeared in the written reflections and discussions.

This sentiment is also expressed by Lauri Jäntti, dancer and co-organiser of SoS festival, who believes that “you connect to yourself when you’re away from society,” and in a practice such as improvisation which is very personal, it facilitates more meaningful meetings between people (Jäntti, 2015).

In some cases, this also lead to a resurfacing of personal issues during our time in the forest. Being in the wilderness, and likely because of being away from one’s own usual environment, seemed to facilitate a reflection on such issues. This took

the form of memories emerging into awareness seemingly unwarranted, in dealing with aspects of one's own personality that one finds unpleasant, and feeling peaceful in remembering experiences which had been the source of stress in the past (Heini; Nadja; Alicia).

“Whether we know it or not, we need to renew ourselves in territories that are fresh and wild.” (Halifax, in Adams, ed., 1996, p. 9)

Increased sensitivity, sensory stimulating.

By moving from a familiar and habitual environment to a different and unfamiliar environment, we were also faced with a qualitatively and quantitatively different landscape and soundscape. This contributed to a stimulation of the senses, very similarly to how one is more acutely aware of noises and sounds when visiting a foreign city. Due to a lower volume in the soundscape we were more attuned to softer sounds, such as animals moving in the distance, and other sounds which would otherwise be lost in a lo-fi environment saturated with typically louder sounds.

Non-duality, connectedness.

Perhaps the idea of non-duality is one of the most spiritual ideas in this list of keywords. Non-duality was discussed as the understanding that nature is not something separate from us, and we are as much part of nature as anything else. This was reflected in statements such as, that we do not need to carry anything back from the wilderness because we are the wilderness itself (Heidi; Alicia). This

experience is so akin to how Cass Adams describes a visit in the wilderness that it is worth quoting in its entirety:

“Seeing the smallness of our human lives against the unrestrained expense of nature into which we have been born, we are deeply and gratefully humbled. Through this seeing, our attention may be turned away from the confines of our humanness and toward the depths of our nature; and in this act we grow immeasurably. We no longer perceive nature as something out there that we periodically visit, but as something that we carry inside of us wherever we are.”
(Adams, 1996, p. 189)

Such feelings of “oneness” in natural environments are not exceptional during trips into the wilderness (see Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989), and are a typical characteristic of spiritual and mindfulness retreats (Cooper, 1992).

No clear lines, no straight lines.

“No clear lines” means that in the forest there are no perceptible discrete boundaries between entities and elements of the environment, whether geographical or animal. Instead, everything appeared to blend into everything else.

This lack of discreteness was also observed as a lack of straight lines: trees, for example, were arguably the straightest element in the environment. Yet even the straightest trees bend with the wind, their trunks are full of branches, and the surface is never flat. Moreover, in the wilderness, because of a lack of organised and

planned tree planting, gardening, or other manipulation of the land, trees grow a lot less straight than in plantations or parks. In the wild, trees need to compete with other species for sunlight, protection from the wind, and search for nutrients, leading to a diversity of shapes and sizes.

Mäkinen (2015) was also aware of this quality of the wilderness, commenting that “most of the cities are built very angular, and the architecture is quite straight,” and the wilderness landscape is more akin to the non-straight nature of the human body.

The previous keyword, non-duality, could be seen as a form of “no clear lines,” the *lines* in this context being the boundary between human and non-human.

Process.

After our improvisation on the evening of Day 2, we realised that one of the causes of dissatisfaction with the experience was that we were focusing too much on the product, on “what does it look and sound like” instead of focusing on the internal processes of listening, being present, and interacting.

Through focusing again on the process that we, as participants and creative artists, are going through, we managed to find common ground and connect our experiences in the wilderness to our performance in VTT, and overcome what seemed like the tensest interaction within the group in the entire project. This was perhaps expressed most clearly in Alicia’s writing, that “getting here is part of being here,” as well as talking about how to bring the processes we’ve been going through in the forest back to the performance space (Nadja; Katarina) rather than a finished product that we present to the audience.

Slowness.

All participants experienced to a certain degree a slowing-down of rhythms, as well as a pace not defined by the clock, but by the group's own dynamics, motivation, and energy levels. This slowness is reflected also in the simplicity of the activities: rather than hurrying through a large number of different exercises, we spent a lot of time with each exercise, and we did not have to hurry anywhere.

b. Individual experiences

Alicia

An element that surfaced repeatedly in Alicia's texts and interviews was a feeling of doing less. She was particularly fascinated by our silent soundwalks, and how it fostered listening within the group, and during the performance within the audience as well.

The simplicity of our experiences in the wilderness inspired her to "use [her] voice in a minimalistic way, and to focus on bringing out the deeper qualities and fullest potential of every note I chose to sing." This minimal approach to content was also expressed in feeling more comfortable stepping back from the action and taking on the role of an observer for some time.

Katarina

Through Katarina's reflections and post-project interview, an important element of the experience was a lack of stage fright or other kinds of performance-related

stress, both prior to and during the performance. She acknowledged that there were certain moments of anxiousness or anticipation regarding what is going to happen next, but such feelings did not have a considerable impact on her like they have had in other contexts.

Katarina attributed this to thinking of the audience as a “non-judgemental forest,” and letting go of a tendency to want to project something to the audience, preferring to “[let things] evaporate into the space” instead. This helped create a “feeling of space,” in which she felt comfortable and relaxed performing.

Laonikos

As for myself, the most fascinating aspect of our time in the wilderness was experiencing simplicity, and letting go of a need to constantly change what I’m doing. This is connected to an attitude of non-judgementality. During the improvisation on the evening of Day 3, I found that I was constantly thinking “I’ve been doing this for too long, time to move on to something more interesting, this is not working.” Because of this continuous internal judgement, I was listening less and being less present with the rest of the group.

By giving permission to myself to dwell in any one action, material, scene long enough until it dissolves, I found that I could immerse myself in the moment more easily, and spend enough time within a particular situation that I can trust that the situation will take a direction of its own without any executive decisions on my behalf as to whether it should develop, stay the same, or we should return to previous elements.

