

Unravelling Intercultural Knowledge Through Performative Contexts: A Flautist's Perspective.

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Performances create rich contexts for interrogating interculturality, for creating a setting for dialogical processes, exploring the interplay of our multiple selves and multiple voices, and the spaces or interstices between different “worlds”. This chapter aims to articulate aspects of the materialising thought of the performer, and investigates the performance as mediated space, as an articulation of “art as life” (Bourriaud, 1998, p.13), and as a model for aesthetic and cultural exchange from the performer’s perspective. Referencing theorists such as Bourriaud and Lau, a framework for the discussion evolves as a transition through art music and East/West engagement. The investigation draws on the author’s experience and study of intercultural music performance in Malaysia, and practice-led studies of process in contemporary art music performance.

As an Australian flautist living in Malaysia, I have found myself in a complex multicultural society, and a unique context for intercultural exploration through music. Unravelling cultural understandings as interpretation in this setting, as knowledge that is coloured by experience and preconception, has brought to the fore Gadamer’s belief in the ability of art [music] to “disrupt and challenge customary expectations ... [attributing] an ethical significance to art as being able to reveal the limitations of fixed cultural expectancy and to open the spectator towards the other and the different” (Davey, 2011, p.1). The ability of researchers, musicians and composers to achieve flexibility in participation and negotiation, and to nurture differences in an artistic context can, ideally, lead to new expression, generate unspoken, intuitive and embodied knowledge, and transform the spaces of music into dialogical sites of discovery. New models of actions can be generated, where the art (music) becomes the space, and the action becomes the living reality (Bourriaud, 1998).

This investigation presents two exemplars for performative analysis: A work for solo flute and percussion from 1984 and a 2010 work for flute and poetic vocalisation – compositions that articulate a crossing of cultures and perspectives, and create settings for intercultural dialogue and exploration.

Imagining the Space

Currently, a major research project in Malaysia, *The Imaginary Space: Developing Models for an Emergent Malaysian/Western Electroacoustic Music* (Malaysian Government Fundamental Research Grant Scheme 2012-14), is drawing to a close.¹ The major goal of this research has been to make artistic and cultural connections, to experience contemporary and traditional music practices of Malaysia and to see what we can learn about each other in a context of new electroacoustic composition and performance. Activating this intercultural exchange has proved to be an engaging undertaking and challenge.

According to Cloonan, Spencer and Saunders, “Participating and negotiating with people requires an ability to know and understand ‘your’ culture, ‘another’s’ culture and have skill in working between your own and another’s culture” (Cloonan, Spencer and Saunders, 2005). This aspiration provided a useful and idealistic framework as we initiated the research and managed the challenges of musical interculturality in the Malaysian university setting – in a faculty that specialises in traditional Malaysian music and is now incorporating significant elements of Western music education and expertise. Our ideas for establishing a performative conduit for exchange and connection, and a synthesis of cultures within music have been welcomed, as well as challenged, in a country that is re-evaluating internal

identities and tensions, and a burgeoning higher education sector. We have noticed a distinct post-colonial defensiveness, traces of outmoded perceptions of Western domination, and a considerable reluctance in some to establish a truly reciprocal interaction. East/West investigation for us in this setting has been about personal experiences, about sharing and about learning; about absorbing difference, strengthening our artistic practices and striving for a “cultural flux” (Lau, 2004, p.39) as new understandings evolve. It has necessitated deep self-reflection and a re-evaluation of values – and the most telling and meaningful way to accomplish this has been through music.

Composer Liza Lim has worked extensively in intercultural zones with Western and Non-Western performers and cultural practices of China, Indigenous Australia and northern Europe. She describes these exchanges as transformative education. For her,

knowledge is not so much passed from one ‘side’ to another but is generated in the engagements of the exchange. The dialogue itself is inherently ‘cultural’, that is, a situated social activity within which some processes of understanding can take place (Lim, 2013, para 4).

Transformative education in this sense, how we change through new understandings and connections, underlines our goals within a focused environment to engage with, articulate and disseminate experiential paradigms in music.

