

Teaching - Playing - Researching: No Boundaries

'Playing and listening to music together provides a cultural space and a cognitive means through which individuals and social groups can coordinate their actions and behaviours'. (Borgo, 2005: 5)

As David Borgo (Sync or Swarm) alludes to above, the very act of 'playing' is a coordination of actions and behaviours, and I ask to what extent is the simple act of 'playing' in a group improvised context informed by a reservoir of improvisational knowledge alongside a keen awareness of intelligent transactions? My third and final PhD case study asked these very questions. Completed in December 2017, the project featured improvising musicians Peter Evans (trumpet), John O'Gallagher (saxophone) and Alex Bonney (electronics) in a free improv setting with no music, no rehearsal and no pre-conceived ideas. We simply played. But what does it mean to 'simply play'? And is it even possible to have no boundaries within improvised group performance?

As a lecturer, jazz drummer/composer and emerging researcher I have been dealing with the confluence of all three modes for some time and at the heart of my playing and research is the cultivation of an active connection with my undergraduate jazz students with an aim to maintaining an open dialogue about my mode of working and its relevance to their personal evolutions. At the core of each of my research projects is the space to perform in workshop for the students, to perform in a concert setting, and to have them engage in pre/post-concert talks and/or in-class discussion to realise and question what they observed in each context, what they learned from these observations, and how they might use this concept themselves. I see this conference as an opportunity to share good practice with colleagues with an aim to improving the connection between the two.

As a strong supporter of the intimate and active connection between artistic research and artistic practice in an improvised jazz context, specifically as it relates to higher music education in a conservatoire, my paper interacts with many, if not all, of the questions listed in the Call. In fact, I would put it to you that jazz musicians have always been engaging with artistic research since the inception of the music and that great jazz musicians are also great thinkers and conceptual theorists: John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, Miles Davis and Steve Coleman being some obvious examples.

I am interested in how we recognise and encourage this behaviour from within the conservatoire, my personal experience being that students respond in the positive as soon as they realise how useful methodology, situated knowledge and research context are in helping shape their musical expression.



Andrew Bain

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, England
andrew.bain@bcu.ac.uk

Andrew Bain is one of the leading performers and educators in the UK. A graduate of the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London and Manhattan School of Music, NYC, he has performed with many luminaries of the jazz world, and in many major festivals, on both sides of the Atlantic.

His latest research-based project - *No Boundaries* - featured Peter Evans (trumpet), John O'Gallagher (saxophone) and Alex Bonney (electronics) and explored the landscape of free improvisation with no pre-conceived ideas. His second case study, *Embodied Hope* featuring pianist George Colligan, saxophonist Jon Irabagon and bassist Michael Janisch - explored the evolution of co-generative music over a 14-date tour of the UK. The album is available on Whirlwind Recordings.

Andrew is Senior Lecturer in Jazz at the Birmingham Conservatoire and Artistic Director of Jazz for the National Youth Orchestras of Scotland.