Heidi

For Heidi, it seemed an important dimension of the experience was the multitude and diversity of stimuli, particularly the richness of experience in the feet when walking barefoot. This was also expressed in feeling more connected to the ground. The unevenness of the terrain, weather changes, the aliveness of the environment, were all affecting improvisation in the wilderness in an interesting way.

Heini

Heini seemed to be particularly inspired by the presence of trees. A considerable amount of text in her reflections was dedicated to describing in short, iterative phrases about a tree and how she relates to the tree, using the tree as a metaphor for a desirable way of being. She writes of the tree as “patient,” “listening,” and “open”; that it forgives everything and accepts her; that the tree simply was, it did not compare anyone to anything, did not judge, did not analyse; that the tree did not live in the past or the future, but in the present. She speaks of the tree as encouraging her to let go, and that it was an example in listening and being present. The word “now” was iterated numerous times and underlined, to highlight how a tree only exists in the present moment, and she, in turn, can be an example by meeting others in the present moment. Towards the end of the text, she writes “Then, I was like a tree is.”

This experience seems to have been stimulated by the last exercise in the forest, *Ask a Tree* (see p. 81). She found the experience of putting oneself in the situation of

asking for the tree to listen very personal. Talking about this exercise during the open discussion, Heini described how the realisation that one can learn to listen from a tree was touching and made her cry.

Nadja

An experience, which seemed to stand out among the rest was the moment Nadja fell into the lake in Day 2 while walking on the trunk of a fallen tree. At first, she felt this would be embarrassing, because it was a mistake, yet she felt accepted, and that in a natural environment this sort of behaviour is not embarrassing or awkward. Giving permission to oneself to make mistakes, and accepting them as part of life—or performance—gave Nadja a sense of security and connection to the rest of the group. Nadja closes her reflective writings with the sentences: “In to the wilderness, enjoyment of freeing me. Search new things.”

CHAPTER IV: REWILDING MUSIC

A. Embodying the Wild

When asked by Giorgio during the open discussion how we prepared for the performance, and what steps we took in returning to the city, it was evident, post hoc, that upon returning to the city “the city brain switched on” (Laonikos) and you “just have to do this stuff” (Heini). Quick decision-making and logistical efficiency, during our limited time before the performance, was “intuitive” (Heini), and it happened very organically (Katarina, Heidi). Katarina elaborated that “We did it naturally—because I think it’s always *a function of the environment*. Whether you are in the forest or in the city, you somehow tune into the specific mode of being in these places” (emphasis added). Katarina unknowingly bumped into Tetsurō’s concept of *fudo-sei*, and a way in which the environment immediately influences our behaviour.¹⁰

As seen in the following analysis of the Immersive Listening research project participants’ reflections and experiences, a number of qualities of the wilderness, as an environment, can potentially be embodied and manifest themselves in creative group work. In other words, it can act as an embodied metaphor in our interactions as artists. In exploring the ways in which the participants of the Immersive Listening project embodied aspects of the wilderness, it is useful to return to the distinction between on-line and off-line embodiment (Wilson, 2002). The analysis of insights from this project will, therefore, be summarised in a) **on-line embodiment**, that is,

¹⁰ A straightforward example of on-line embodiment (Wilson, 2002).

the ways in we were influenced by the wilderness environment while we were in the environment; and b) **off-line embodiment**, that is, the ways in which features of the wilderness were embodied and manifested in our improvisation after having been in the wilderness, and having returned to Helsinki. A common ground is expected, and what is most interesting to this research is the qualities that were embodied off-line, and which we were unaware of until we performed back in the city.

1. On-line Embodiment

Perhaps the most significant quality we embodied was the particular wilderness environment's *silence* and a feeling of *being present*. These, and many of the keywords in the previous analysis (see Table 1, p. 107), are typical of writings about mindfulness. Mindfulness researcher and author Jon Kabat-Zinn, in his book "Wherever You Go, There you Are" (2004), includes dedicated chapters on simplicity, non-doing, letting go, non-judging, interconnectedness, and oneness, among others. Interestingly, in the same book, there are a number of meditations which use natural elements as a starting point: the "lake" meditation, the "tree" meditation, the "mountain" meditation. A connection between natural environments and mindfulness is not surprising. Meditation is typical of philosophies and religions such as Buddhism, Taoism and Zen (Kornfield, 2002), which were developed in cultures whose philosophy and aesthetics have a very strong connection to their natural environment (Ross, 1960; Tsubaki, 1971; Dōgen, 1985).

Nature-connectedness has also been correlated to mindfulness (Howell et al., 2011; Wolsko & Lindberg, 2013; Capaldi et al., 2014). It is, therefore, not

unreasonable to hypothesise that the way in which the wilderness affected us in all these domains was through acting as a *primer* for mindfulness. Our time in the forest was, in fact, often described as meditative (Katarina; Nadja; Heidi).

Being in silence further supported our listening—aural, perceptual, conversational—which was uninhibited from any distractions, noise, and sensory overload. Silence and listening were both embodied in our conversations, as well as our improvisations in the forest, which were typically lacking in flamboyance and intrusiveness, indicating that we spent time observing as well as interacting. Furthermore, three participants described a general increased *sensory sensitivity* (touch, hearing, vision), perhaps also fostered by a significant lack of sensory overload. Another effect on the participants stemming from this “opening up” to our environment perceptually was that our field of awareness itself expanded. We became sensitive to perceiving more “three-dimensionally,” or non-directionally, making it easier for each of us to be aware of the rest of the group during the walking improvisations.

Working independently of a clock, structuring instead our days according to our interests, hunger, and energy levels, meant our time in the forest was characterised by slower rhythms, an embodied unhurriedness, manifested in each participant reporting feeling “still” and “quiet” at some point in the trip.

Non-judgementality was a quality that we attributed to the natural environment, and which was embodied in our interactions within the group. This took the form of acceptance of one’s own thoughts and impulses (Katarina); of oneself in general, and through that acceptance of others (Nadja); accepting one’s own negative feelings (Heini); and acceptance of unplanned circumstances (Laonikos; Nadja).