New modalities of reflection constructed through performative writing can reveal information through shifting towards a subjective analysis of process and response. Over recent decades, the value of description in music/artistic research has been recognized as crucial to developing true understandings. Marc Leman writes of “shared experiences that involve personal memories and interpretation of the cultural environment” and of how verbal and graphic descriptions provide the space for interaction between experience of involvement and the cultural context (Leman, 2008, p. 7). He further states that

Any engagement with music is a signified engagement in that it is about personal experiences, intuitive judgements, and interpretations, which are hardly accessible with scientific methods. What musicology can do is provide descriptions which are grounded in a subjective ontology of experienced musical intentions. (Ibid, p. 11)

As cultures may focus on artifacts and structures, knowledge from perception, cognition, emotion, and gesture (Ibid, p. 71), can be unified and synthesised through actions, and the creation of imagination. This mediation through the performer’s experience and physical energy associated with cultures, the interactions between performer, composer, audience, the materials of music (for example, the score and instrument) and the performance space provide the setting for action, for reflecting on cultures and synthesis, and for exploring “art as life”.

Western aesthetics and the role of art: Knowing our ‘own’ culture

In attempting intercultural musical dialogues we are forced to question understandings and knowledge of our “own” culture. In this discussion Western aesthetics, as represented by a selection of writers, relates to a way of thinking that articulates ideas finding resonance in our work: that shed light on the role of art and that assist the initiation of human interconnectedness through musical dialogue. Bruno Nettl has described the basic traits of Western art music as music that is carefully composed and meticulously rehearsed; it may have radical innovation in musical content or style in composition; and it is music that is conceived of as autonomous from other domains of culture (cited in Everett 2004, p. 221 n.1). This provides a base, albeit arguable, from which we might form aspects of the discussion.

Nicolas Bourriaud describes the space of contemporary art as one that is active and real-time: “The role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever the scale chosen by the artist” (Bourriaud, 1998, p.13). The performance as a “way of living”, a

processual interaction and response to contexts, ideas and sounds, creates models and methodologies for performative research. The processes create the exchange of ideas and the performance becomes the dialogue where these are realised. The performance then becomes a space to evaluate reality, to re-evaluate values and for self-reflection.

Bourriaud writes about the space between things as a crucial point of interest, an observation he notes is supported by a cluster of French philosophers (2009). In his view, Giles Deleuze redefined the world in terms of flows and gaps between mechanisms; Jean-François Lyotard described it in the form of a system of connections and of “differentials” between various conduits of energy; and Jacques Derrida explored the interval between the oral and the written, the sign and the trace. The important thing here is always the space between things, rather than things themselves, “the event rather than the monument” (Bourriaud, 2009, p. 11). Additionally, Michel Foucault, according to Bourriaud, is less interested by what an image says than by what it produces – by the behaviour that it generates, and what it leaves barely seen among the social machinery in which it distributes bodies, spaces and utterances (Ibid, p. 13).

As we explore performative spaces between cultures that emerge in contemporary music for flute, these aspects of Western thought create a presence, a placement of values, a configuration and shape to investigate what is going on in performance. We search out the “event rather than the monument” – what can be gained from the processes rather than historical fact and artifact; and we take these experiences into every consequent interchange and reflection. Our aspirations accord with Lim’s description of the process of dialogue as an enabler of capacities: “the ‘intuitions, sensibilities and orientations’ of participants are part of the shape of new feelings, responses, evaluations and understandings that arise: that is, the dialogue shapes the intertwined capacities for response to and for engagement with meaning” (Lim, 2013, para. 2).

Shifting cultures

In our contemporary world of seemingly boundless international travel and interconnections, rising global interest in other cultures, and where people of contrasting nationhood and cultures might live side-by-side, cross-cultural influence is inescapable. Our music is inevitably reflective of these mobilities; and our lives enriched and enlightened. Musical syncretism (combined cultural idioms), and synthesis (the transformation of borrowed cultural elements into a new, hybrid musical entity) are flourishing, albeit with varying degrees of success and integrity. The history of these crossing pathways is centuries old.

