What happens next? Imaginative presence in Gary Peacock and Lee Konitz: Divergent fields, audiation, and the unexpected

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY
This is to certify that the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

BEN ROBERTSON
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ABSTRACT

Bassist Gary Peacock champions an intuitive aesthetic, whether improvising over standard or free jazz forms. Saxophonist Lee Konitz utilises a similarly fearless approach, improvising melodic ideas that are conceived in the moment. This can be an elusive goal for improvisers, and so this research compares the approaches of these two improvisers via transcription and analysis, and the employment of their methods in my own creative practice. In synthesising the key ideas of the two case studies, the research then presents a theory of improvising possibility, called the **divergent field**. This identifies a type of indeterminacy that can be used as the engine for change in the process of improvising. The *divergent field* describes musically ambiguous states that leave ‘what happens next’ as being up to the improviser. This aspect is examined in a creative component, *Unanchored Music, An Improvising Journal 2013-16*, a CD which accompanies the written exegesis and is a record of my own improvising as double bassist with several ensembles, exploring my own creative practice resulting from the writing. My improvising is informed by the jazz tradition in a creative method that involves daily practice, aural training and the study of ideas that populate my musical imagination. This has allowed me to absorb and apply aspects of this research into my own improvising, as it is motivated by a desire to discover the process that Konitz and Peacock are using while improvising, rather than imitate the final products they create. It is hoped that by focusing on this less explored aspect of the field, this thesis will contribute to improving the ongoing dialogue between player and researcher.
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INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

This research is an investigation of musical factors that contribute to imaginative melodic jazz improvisation. This refers to jazz improvising mainly influenced by approaches from 1950 onwards. This approach is affected by African-American rhythm and harmony, European classical harmony, Indian modal music and common Blues structures, among other things. It refers to improvising using harmonic and related non-extended technique playing. It does not attempt to apply these concepts to a broader improvisational context, despite the potential for the ideas to be applied further. This remains beyond the scope of this thesis. The research examines the improvising of two case studies that is inventive and the product of deeper resonance than a vertical explanation.

Both improvisers were chosen for their unique qualities. American saxophonist Lee Konitz (b.1927) is one of the most significant alto saxophone players of the highly influential Charlie Parker era, although he does not sound like Parker. In a similar era, American double bassist Gary Peacock (b.1935) has enjoyed a long career as a pre-eminent bassist with the Keith Jarrett trio. He is also known for his innovative work with Albert Ayler, Paul Bley and Bill Evans.

The first two chapters will investigate the music and philosophies of these two contemporary musicians as case studies, and then present a reflective exegesis on the author’s creative practice. The third chapter will thus focus on the development of my internal aural architecture with links to the case studies and offer a new contribution to research in this area, a proposed divergent field.

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1 Extended technique playing is music with pure sonic pallets of sounds without tonal reference, often with unconventional techniques.

2 For corroboration of the differing sound of Konitz to Parker, see Parker’s own comments on Konitz’s playing in chapter one.

3 See for instance Spiritual Unity (ESP, 1963), Paul Bley with Gary Peacock (ECM, 1970) and Trio ’64 (Verve, 1964)

4 Contemporary means alive at the time of writing.
(The) Musical Sense

Both Konitz and Peacock improvise melodic material that is aural or audiated. In contrast, improvising can be reproduced from patterns and/or pre-learned material, especially in improvising on complex harmonic material where one may sometimes rely on a mechanical, sometimes pre-learned and thus less immediately aural, approach.

This research examines the way Peacock and Konitz avoid non-audiated devices, as well as licks and clichés in their melodic improvising. It examines their methods for facilitating this; they have developed attitudes of deep learning about musical meaning in which they work from imagined ideas. Meaning is here framed as the internal grammar of music itself, to which all musical ideas relate. This refers to explanations of musical direction and relationship that are specific to, and best experienced in, the event of the music itself, rather than the verbal description of it. In general use, meaning is used as a term that depends on its frame of reference ([Dictionary of Philosophy s.v. 'Meaning' (Runes 2001)] thus is in this research it is qualified to a strict musical context.