Katarina exemplifies this embodiment of non-judgementality in her writings: “A lot was said about nature and its ability to take all your worries, about nature not being judgemental. And I truly felt this—the forest has a great ability of tranquilising me. It makes it easier for me to accept every thought, every sensation, every idea.” This idea of non-judgementality contributed to a quality of playfulness, which characterised many of our experiences in the forest, whether they were related to the research (e.g. “wild” walking improvisation) or free-time (e.g. Nadja walking on a fallen trunk and falling in the water).

One element that surfaced during this research and was entirely unexpected was the dimension of reflection on one’s life and “confronting oneself,” what is, in fact, typical of longer retreats (Cooper, 1992). Our total time in the wilderness was relatively short (three days), and all the participants were, to a certain extent, familiar with Finnish forests. It was, therefore, interesting to observe that for at least half of the participants this trip was accompanied by a deep self-reflection, on life priorities, previous unresolved issues, and current personal struggles.

As seen earlier, the basis of improvisation is listening and being present (Hannula, 2015; Nachmanovitch, 2009; 2010). To the extent that being in the wilderness fostered both of these qualities of experience, it had a positive effect on our ability to interact creatively in improvisation during our time in the wilderness.

2. Off-line Embodiment

A number of the *on-line* embodiment elements that were looked at in the previous section are also common in *off-line* embodiment. Having returned to the city we

maintained our sense of listening and being present during the performance in VTT, which was evident both in our reflection and memories of it, and in the comments of audience members. In terms of creative interaction during our performance, we also exhibited a similar kind of playfulness as experienced in the wilderness: for example, the scene in the VTT performance when Heini started vocalising rhythmically was remarkably similar in character to the ending of our “wild” variation of the walking improvisation on Day 2.

Silence was embodied not only as conversational silences in the forest but also by embracing physical space and musical silences creatively in the improvisation. Our improvisation in VTT was characterised by a certain slowness, subtleness, and quietness, all of which we experienced in one way or another in the wilderness.

Upon review of the documentation of the final performance, there was an interesting observation which was not reflected upon, or picked up by audience members. At some point during the performance, every participant interacted creatively with, or incorporated creatively into their own performance, an object or item from the environment: a chair, a carpet, a pillow, a scarf, and so on. Sometimes the interaction was initiated intentionally (e.g. the scene with Laonikos and Heidi “fighting” over a pillow) and others accidentally (e.g. when Heini stopped suddenly on top of a carpet, which then slid on the floor; she then continued playing with the slipperiness of the carpet, sliding with it).

While in the wilderness, members of the group spoke about the awkwardness of calling elements of the natural environment “objects” or “items.” This likely stems

from a lack of anthropocentric utility in natural elements, and the fact that many of the elements in a natural setting are alive, plants and animals alike.

Prior to the performance we had agreed to treat the audience members as “trees,” and perform not *for* them, but simply *amongst* them, just like we had been improvising in the forest. It seems that such an artificially-induced relationship to the audience carried with it other embodied aspects of the wilderness, such as the oneness of the elements in a natural environment. This was eventually manifested in the *organicity* with which we interacted with objects during the performance. The individual decisions to incorporate objects into the improvisation were neither agreed upon nor did they happen at the same time. This type of behaviour in performance was indeed very similar to the manner in which, during the “wild” variation of the walking improvisation on Day 2, we would permit ourselves to react to impulses from the environment, such as picking up berries, or sliding on rock, or smelling a flower, and letting those acts become part of the performance. This was an element that we did not pay much attention to, either during our time in the forest or in our reflections, but was evident in the video and photographic material.

There was another element, which we embodied, and were not entirely aware of until a dancer and member of the audience pointed it out to us. Heini Nukari, as mentioned earlier (p. 97) observed that the way we walked, and the way our feet touched the hard concrete floor of VTT were characterised by “softness and aliveness,” which resulted from having spent considerable time walking barefoot in the forest.

The group's decisions for the performance space arrangement, as well as the structure of the performance, were directly informed by the lack of social and architectural structures that was observed in the forest, as well as with an off-line embodiment of the qualities of "non-duality" and "no clear lines."

Having spent time in unarchitected space, and through embodying non-judgementality and acceptance, we were eager to interact beyond the roles and identities which are defined by our training and background, getting "to know each other, not as dancers and musicians, but as human beings" (Alicia). Being in the wilderness generates a sense of humility: it takes us "away from our egocentric behavior, away from our anthropocentric behavior" (Stokes, quoted in Craver, 1996, p. 64), and by not being exclusive in terms of species it allows or supports, it fosters multiplicity and diversity. The wilderness shows us that "we do not have to be one certain, fixed way" (p. 64). As manifested in our reflections and discussions around acceptance and non-judgementality, this can also be described as embodied *acceptance of diversity*. Together with the creative incorporation of elements of our environment in the performance, these were surprising observations which had not been previously expected or hypothesised.

B. Lessons from the Wild

1. Global Music, World Music

“There is no bad season: every season presents the gardener with a challenge and an interest of its own. All weather is good for somebody, or some plant, somewhere. The gardener cannot change these things. He must accept the challenge of learning to understand the seasons and of adapting himself to work within their never-ending cycle.”

Seymour (2008) “The self-sufficient gardener.” p. 50

Before attempting to connect the insights from the Immersive Listening research project to the theoretical framework constructed earlier, it is useful, at this stage, to examine more in-depth what a global musician is, and what challenges a global musician should be trained to respond to.