During the 20th century, the social functions of art music and roles of musicians were redefined in Japan, Korea and China through modernisation and Westernisation (Garfias, 2004, p.19) – sometimes erroneously considered one and the same. According to Yayoi Uno Everett (2004), the composer became an idealised individual, and music moved from ritualistic, or pragmatic function to art for arts sake (pp.7-8). Composers such as Toru Takemitsu (1930-96), Isang Yun (1917-96) and Chou Wen-Chung (born 1923) are examples of this shift. Each of these composers are equally highly recognized in both Eastern and Western musical circles. Their music is significant artistically and also because it explores the East and West from both sides, and contributes to the forward thrust of musical creativity in contemporary life. Taking the traditions, the sounds and philosophies of their own people out into the world as newly formed music has successfully sustained, informed and stimulated listeners and practitioners in the West. Takemitsu writes:

By cultivating within my own sensitivities those two different traditions of Japan and the West, then, by using them to develop different approaches to composition. I will keep the developing status of my work intact, not by resolving the contradiction between the two traditions, but by emphasizing the contradictions and confronting them. Unstable steps perhaps, but no matter how faltering they may be they will stop me from becoming a keeper of the tombs of tradition (Takemitsu, 1994, loc. 967).

Composers writing within cross cultural idioms have been described by Everett (2004) as “cultural brokers” who have acquired understanding of more than one set of cultural principles and who function as mediators between native and foreign cultural groups in initiating dialogues (pp. 4-5). This positioning of composers as mediators stretches back a long way. American composer Henry Cowell in 1933 described his cross-cultural borrowings as “not an attempt to imitate primitive music, but rather to draw on those materials common to the music of all the peoples of the world, to build a new music particularly relating to our own century.” (Cooke, 1998, p.279). Canadian composer, Colin McPhee had a wide reaching influence on directing Western understandings of Eastern aesthetics through his work in Bali, particularly his studies of gamelan as documented in *Music in Bali* (1966). Perhaps John Cage had the most celebrated influence on cross cultural music approaches in the twentieth century, mainly through his philosophical and artistic connections to Japan and China. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss in detail the pioneering work of these composers, it is important to note the deep influences the introduction of Eastern aesthetics had on composers, performers, audiences and students in the West.

The proximity of Australia and its position as a Western country on the edge of Asia has naturally inspired many of its composers to look towards the East. Peter Sculthorpe (1929 - 2014), for example, became interested in Asian music through recordings he heard in the 1950s of Japanese *Gagaku* (as arranged by Leopold Stokovsky) – recordings that sound quite bland and Westernised now, but that had a lifelong impact on his compositionⁱⁱ. Perhaps Sculthorpe’s most vividly Asian influenced work is *Sun Music III* (1967) for orchestra, with its bountiful use of Balinese gamelan patterns. In addition, there is *Tabuh Tabuhan* for wind ensemble (1968) which takes its name from Colin McPhee’s 1936 work for orchestra of the same name, and the *String Quartet No. 8* (1968) that utilizes rhythmic patterns from Balinese rice pounders.ⁱⁱⁱ These works came from the 1960s – but Asian influences in Australian music stretch far further than that.^{iv}

Anne Boyd (born 1946), a close associate of Sculthorpe, has composed much music that explores aspects of the East, and many of these works are for flute. A series of her works derive inspiration from Balinese gamelan and landscape (*Bali Moods I and II*), Hong Kong (*Cloudy Mountain*), and from Japan (*Goldfish Through Summer Rain*; and *Red Sun, Chill Wind*). Her writing for flute intentionally captures the sense of the shakuhachi in these works, as a personal expression based on her own identity and sonic ideals. Julia Grenfell, who presents insightful material from personal interviews with the composer, has investigated these influences. She cites Boyd:

When I write for [the Western flute] it is the shakuhachi which is the source of my inspiration. The shakuhachi ...has a special presence in all of my music representing my melodic ideal. It is in a sense my alter ego, being the instrument of my Asian dreaming with which I have the closest spiritual identification. In this way my personal musical language has been distilled as a fusion of East and West; this musical language, I believe, is quintessentially *Australasian*. (Grenfell, 2003, p. 58)

Synthesis such as this creates a rich and imaginative setting for exploring different feelings and intentions of interculturality in a performative space. Other iterations of fusions of East and West might emphasise more superficial or technical aspects of the styles. Whilst multiple genre, nationality and style fusions can be heard throughout the world, considerable discussion remains about achieving an appropriateness of musical and cultural mixing, and one that respects differences of ethos and historical practice reflective of cultural understanding. Frederik Lau believes that a systemisation of synthesis has created rigidity; that Eastern characteristics such as unusual tuning systems, pentatonic scales, static harmonies and unconventional instrumental timbre have become ubiquitous, and that new wave composers will now emphasise suggestiveness and evocation rather than transplantation of materials. He states, “We need to develop cultural flux rather than categorisation ... an understanding of boundary crossing and to make room for the need to create multiple identities...” (Lau, 2004, pp. 38-39).

