

## A Philosophical (auto-)Appraisal of my Work

With the presentation of my composition, *SHADES: in memoriam Roger Frampton*, Sydney Opera House, 2002, I returned to active performance and have since then initiated several projects. During the period 1992 ~ 2002, while away from the public sphere, I pursued extensive research and devoted myself to the practice of marimba playing. With its publication in 2009, *of Paradox Once Found* signaled a creative trajectory for which I'd been seeking clarity for many years: one guided by my philosophy of Collective Autonomy; one that simultaneously frees up creative space and interaction for participants while endowing the architectonic with structural perspicuity and grounded stability; and one not defiled by recourse to stylistic determination.

“Conceived of as a unified, large-scale “Work”, *of Paradox Once Found* explores transformations of textual readings and their interpretation into interdependent expressive forms rendered as written text and spontaneous improvisations for solo marimba.” Thus I described the work of this “Work.” This description is not only an index towards active participation and interpenetration but significantly, the inevitability of interdependence, whether or not it is carried out by a person in geographic isolation or by a body of people together in the one space. It is also an index towards the question of multiplicity and the potential of layered structuring irrespective of modes of production and the procedural necessities &/or dictates these might, or might not, embody. It designates a new appraisal of what it might mean to ‘compose’ and what might be the implications involved with the act of composition. It places a new emphasis on the question of time; whether, where, how, and when, the various construals of this thing called ‘time’ might occur or be occasioned; whether and to what extent intentionality might play a part in the creative act, and if so, with what criteria might this be considered, or brought into view. It renders salient the contingency of memory and the part this might play in the creative act, spontaneous or otherwise, and whether this might be ‘conscious’ or subliminal.

During the ten-year period of intense research mentioned above, one of the aspects of my music philosophy I worked at assiduously concerned that aspect which enables the philosophical concepts to be interwoven with the musical material such that its presence is in no way an overt characteristic. Put differently, this means embedment rather than mapping onto; working the philosophical implications into the music-structure itself. I wrote many pieces I refer to as ‘Sketch Fields’ and ‘Essay Fields’, the latter generally involving more precise notation but all exploring various ways and possibilities by which composed/notated music and improvised music might interact, interpenetrate, and inform each other at an intersection; not just any intersection, not an intersection of willful or whimsical making on the spur of the moment but one written into the music at its structural level. While none of these pieces have been performed their writing served a beneficial purpose, namely, to clarify the terrain, understand the problems, and thus be able to write these back

into the music for others to have to solve if their perception discovers them and their sensibility deems solutions necessary. The beauty of this should be obvious. The performers are left holding the reins, so to speak; the music as made remains a matter for all involved with the process. The many and broadly differing ways I found to bring this embedded-ness about has become intrinsic to both my compositional work and the improvisation I engage. “It often beggars belief that these pieces were not fully composed”, John Shand observes in his CD review of *of Paradox Once Found*. The music is entirely improvised, yet the question remains: To what extent might memory – and by extension, subliminal feelings, experiences, thoughts and such, these no longer sitting in consciousness – inform the real-time music-making act?

In 2010 I initiated Spaces and Streams, ostensibly, a return to my jazz roots. In fact, it is anything but. Spaces and Streams, as with all my work, is forward looking. A particular kind of attitude and feeling for music-making is realized by people invested with determination to play that music called “jazz”, and this does not necessarily imply *American*. There are people who embrace utterly the spirit of jazz improvisation as a means of expressing personal beliefs and commitments without this implying in any way that they subject themselves to the dictates of an imported model. Though these people are not abundant, they exist and it is these that I feel to be the ones most likely to contribute vitality and offer essence for development. It is towards this end that Spaces and Streams was initiated and for which I have several compositions planned, some already written. Through these, further explorations in Collective Autonomy will be made.

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