The Global Music Matters programme is not an attempt at perpetrating a particular aesthetics or creating another section at record stores simply to stand out from all other kinds of “World Music” (or, even worse, “Ethnic Music”). In fact, the idea behind global music is radically different to the attitudes and assumptions implied in “world music.” Cultural entrepreneur Drew Foxman wrote on the topic as part of his studies at Columbia University. In his 2008 essay, “GLOBAL MUSIC: Re-envisioning the place for music and musicians in global civil society,” he lays out an overview of the definition, origin, and implications of the term “world music,” as well

as the need to envision a new kind of musician, a globally socially responsible musician, able to meet the multifarious and rapid changes that accompany globalisation:

“Just as global citizens are needed to respond effectively to global issues, I argue that global musicians are equally needed and perhaps better suited to such a cause. Our future global citizens are to be trained not “in or about citizenship, but as citizens” (Davies, 2008, p. 2). Similarly, a new generation of global musicians needs to be instructed not in or about music, but as musicians.” (Foxman, 2008, p. 21)

Global music’s power lies in “honoring difference and creating truly global, rather than world, sounds,” and thus becomes about “music, activism, interculturalism, education, and global society” (pp. 21–22). Its main challenge is to responding creatively, meaningfully, authentically, and humanely to a changing world in the midst of globalisation. In doing so, global musicians, like Seymour’s self-sufficient gardener, need:

“to learn how to join in in unfamiliar musical situations, to improvise when [they] don’t know the rules. Not to be the star and sing out above the fray, but to slip in; to go native; to figure out quickly what others like and what they dislike.” (Rothenberg, 2002, p. 115)

Though improviser and philosopher David Rothenberg's words were written years before the *Global Music Masters* was even conceived, his thoughts resonate strongly with the aesthetics of the global musician. While Rothenberg does not call it global music, he distinguishes it from "world music" by calling it "real world music," a music which "doesn't exist to represent any particular ethnic group, country, or part of the world" (2002, p. 127). He talks about wanting to "honestly open to the search for an organic otherness that lies latent inside me" (p. 116) and encourages the reader to interact with other musics in an authentic, non-destructive way. Without either exploiting and appropriating others' music, or maintaining them lifeless like exhibits in a museum: "Instead we must make it part of the future culture of the world, a better culture than today's, one with more diversity, more life, more nature, more song" (p. 124).

2. Cosmopolitan Listening

Rothenberg's (2002) aesthetics resonates strongly with what ethnomusicologist Steven Feld calls cosmopolitan listening, that is:

"The ethical and aesthetic value, or sensibility, of listening beyond horizons, beyond boundaries, beyond borders, listening beyond what is presumed incommensurable, listening across the divides, gulfs, and hurts of history, culture, art; listening across species and technologies. In all, listening that performs cosmopolitan ethics and aesthetics, by the ways it might acknowledge, engage,

promote, and perform both expansive imagination and a solidarity in difference.”
(Feld, 2015)

Through this simple, yet sophisticated, act of listening, we may learn to engage with each other genuinely, mindfully, respectfully. Not force a mentality, or exploit a resource; not preserve for posterity, and not appropriate destructively. But contribute creatively to co-creating living artistic experiences, meaningful for everyone involved. It is precisely cosmopolitan listening that global musicians should be trained to practice, yet as Feld comments, there are certain difficulties within institutionalised education in a cosmopolitan listening education:

“The problem in the academy now is how to promote, in as many ways as possible, a healthy and open-minded understanding of the dynamic nature of what is called “tradition,” rather than a reified, authoritative, and foolish version of it. At the same time to encourage forms of openness and expansiveness, and the creation of new kinds of dialogue and translation through musical interactions with musicians from many places.” (Feld, 2015)

Cosmopolitan listening can be learned through directly experiencing the “the incredibly dynamic and open world of real music practice,” as opposed to a “guruization of non-western music, of reified ideas about tradition and hierarchy and authority that do not exist and are not really part” of reality which often characterises approaches to non-western music in music education institutions (Feld, 2015). The

idea of cosmopolitan listening extends beyond just music, and becomes, much in Small's spirit (1977) a question of learning to live together with other people.

Many of the more technical competencies relevant to global musicians' education, such as management, leadership, and artistic skills, can be well taught in an academic context, where easy access to literature, experienced staff, and possibilities for practical work and projects abound. However, as the Feld quote above demonstrates, the competencies needed to participate in cosmopolitan listening, or "cosmopolitan musicianship," are not typically found in the curriculum of formal music education (Partti, 2012, p. 85). Furthermore, cosmopolitan listening is above all about *listening*, and as acoustic ecologist Westerkamp reminds us, listening cannot be ordered or forced (2015). Listening cannot be transmitted, any more than a person can be ordered to care about or love someone else.

Listening, however, can be fostered. And while it should be obvious that the most efficient way to develop cosmopolitan listening is through hands-on practice with real people in the real world, the wilderness as an environment can support such a practice of listening and openness as it relates to music and collaboration. As it was seen earlier, disrupting our everyday habits brings an awareness to our activities, and listening can take place more effortlessly (see p. 110).

Having constructed an understanding of the wilderness, of improvisation, and of mindfulness, and through an analysis of the Immersive Listening research project, the wilderness as an environment has been seen to have a positive effect in collaborative artistic work, as expressed in the way qualities of the wilderness are embodied and expressed in artistic work and interpersonal relationships. Some of

the studied effects of being in the wilderness on collaborative work can be attributed to the intrinsic qualities of the wilderness environment; others can be attributed to a distancing from our habitual spaces and routines. These insights, therefore, are drawn specifically with regards to artists living in urban areas and for whom a safe excursion into the wilderness can be facilitated, in terms of the location and season, and which they can willingly join. In this sense, the wilderness can, in certain contexts, support cosmopolitan listening in an educational context, by fostering attitudes, qualities, and values which cosmopolitan listening entails. An indispensable part of such processes, however, must necessarily include a good deal of reflection. Reflecting on such experiences, rather than simply documenting or reporting, is an invaluable tool for constructing an understanding beyond the verbal (Schön, 1983). This includes both reflection-*in*-action (reflexivity), meaning reflecting while doing something; and reflection-*on*-action (reflectivity), meaning reflecting on an activity which is already over (Schön, 1983; Renshaw, 2010).

C. Personal artistic development

This project and accompanying writing, from conception to completion, has been an incredibly educational experience personally. The combination of a focused artistic project, a reflective practice, and study of related literature has helped me develop in numerous ways, both as an artist and as a workshop leader.