Other writers, for example John Corbett (2000), have described these cultural crossings as colonialist attempts to assert a power on the East. Corbett writes about the “spoils” of Oriental musical exploration, of elitism in approach and the desire to reassert Western control (pp.166-168). This emotive language can perhaps be justified in a defensive situation, where a culture may feel overrun and devalued by the “magpie cultures” of foreigners from East or West adopting and using certain elements of music to colour or lend a perceived exoticism to their own. In a deeper sense, these musical crossings could be understood as attempts to recognize and seek knowledge of others, to appreciate and share ideas in a new expression.

In Malaysia there have been shifts that include Western styled Malaysian pop songs, and a rise in assorted syncretic music. Diverse traditions have arrived in Malaysia from many parts of the world over the centuries: from Java, from the Middle East, from China and India, from Portugal, the Netherlands and Britain, amongst others. An amalgamation of styles that reflects the various colonisations and migrations to the country is evidenced in much traditional Malaysian music. Instruments and techniques such as the oud/gambus from the Middle East; Baroque violin techniques brought from Europe and still used in traditional playing today; the Portuguese folk song idioms incorporated into styles such as Keruncung; the Hindu influences seen in Wayang Kulit; and the introduction of functional harmony and “foreign” elements by composers such as P. Ramlee to Malaysian song (Chan, 2012). These multi-cultural influences cannot be judged as a series of attempts to take control – more a natural transcultural exchange reflective of people and ideas existent together in a particular place.

The flautist in the intercultural performance space: Two exemplars

That musical crossings can deeply inform and widen the experience of performers, through the absorption of different sonorities, techniques and philosophical approaches to their work, is undeniable. Appropriations of these elements, in general as a response to compositional requirements and personal sonic preferences, can expand performative experience through a sonic and physical embodiment of cultures. As a flute player, these influences may focus on tone production, ornamentation, the gestures of breath, and the freedom to explore unique musical forms and syntheses that can seem to shift from one culture to another, and one performance mode to another.

The instrumental ontologies or characteristics of Western and Eastern flutes, from exquisitely crafted state-of-the-art Western flutes to, for example, the simple drilled bamboo of a traditional Indonesian flute (Figure 1), create and sustain performative and musical knowledge, carrying specific and imagined information into performance practices and connections. The different traditions, the memories of sounds and associations, the feelings for breath and physical gestures speak one to another, drawing the player into and out of differences of sound and of thought, creating within the performance “art as life”. Citing Nicholas Thomas, Kevin Dawe writes of a re-contextualisation, of the colonisation of instruments – consuming, giving meaning and reproducing in our own image, the instruments become objects that are “not what they were made to be but what they have become” (Dawe, 2003, p. 281). Within the performance, these appropriations create an enlarged cultural reality as sonic and musical articulations of connections occur through the instrument, the extension of the human player.

[insert] Figure 1. Flutes from the author’s collection. L-R Powell custom made sterling silver flute; set of bamboo flutes from Indonesia]

Composer responses to the significance of instruments in the artistic process illuminate differences and similarities of approach in both East and West:

Luciano Berio:

Musical instruments are tools useful to man, but they are tools that lack objectivity: they produce sounds that are anything but neutral, which acquire meaning by testing meaning itself with the reality of acts. They are the concrete depositories of historical continuity and, like all working tools and buildings, they have a memory. They carry with them traces of the musical and social changes and of the conceptual framework within which they were developed and transformed. ...The sounds produced by keys, strings, wood, and metal are in turn all tools of knowledge, and contribute to the making of the idea itself. (Berio, 2006, p. 25)

Toru Takemitsu:

The sounds of such instruments [biwa and shakuhachi] are produced spontaneously in performance. They seem to resonate through the performer, then merge with nature to manifest themselves more as presence than as existence. In the process of their creation, theoretical thinking is destroyed. A single strum of the strings or even one pluck is too complex, too complete in itself to admit any theory. (Takemitsu, 1994, loc. 944)

The following two exemplars provide a setting in which to examine personal responses to unraveling intercultural knowledge through the performance of works for flute; one American composer influenced by the philosophies of Japan, and one Malaysian composer writing within an ostensibly Western aesthetic.

John Cage: *Ryoanji* for flute and percussion

The inspiration of John Cage, his groundbreaking intercultural arts practices and his technological and philosophical approaches, has had an enduring legacy on musical connection and thought. The following personal response to his composition *Ryoanji* (version for flute and percussion, 1984) reflects on how the performer embraces these influences, and integrates aspects of Cage's creative expression into a realisation of this work. A series of relationships is described: with the notation, the timbres, time structures, physical energies and cultural resonances.

Encountering the flute score. A performance of *Ryoanji* can last anything between about fifteen minutes and over an hour, but weeks and months may be needed to fully grasp what is going on in it, and to determine how a performance may be realised. Inside the cover of the Peters edition (1984) we are confronted with beautiful graphics of symbols and signs, and performance instructions that ignite curiosity and capture the performer's imagination. Flute performance instructions are on the first page.

"Each two pages are a 'garden' of sounds", says Cage (Score: 1). The question, "how can music be a garden?" arises. My mind steps back a couple of years into the late Bill Duckworth's mobile phone gardens, called *Sonic Babylon* in Australia, where sounds were planted electronically in specified spaces^v or the Toronto Music Garden^{vi}, inspired by the music of J.S. Bach with each section of the garden corresponding to a movement of Bach's *Cello Suite No.1 in G major*, BWV 1007; or perhaps even further back to the beautiful *Jardins Sous la Pluie* of Debussy (1903) in which the piano describes a garden in a heavy rainstorm. Cage's garden of sounds seems more abstract, more enigmatic, more arcane.

The glissandi are to be played smoothly and as much as is possible like sound events in nature rather than sounds in music.

Any multiphonics that happen unintentionally are welcome.

The dynamics, not given, are to be soft rather than loud, as a rule, a rule that has exceptions.

The pieces are for flute solo - or for flute with prerecorded parts...

In a performance each part is given its own sound system.

The score is a “still” photograph of mobile circumstances.
That is, where there are two or more parts active at the same time their relationship in time need not be exactly the one delineated.
Each part should be played or recorded independently of the others but within the same total length of time and following the general outlines of proportional notation... (Score, 1984)

In deciphering this text, the performance journey begins to achieve definition. The instruction to create “sound as nature” seems to immediately take away the element of performance and compositional ego; another to play “unintentional multiphonics” seems to predicate an intentionality; “A rule that has exceptions” generates a sense of freedom, but within a static, yet mobile soundscape. All of these words incite creative responses and research.

The notation of the flute part is microtonal and fragmented (see Figure 2). Curves and lines that represent the glissandi, the mobile pitches, are specified and gestural both visually and sonically. Initially, these curves seem enormous, but they actually denote a very small sound range. For example, the first pitch (G half sharp) moves down and up to G sharp then to A flat, A natural, and to a flat B natural – just a minor 3rd overall. This tiny range forces an immense concentration on the micro-elements of the sound which become magnified in effect.

[insert] Figure 2. Cage *Ryoanji*. Opening flute notation]

At the beginning of the second “garden” the second flute part enters, either recorded or live (Figure 3). There is an overlapping of phrases, but they are never together. Everett (2004) calls this a “Korean” style unison, where attacks are close but not together (p.228 n.72). The music may look like an idle tracing and circling of lines or stones, but it creates an amazing sense of intimacy and dialogue between the players. The silences, the spaces between the notes, are equally important, and contribute a great deal to the sense of time stretching that is characteristic of the piece. The performance context transforms these elements into physical energies that merge and re-form as cultural values and experience within the performer and listener.

[insert] Figure 3. Entry of second flute.

Encounter with the percussion score. The percussion part uses regular stick and stave notation, with straight lines, but irregular pulse (see Figure 4). According to Latartara, this is the first time Cage used a pulse in his music in 30 years (2007, para 23). There are no repeating patterns in the rhythms, but an illusion of repetition is created. The contrast to the flute part projects a sense of multiple temporal layers – of different time scales, of stasis and irregularity. The text/instructions read:

At least two only slightly resonant instruments of different material (wood and metal, not metal and metal) played in unison ... These sounds are the “raked sound” of the garden.... They should have some life... as though the light on them is changing.” (Score, p. 2)

The timbre and strength of the percussion sound seems to give an impression of a marker – of something marking out time, or sand. The ritual of sand raking implies aspirations of conformity and control, and regular movement. The lines in the score seem to express a rigidity, and immovability; a reduction; perhaps a symbolic mediation of temple gongs, physical gesture and action. These sounds create a spatial representation that works in parallel with the flute lines, that may seem to randomly cross it, but the part retains a separateness of experience and time. The irregularities of this percussion pulse express a disjunct-ness, a challenge to physical gesture, and performance methodologies, demanding new approaches and processes and, again, a centering on the sound.