As a facilitator and leader, I learned not to plan too much in detail, for I can never be prepared enough for all circumstances. Like a wilderness guide, I need to remember that a map that is useful for one forest will be useless for another, though

the skills to navigate through the terrain will help me from one trip to another. And like a wilderness guide, as a facilitator of artistic projects I need to have a clear vision of what the project is about so that I can best respond from moment to moment to the unexpected challenges that inevitably arise. I learned that I need to place boundaries and that in dealing with conflicts of opinions within the group, it is neither my role nor responsibility to persuade others of a particular opinion. Rather than taking such conflicts personally, I should be able to stand back, and, instead, merely allow for opinions to be heard, and people can then make up their own mind.

A lesson that I learned from Sigrún Sævarsdóttir-Griffiths and Paul Griffiths was that the less one talks, the fewer misunderstandings there will be. This has never been truer in work involving artists from different backgrounds and of different language levels, and this project was a grand revision of this lesson. I also learned that as a facilitator it is more important to know what questions to ask, rather than what answers to give: instead of giving half-hearted responses to a pressing question, to ask and help the group arrive at a solution.

As an artist, I learned to trust in the group and the process and let go of any expectations for things to look or be a particular way. Many times during the project I doubted whether the final performance will “work,” or this research will eventually produce anything worthwhile, because of our conflicts and my own personal expectations with regards to the outcome. I saw that letting go of these allowed me to discover possibilities which I could not have planned or imagined beforehand, and to realise that I need to trust in the process for it to work. Luckily, “failing” or messing up in an artistic context has far fewer consequences than the same happening in a

trip in the wilderness. Remembering this makes it easier to accept mistakes as an inevitable part of such processes.

Another important learning outcome was an acceptance and expansion of my artistic identity, embracing other art-making as part of my own identity. I worked with this direction in the months following the project, which eventually led to my final performance project of my studies, *umami-music*. It was an improvisatory collaboration with Chris Bartholomew and four invited musicians, and included music, movement, spoken word, recordings of soundscapes, and a book written especially for the performance. As with any creative collaborative project, this too was an affirmation of the power and value of working together. Sharing a creative space in which we can be vulnerable and intimate, and accept each other for who we are, is an irreplaceable experience.

I decided to study on the global music programme because I wanted to find ways to combine my two passions: the wilderness and music-making. When applying for the course, and for a long time while studying in it, I had little to no idea as to how I would do this. Though the many discussions with both Peter Renshaw and Nathan Riki Thomson, for which I am immensely grateful, helped consolidate many of the ideas in my mind, there were still times during which I felt like this was an impossible task: the idea too vague, the interest too little, and then the constant worry that perhaps these connections only exist in my mind, because of my own personal interest in the wilderness and music.

One of the most important encounters during my studies and this project is when I discovered ecomusicology, an interdisciplinary field with people who share the same passion for exploring the interconnections between music and the natural environment. This realisation that I am not alone in this endeavour was deeply encouraging. During my time at the Ecomusicologies Conference 2014, a number of people, upon hearing my then-vague ideas for this project, responded with enthusiasm and fascination; participants at the two workshops Alicia Burns and I lead there also gave very positive feedback. As Tommi, a former workmate of mine used to say: “it’s a small thing—but it’s a big thing” and this could not be more appropriate in this case. Such short sentences of encouragement proved to be invaluable mental support in all those moments of doubt. Coupled with Peter Renshaw’s relentless curiosity, and his willingness to ask the tough questions (the ones I did not have answers to), these vague thoughts and aspirations began to crystallise and eventually became a fascinating and rewarding journey, leading to this project and thesis.

D. Limitations of the Research

A fundamental limitation of this research, with regards to the Immersive Listening research project, is its small and specific sample of participants. All the participants were, to a certain extent, familiar with the Finnish wilderness, and had had previous experiences with improvisation. While this meant that it was easy to maintain a sense of safety within the group while in the forest, it also means insights from this project might not so readily apply to people who do not feel *de facto* comfortable in

such an environment. There was also a gender imbalance within the group, with five females and only one male, and the majority of the participants (80%) were Finnish.

Another limiting factor is the fact that I was involved with this project as both a facilitator–leader and as artist–participant. While any role hierarchies within the group were less imposing, it also meant that I may have influenced the group dynamics, discussions, and direction because of my personal beliefs and expectations.

The particularity of the wilderness environment in which the group spent time is also a limitation. The wilderness area can be characterised as a boreal coniferous forest, with soft, mossy swamps and broad-leaved patches around lakes and more wet areas, typical of central Finland and other temperate countries of northern latitudes with not much mountains, such as central Sweden or Siberian taiga forests.

The project further took place at the end of summer, and the effects of each season's qualities, as well as the range of difficulty in facilitating a comfortable and safe experience for the group from one season to the other, are variables which would inevitably change the outcome of this research, had the case study taken place in another location or season. The findings are thus limited to the specificities of the environments in which we worked.

E. New Questions—Where to next?

In the late seventies, Christopher Small indicated that “nowhere is our unwillingness to let nature, especially human nature, alone to work out her own processes in her own time more apparent than in education” (1978, p. 11). Fifty

years later, and though a lot of things have changed for the better in that time in education, this is still very underdeveloped. Certain initiatives have explicitly tried to reinstate such an awareness of our inherent connection to the natural world. Lifelong Integrated Education, a framework developed by Yoshiko Nomura and whose principles are based on an “oriental view of nature, in which all things and matters in nature are integrated” (Nomura, 1998, p. 102).

It would be interesting to study how, embracing the wilderness as part of education can potentially open up new directions in music education, supporting artists in connecting their work to global issues such as climate change.¹¹

Another interesting direction would be to see the educational potential for wilderness experiences in young people’s art education. In ten years of data collected during the Outdoor Challenge Program, Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) note that the positive effects of being in the wilderness were more strongly evident in youth with problematic behaviour than in adults.

One possibility for future research, which was touched upon in the discussions between, and reflections of, the participants of the Immersive Listening project (Alicia; Katarina; Laonikos) would be a comparative study of the specific effects that the different varieties of wilderness areas have on music-making: Lappish tundra, Algerian deserts, the Appalachians, a small island in the Pacific, and so on. Investigating, in other words, music-making as a function of the local *fudo* and exploring the specific differences.

¹¹ Christopher Small, in a lecture given to a small group of students a few months before his death, asked them “What about music and climate change?” (Laurence, quoted in Laing, 2011)

A related question would be in a sense the reverse: rather than have one artist explore different *fudo*, to take a number of artists who live in various *fudo* and bring them all to experience one *fudo*. Investigating, thus, how our deeply embodied *fudo* from the place where we come from influences the ways we perceive and interact with a new *fudo*. How is an artist from an Algerian desert, another from Borneo, and a third from north Greenland experience a Siberian old growth boreal forest?

Perhaps the most interesting question personally is practising cosmopolitan listening through familiarising oneself with the *fudo* of potential collaborator. In other words, assuming that one's sum of views on music (*Musikanschauung*) is, to certain degree, a function of *fudo* ("climate as a factor within the structure of human existence," Tetsurō, 1961, p. 1), to investigate how immersing oneself physically in another person's climate can be a way of constructing an embodied understanding of their *Musikanschauung* (music-view), and, therefore, facilitate collaboration. Shakuhachi player and author Christopher Yohmei Blasdel describes his experiences of learning the shakuhachi from sitting and listening to the soundscapes in the mountains near Ikenodaira shrine:

"It was as if nature were busily whispering her secrets through her sounds—all we had to do was quiet ourselves and listen. Learning to discern the myriad tone colors of Ikenodaira's natural environment helped me later to appreciate the rich timbre in traditional Japanese music." (Blasdel, 2005, p.14)

The thought of investigating how immersing oneself into the soundscapes surrounding Ikenodaira shrine could be a way of understanding Blasdel's *Musikanshauung*, as an alternative to talking *about* music.

F. Closing remarks

Rewilding music is moving from post-colonialist exploitation or conservative reification of tradition to creative trans-cultural, collaboration. It entails giving agency to everyone involved, allowing the process of working together to define the outcome of the interaction, rather than arriving with a predetermined idea of what the interaction should be like, and attempting to force this preconceived outcome. It means allowing the accompanying uncertainty and unpredictability to be a valid part of the process. By replacing the word “ecosystem” with “genre,” and the word “species” with “music,” Monbiot's statement about rewilding of natural landscapes is equally poignant translated to music: “Rewilding has no end points, no view about what a ‘right’ genre or a ‘right’ assemblage of musics looks like” (paraphrase of Monbiot, 2013, p. 10).

Rewilding music, therefore, means embracing cosmopolitan listening as the *modus operandi* of global musicians, at the same time acknowledging the wilderness for its potential to foster cosmopolitan listening. The wilderness, as a literally living example of diversity, interconnectedness, acceptance, openness, has the potential of being a powerful metaphor in global music education. If the experience is facilitated and organised safely, and the endeavour is approached mindfully, the wilderness can foster musical cosmopolitanism. In a somewhat paradoxical way, the more we

remove ourselves from anthropocentric environments, the more we discover our common humanity. This paradox is not unlike how, in meditation, the more one distances oneself from one's *idea* of oneself, our ego, the more becomes more authentic to oneself.

Philosopher and improviser David Rothenberg reminds us that although “music is abstract enough to be about almost anything,” if we want to be part of a culture that sees humans as in an organic interrelationship with the rest of existence, “art must resonate with the logic of interconnectedness; only then will it earn a place in the dream we’re trying to articulate” (2002, p. 177), a sentiment echoed in the words of composer John Luther Adams, who believes that “by deepening our awareness of our connections to the earth, music can provide a sounding model for the renewal of human consciousness and culture” (Adams, 2009, p. 3). Through engaging with the arts we “participate, through the symbols offered by a work of the imagination, in a potential society that lies beyond our grasp” (Duvignaud, 1972, p. 20), and as such we become active members in realising the potential society.

Rediscovering the arts through a connection, physical or metaphorical, to the wilderness, that wild, uncontrollable side of all that exists as much within ourselves as outside of us, can help us restructure our way of living to embrace the diversity of life that exists on this planet and see humans as intimately interconnected to the rest of the planet. Through immersing ourselves in the wilderness, we are empowered to return to our starting places ever so slightly wilder than we were before. More aware of the wildness inside us all—a wildness that connects rather than separates—we may give permission to ourselves to go beyond symbols and patterns of

conservation, othering, and reification, and towards an appreciation of people and their musical cultures as alive, relational, and meaningful, and join in with this living dance that it is to be human on this planet: “Jamming with the earth, figuratively or literally, is a way to find our place in it” (Rothenberg, 2002, p. 201).

As global musicians, we need to bring a childlike curiosity and presence to the increasingly complex field of working with people from diverse backgrounds: disciplinary, cultural, or otherwise. The wilderness can be a powerful metaphor for a rewilding of art-making or an inspiration for connecting our artistic practice to a larger ecological and cosmopolitan context. More than that, however, it is an environment exemplifying just the kind of attitudes and qualities we need to develop in our relationship with ourselves, each other, and the world around us in order to coexist harmonically and creatively on this shared home of ours, and continue to produce meaningful work that connects to context. The global musician needs to begin by acknowledging the historical sources for the powers that have led to the commodification of music, the corporatisation and saturation of landscapes, soundscapes, and human imagination that brought us, among others, “world music.” A global musician must be ready to not only let go of, but actively deconstruct such ideas of hierarchy, of reification of tradition, or a “guruization” (Feld, 2015) of anything non-western, in order to be able to re-engage with other artists meaningfully, transcending—yet acknowledging and respecting—difference.

This research started with a quote by Barry Lopez, and will end with another. Lopez was quoted earlier, in describing the wilderness as a place that makes us stumble (Lopez, 2014, p. xi). This seemingly simplistic view of the wilderness

encompasses many elements that have already been described: a place that makes us stumble implies a non-straightness, an unpredictability; a lack of control, as we are taken both out of an anthropocentric environment and out of our habitual spaces, both architectural and professional. It switches off our auto-pilot, as we can take fewer things for granted. Stumbling brings attention to the present moment. The wilderness, as a place, highlights our vulnerability, yet at the same time the safety surrounding such a vulnerability (we stumble, we do not collapse or nosedive) as well as a lack of evil intentions (nature does not *trip* us; it is us who stumble).