[insert] Figure 4. Cage *Ryoanji*. Opening percussion notation.

Realising East/West Intersections: Further reflections on performing *Ryoanj*.

The visual imagery of the score, the lines and curves of the flute parts and the rigidity of the percussion part, the roles of the instruments and instrumentalists, create conflicting expectations and re-assessed performance imperatives. The percussion part is dry, sharp and irregular. It is a representation of moving grains of sand, but the image one may previously have had of this is displaced with an unexpected rigidity. The flute part is a representation of stones, but is agile and flowing, following and creating breath patterns and indefinite pitchings – movements that are not necessarily associated with the stillness of stones.

With the removal of pre-conceived perceptions of the flute (which was, in Western art music, largely a melodic, tonal instrument) there comes an exciting re-assessment of performance mode and technique. The images become a process, a means to communicate the content, and to induce a performative centering on the sounds. The tracings around the rocks afford a sense of movement and layering that can be reflected in the glissandi of the flute part. While the glissandi reflect these tracings, they also move them into a timed dimension. Underpinning these thoughts is the meditative, ritualistic aesthetic created from the stretching of time structures, and the emphasis on inward focus.

The place of the player's breath accompanies this sense of centering, as the interior – the breath – is converted into the exterior (shared experience of sound), and the timbre of individual tones and slides are given shape. *Ryoanji* shows a strong relationship to *honkyoku*, the Zen devotional music for shakuhachi. Whilst not directly taken from this tradition, Cage, according to pianist, Michael Fowler, “assumed a musical methodology that approached the act of composition in the same manner: as ritual” (Fowler, 2009, p.2). A method for “blowing Zen” is described by the Australian shakuhachi player, Riley Lee (1992), as playing that focuses on the present moment – the “process” or act of performance – the here and now. Through focusing attention down to individual sounds, the formal structure of the music or the breath counting fades into the background. This ritualistic practice of focusing down and inwards to discover self-realisation or enlightenment is melded in this instance with performance on a Western flute, with its own unique set of techniques and practices. Playing glissandi in this manner forces a change in playing approach that matches the shapes of the notation, ranging from breath channeling to the physical handling of the instrument. A sense of other worldliness emerges, reminiscent of the Komuso monks' performances of nothingness and emptiness.^{vii} The body becomes a mediator between the physical energies of playing the flute and communicating meaning, as performative gesture articulates the expression and experience of the music

The unique timbre of the shakuhachi is always prominent in the mind when playing Japanese influenced flute music, and the techniques one favours are those that move towards it. The sound of the Western flute, so malleable and resonant, can draw out an assimilation of gesture, a focus on sound over structure; and particular choices of resonance, and colour. Cage's drawings of stones may seem stark and monochromatic – but then, he mentions the light that must be transferred into the percussion sounds, the mobility that should be captured by the flute motifs, and the life in the drawings is immediately and vividly apparent as movement and performance.

The garden design, the spatial relationships within the work that represent the stones and sand; the sounds that articulate these, and the sense of space created reflects elements from both East and West – of repose and meditation, of design and transformation of place, and perhaps a search for clarity of thought: a common purpose in many garden designs throughout the world. These elements transfer into the sonorities and silences through the timbres, the sense of ritual and the unfolding of musical time. Cage's approach to time crosses cultural boundaries through a use of multiple temporal layers. Stasis and movement are portrayed as natural counterparts, and in the listener and performer, time is stretched out and out. The performance space reflects this transformed sense of time, becoming a place for sonic discovery, a place where new thinking can occur and knowledge is interpreted. In this piece there is both a concentration on the inside of the performer, and a negation of the traditional idea of the performer (certainly the ostentatious performer). It is a progressive path of enlightenment, a new discovery each time, as micro sounds, physical and mind elements come to the fore. The performer grapples with the task of creating this space through sound, and strives to share what can be learned from entering this space for thinking. Cage's music gives us the opportunity to explore our inner ourselves, our sonic selves and the selves of others, and to create new understandings of both.