Global musicians can, therefore, benefit from (re-)learning to stumble: learning to approach the world with a gentle and creative humility, and to be mindful of wildness within as well as without. The wilderness, with its quietness (*ekimi*) and distance from our mental and geographical habitual places, acts as a primer for presence and listening. When approached safely, mindfully and accompanied with a healthy dose of reflection, the wilderness can be a rich educational environment—directly conducive to an embodiment of the openness, non-judgementality, and acceptance of difference and diversity that cosmopolitan listening entails.

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APPENDIX A: IMMERSIVE LISTENING PROJECT

APPENDIX A1. Photographs: Patakallio



Figure 1. Ahvenusjärvi Nature Reserve (Ahvenusjärven luonnonsuojelualue). Photo by Laonikos Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis.



Figure 2. Morning soundwalk on Day 1. Photo by Nadja Pärssinen.



Figure 3. Ahvenusjärvi Nature Reserve. Photo by Laonikos Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis.



Figure 4. Patakallio, Ahvenusjärvi Nature Reserve. Photo by Laonikos Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis.



Figure 5. Kuusen perse. Photo by Nadja Pärssinen.



Figure 6. Immersive Listening participants on a soundwalk. Photo by Alicia Burns.

APPENDIX A2. Photographs: Performance in VTT



Figure 1. Vapaan Taiteen Tila (Space of the Free Arts). Photo by Laonikos Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis.



Figure 2. Metal rig in the middle of Vapaan Taiteen Tila, where performance took place. Photo by Laonikos Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis.

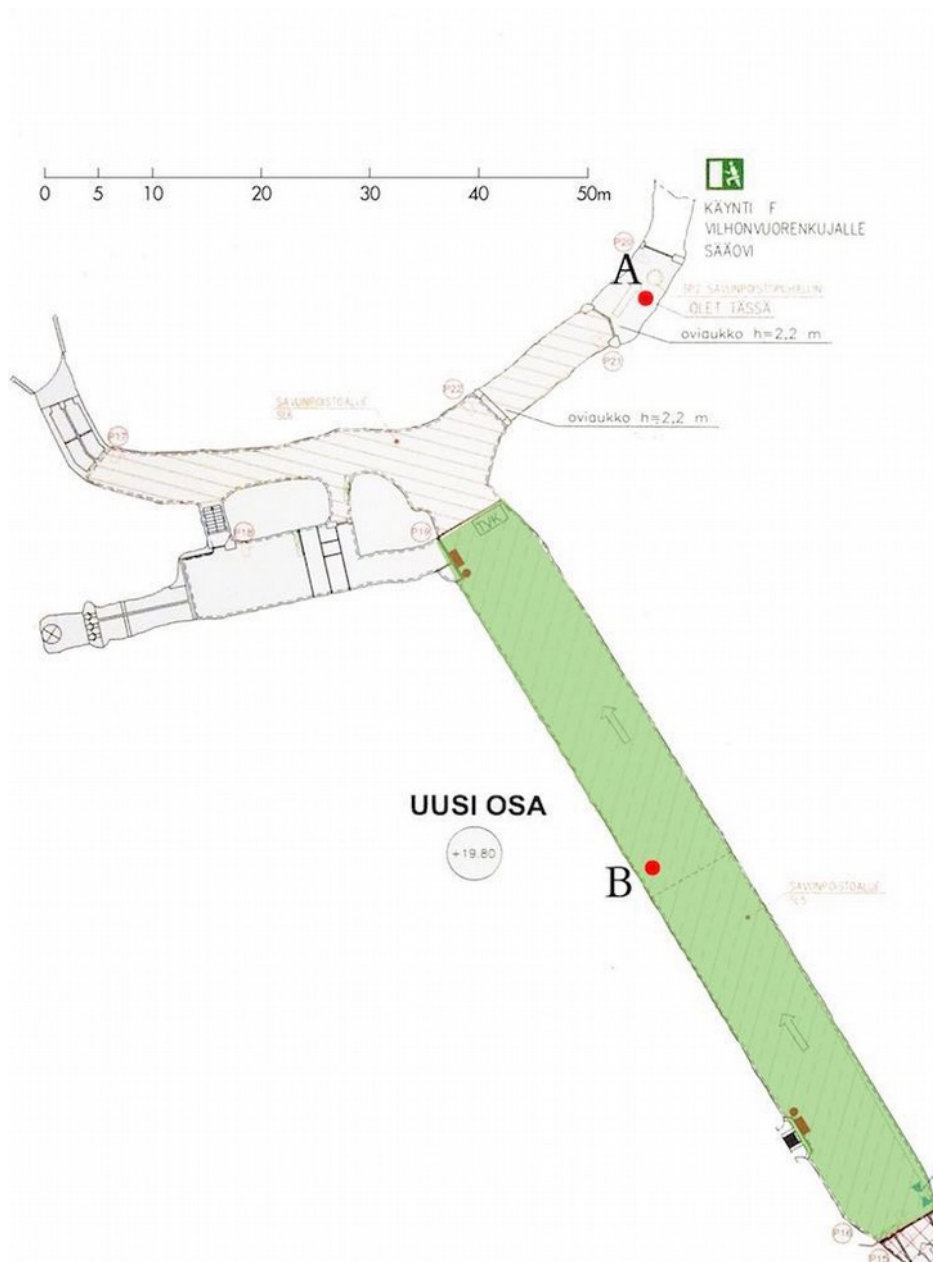


Figure 3. Map of Vapaan Taiteen Tila. The performance started with a tuning meditation in A; followed by a soundwalk from A to B; and the rest of the performance took place around B. The performance hall is highlighted with colour.



Figure 4. Performance in VTT. Photo by Laura Kosonen.



Figure 5. Open discussion after the performance. Photo by Laura Kosonen.



Figure 6. Alicia interacting with a pillow. Photo by Laura Kosonen.



Figure 7. Heidi and Laonikos interacting with a pillow. Photo by Laura Kosonen.



Figure 8. Katarina interacting with a small carpet. Photo by Laura Kosonen.



Figure 9. Nadja interacting with a large carpet. Photo by Laura Kosonen.

APPENDIX A3. Videos

Immersive Listening: Extracts

URL: <https://vimeo.com/laonikoss/il-extracts>
Filming and editing by Malak Mroueh.

Tuning Meditation

URL: <https://vimeo.com/laonikoss/il-tuning>
Filming and editing by Malak Mroueh.
Password: rewildingmusic

Walking meditation (unedited)

URL: <https://vimeo.com/laonikoss/il-unedited>
Video by Laonikos Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis.
Password: rewildingmusic

Walking meditation (edited)

URL: <https://vimeo.com/laonikoss/il-edited>
Video by Laonikos Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis.
Password: rewildingmusic

APPENDIX A4. Keywords table

Table 1. List of keywords from analysis of Immersive Listening material, and their frequency (in how many participants' writings or interactions it was mentioned).

Keywords	Frequency
listening	6
silence	6
presence	4
space	4
acceptance	3
authenticity	3
being mode	3
confront myself	3
connectedness	3
getting back to oneself	3
increased sensitivity	3
letting go	3
no clear lines	3
non-duality	3
non-judgemental	3
process	3
sensory stimulating	3
slowness	3
three-dimensionality	3
gentleness	2
groundedness	2
let things emerge	2
making mistakes	2
meditation	2
no boredom	2

Keywords	Frequency
non-verbal communication	2
peace	2
playfulness	2
quietness	2
stillness	2
timelessness	2
anti-climax	1
awareness	1
being home	1
clarity	1
honesty	1
I am the tree	1
meaningful	1
not boring	1
oneness	1
open up	1
personal reflections	1
sacredness	1
solitude	1
spatiality	1
subtleness	1
surprise	1
therapy	1
vulnerability	1

APPENDIX A5. Interview Questions

a. Before project

What are your expectations about this project? Do you have any ideas of what might happen?

How does being in the wilderness relate to improvisation in general? Have you had any particular experiences in the past? Memories?

What is important in improvisation?

What is important to you artistically?

How does this project connect to your work?

What are the challenges of musicians and dancers working together? Are these difficulties the same when working with dancers from a different background, or a culture?

How do you think of vulnerability in relation to improvisation?

b. After project

How have your views on improvisation changed over the course of this project?

How is improvising different in the wilderness than in a city environment? How does the space affect the improvisation?

Which elements (if any) which were present in the forest improvisations remained when we returned to the city, and which disappeared?

How can one bring experiences such as these into their work?

How did you relate differently to people?

How did you relate differently to improvisation?

How does this compare to previous improvising experiences?

Do you have any thoughts, moments, memories from our VTT improvisation that stand out?

What was most surprising about this project?

Share a memory or thought or realisation you had during these three days.

APPENDIX B: SUPPORTING MATERIAL

APPENDIX B1. Ecomusicologies workshop submission

Submission for Ecomusicologies Conference 2014 Workshop Proposal

August 2014 / Alicia Burns, Laonikos Psimikakis-Chalkokondylis

Active Rewilding

a participatory performative workshop exploring awareness, listening, and improvisation in the wilderness.

Active Rewilding is workshop which explores musical collaboration in and with the environment, through improvisation, creating a space for dialogue. The focus of the dialogue is on listening, awareness, and how they affect improvisation in a natural setting. The aim is to explore means for increasing awareness of/within a natural landscape and how that affects ways in which we connect to our environment and each other.

This workshop brings together the interests of both workshop leaders in exploring music-making in the wilderness. Moreover it is connected to Laonikos' thesis project, which researches how spending time in the wilderness informs the interactions and processes in an improvising group of musicians.

Our methodology used draws on influences from the Active Listening Playground, School of Uncovering the Voice, and London-based Creative Music-Making influences, bringing different practices together in a wilderness context.

The Active Listening Playground (developed by interdisciplinary composer Keren Rosenbaum) is a situation-based method involving groups of two to countless people. Its underlying values are playfulness and active listening, which invite innovative collaborations and unpredictable artistic outcomes.

Exercises from School of Uncovering the Voice provide a means through which to experience the world of music relevant both for trained musicians, and for those with no previous musical or singing experience. Alicia will lead participants through an exploration of sounds of speech and musical sound in the wilderness through these exercises.

We will also be using exercises and activities adapted to include the natural environment, inspired by John Stevens' "Search & Reflect," a collection of music-making activities aimed at raising awareness, listening, and interaction in a creative musical setting.

Throughout the duration of the workshop, the participants will have the opportunity to engage with their voice in a holistic manner, become more acutely aware of the elements of the surrounding natural environment, and communicate/improvise with each other using a variety of activities and exercises aimed at raising awareness, listening, and interaction in a creative musical setting.

APPENDIX B2. Sustain Piece (John Stevens)

Sustain Piece, by John Stevens
(Stevens 1985, p. 65)

‘Sustain Piece’ is primarily to do with breathing. Breath is, of course, fundamental to all our activities – without it, the activity is non-existent (and so are we). Here is an opportunity to concentrate on breathing in a relaxed yet intense way, which will involve us, almost as a by-product, in music making.

Individually, each person sustains a note which is as long as their breath length. Collectively, the piece sustains itself – although it moves in waves, it sounds continual; because individual breath lengths vary, there will always be some sound.

Seat yourself in such a way as to enable you to breath [*sic*] comfortably and freely.

Inhale and exhale slowly several times.

When ready, sing a long note on the slow exhale. Choose a note that is *most comfortable* for you. Sustain the note to as near the end of your breath length as possible.

Repeat the process. If you want to adjust the pitch, do so only to make your singing more comfortable.

You are working independently (the pitch and length of your sustained note should not be consciously affected by what you hear) but it is still important to project your sound positively.