Lee: *Echo of the Core* for solo flute

Chie-Tsang Lee, from Sabah, East Malaysia, states that his current compositional work is concerned with “exploring and re-framing interdisciplinary perspectives related to hybrid oral traditions found in East Malaysia to provoke new possibilities for sounds, spaces and creativity in his compositional work.”^{viii} Lee's music evokes the notion of energy as flowing movement and significant colour, bringing together Asian performance aesthetics, Western contemporary classical approaches as well as aspects of indigenous East-Malaysian ritual forms – in particular from the Kadazandusun people (Ibid.). An example of this direct influence can be seen in his work *Interbreathment* (2013) for 52 traditional Kulintangan, 8 kadazandusun gongs, two dancers, metal kulintangan, slenthem (doubling Sompton), and 21 & 36 Soprano Sheng.^{ix}

As a model for intercultural exploration, *Echo of the core* for solo flute presents evidence of both Asian and Western approaches, as well as influences of dance and a compelling timbral flow. According to Lee, the work is a representation of “an ‘inner part’ of the human emotion that has been reflected by a discontinuity in the propagation medium, and returns with sufficient magnitude of emotion and delay to be perceived” (Score notes). An initial encounter with this work is bound up with poetics, extended techniques and sonorities, and a dramatic sense of musical space.

The poem that inspired the work, *Cosa credi che il cuore nasconda* (*What do you think the heart hides*) by Italian poet, Maria Grazia Calandrone, is about language and identity. The English translation is spoken in performance.

*With my language I flower again in your mouth
like a rose: I am reborn in the shape of a rose
if my dead language mixes with yours.
Here I am, totally, where the rose*

had once vanished.

*My language is the rose that died in silence,
the vanished rose blooming in your blood. I am the shadow
flowering when you name it, I am the shadow of those who seem
to sleep but pose questions still, I am the plantation
on the stone of your house, I am the shadow of the shadow of your
language,
a foreign accent, the curve of a rose in your throat
like a scar of a diasporas
on everyone's lips.*

In the score there is the Italian poem with English translation, regular notation mixing Italian and English terms, the composer's Chinese-Malaysian name, and a Chinese inscription: irrefutably multicultural elements on the surface. Immediately on playing the piece, one finds a uniqueness that colours the flute sound with an imaginative expression; that uses extended techniques familiar to the Western flautist (many of which were inspired by styles of the East), such as breath tones, harmonics, pitch bending, vocalisation and tongue rams, as natural flute sounds that are deftly incorporated into the shapes and lines of the music. From the start, the performer is required to step out of a normative playing mode, as the work begins with silence, then recitation melding to flute sonorities. The lines are at times jagged, but with shapes reminiscent of gesture and dance that appear quite stylised and theatrical.

Later, I begin to read into the score my own interpretation of what might be termed "Malaysian-ness" in this imaginative inner sound world, so contrasted with personal societal experience. Is there a subliminal Western-ness that facilitates my understanding? Or a sonic attraction that relates to previous performances? I work with the musical gestures as physical gestures, balanced with a temporal ebb and flow in the sound. Textures of sustained sounds and implied harmonies, fragmenting, arabesque-ing, the fragilities of whistle tones, silences, shadings of pitch with quarter tones and glissandi.

A shift occurs through the use of the voice – narration, exclamation, inhalation and exhalation, and a brief episode of vocalisation while playing. As Steven Connor writes, "Listen, says a voice: some being is giving voice" (Connor, 2000, pp.3-4). Exploring the idea of the voice as cultural signifier generates questions of multiplicities of identity, questions of performer persona, location and dimension, and layers of meaning. The cultural significance of language and the sounds of Western and Eastern traditions challenge and disrupt perceptions, whether overt or hidden, and provide a platform from which to construct phenomenological experiential analysis.

Articulating what happens in the performance space is the crux of this research methodology: to experience and articulate the lived experience of performance; the felt experience in performance. As an example, there is a short improvisatory section of *Echo of the Core*, a 'dance' section, that combines several fragmentary phrases and gestures as well as a physical engagement not normally associated with flute playing: stamping, and fast heel tapping (Figure 5). This section presents a challenge of artistic integration and expression. It is a succession of musical ideas on multiple staves that initially creates a disconnection and awkwardness. Negotiating the musical and physical relationships between the motifs and gestures, discovering new feelings and speculating on what the meaning might be – and then, how best to express it – requires a significant depth of exploration. How can I imagine this? Then, how can I project it? Strongly present is a sense of Bruno Netti's "Western-ness" – this music has been carefully composed; it requires meticulous rehearsal. There is another presence which is harder to define: more of a sensation of perception and attitude. A dialogue emerges that shapes feelings of sounds and physical embodiment of imagined cultures – a feeling of movement from one to another; a shifting engagement that enables the performer to physically and mentally approach different sides, and sonic outcomes. Through immersion in the melded musical lines and sonorities, the gestural shapes evolve into the projections into the room, the artistic articulation of the ideas and sensations. Cultural knowledge and

performance movement is challenged and re-defined. This dialogical reality helps communicate a cultural flux, a sense of moving in and out of a musical space and relationships through the act of performance itself.

[insert] Figure 5. Lee, *Echo of the Core* excerpt.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to show how the performance can generate new knowledge through providing an artistic setting for analysis and response, and an articulation of intercultural resonances. Key issues addressed through this experiential approach relate to creating an empirical methodology based on performative perception, location, and societal correspondence. The performance space (the place where music is studied, rehearsed and presented) has been shown to provide an exploratory context, and to generate dialogical spaces for the investigation of aesthetic and cultural exchange. Bourriaud's concept of "art as life" – as event rather than artifact – has been applied as a way of determining and articulating the actions and implications of these engagements of exchange. Additionally, Leman's articulation of modes of analysis and experiential meaning has provided structures for investigation of cultural context and interaction. The environment of shifting East/West cultures, through compositional and geographical contexts, was further explored through works for solo flute with underlying intercultural perspectives and ideas. Personal responses to these scores and concepts revealed an experience of cultural flux, where the felt experience in performance, the sensation of shifting cultures, were shown as new knowledge and understanding, concurring with Lim's "new feelings, responses, evaluations and understandings that arise: that is, the dialogue shapes the intertwined capacities for response to and for engagement with meaning" (Lim, 2013, para 4).

John Cage's *Ryoanji* constructs the performance space as a place for sonic discovery, for new thinking and interpretation of new knowledge. The musical space – the process and act of performance – reveals disruption to preconceptions and ambiguities of meaning, and a focus on stasis and time stretching that unfolds as physical energies flow from the body through the gestures of flute playing. This focus on sound over structure, of resonances and colour, brings the Western flute player into a meditative, ritualistic aesthetic and an active dialogical synesthetic context. Lee Chie-Tsang's *Echo of the Core* creates a similarly dramatic sense of musical space, as an imaginative sound world melds with poetics and gesture. Multiple cultures and identities are signified through a layering of sonic and physical dimensions and energies. Stylistic melding of techniques and aesthetics create a dialogue that shapes sounds and physical embodiment of cultures – cultures that are imagined and constructed through interpretation, and the feelings and experience of performance.

To sum up, as an articulation of "art as life", the processes of performance simultaneously absorb and synthesise multiple characters, cultures and perspectives. The performance space is activated as a place to reflect on reality, values and oneself; and to uncover intercultural knowledge. As Roger Scruton (1997) states: "What counts is the interaction between the experience of involvement and the cultural context" (cited in Leman, *ibid*, pp.8-9). Cultural interchange is reflective of our global relationships and actions; it sustains and informs through the interaction of the known and unfamiliar.

Endnotes

ⁱ *The Imaginary Space: Developing Models for a Malaysian/Western Electroacoustic Music*. Fundamental Research Grant Scheme 2012-14. Main researchers: Dr Jean Penny (leader) and Dr Andrew Blackburn, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia.

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- ii ABC Radio National interview from 1999 <http://www.classical-music.com/article/music-changed-me-peter-sculthorpe>
- iii <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/public/page/Sculthorpe>
- iv see <http://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/subject/asian-culture>
- v www.billduckworth.com/sonicbabylon
- vi www.harbourfrontcentre.com
- vii <http://alcvin.ca/ryuzen/honkyoku-2/>
- viii <http://leechietsangcomposer.wordpress.com/bio/>
- ix <http://leechietsangcomposer.wordpress.com/video/>

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