In a jazz framework, study of harmony for improvising often focuses on using chord tones with related scales, for example see Spera (1977). This method of understanding improvising often explains what is happening in close focus but avoids the greater musical picture, the larger framework for understanding a musical vocabulary. This exegesis explores of the approaches of Peacock and Konitz, identifying these (sometimes philosophical) ideas in the two players’ improvising, as demonstrated in analysis of the improvising transcribed. This exegesis is not intended to inform the instruction of beginning improvisers, for whom an understanding of chord tones to related scales is vital, rather it seeks to explore the imaginative aspects of the highly developed improviser.

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5 Audiation is a term used to describe the ability to ‘imagine’ sound in one’s mind. This could cover pitch as well as polyphonic sounds, key centres or tonality, whole pieces of music, timbre and rhythmic aspects. This term is used as coined by Edwin Gordon (1989), and is defined by him as ‘the recognition of something as something aurally’ (3). Gordon rebuts the emphasis in modern music education around notation and facts about music, and the paucity of emphasis on aural development. (2001: 1-9).

6 For example, a lick is a musical phrase that is usually automatic and learnt as an improvisation tool, rather than being spontaneously conceived in the moment of performance. Often licks are common across instruments in an idiom, and sometimes are associated with particular instruments.

7 See Gruhn (2006:26), who states that meaning occurs in sound by cognizing it).
Many ideas for this thesis are driven by the questions that are tacitly posed by Peacock and Konitz, in whose work one finds musical expression from aurally formed conceptions. It asks ‘Do they improvise?’ and ‘How do they come up with new ideas?’ Both value an informed aural approach over the mechanical, leading them to improvising that is plumbed from currents of the auditory imagination. This also prompts the question ‘How do I improvise?’ in dialogue with these two authorities, and for me to propose a performance theory in which this imaginative process can take place.

I have been fortunate enough to perform with Lee Konitz on two occasions on his visits to Australia. On the first performance in 1991, I remember being struck by his approach to improvising, his listening and attention to the ensemble. Asking him after this performance for advice he replied ‘yeah [pause, raised eyebrows] all those arpeggios!’ drawing to my attention a predominance of recognisable material in my playing. On that night, he had played the last notes of phrases in one of my solos back to me, perhaps to show me this. In 1996, I had the good fortune to play with him for a second time. On that occasion, he began playing *Stella by Starlight* in complete abstraction—never once stating the melody—and I remember joining in conversationally. This experience asked a question of my own improvising. What was I coming up with that was truly of the moment? This freedom to improvise and converse, away from playing predetermined ideas, has become a prime motivation.

In the approach that Konitz and Peacock encourage, listening and playing new ideas are key priorities. This is not necessarily a given, because one can also improvise stand-alone material, unless a playing politic of collective improvising in an ensemble has been cultivated. In such a situation, players are actively shaping the music in terms of arrangement, harmony, melodic and rhythmic input, rather than having these elements pre-ordained. As Konitz states, unlike many 'professional' soloists (his term for prepared improvising), he is heavily reliant on the other members of an ensemble to form his improvising (Hamilton, 2007: 102, 125). This is the exception rather than the rule, since solos can be developed in practice and are not thus necessarily dependent on what is being played in the moment for musical ideas. According to Konitz, the development of strong internal audiation relies on focussed listening in the present to generate fresh material (Hamilton, 2007: 104, 106, 109).
The improvising of bassist Peacock had an immediate effect on me from my exposure, (nearly 30 years ago) to the recordings of his with pianist Keith Jarrett and drummer Jack DeJohnette. On *Standards Volume I and II* (Jarrett, 1983), Peacock astonished me with his inventive ability to conjure fully formed, rapid phrases in short amounts of time. On first hearing the recordings I was intrigued by the improvising of the trio, thinking naively that they were playing in a free-form manner after they had played the melodies. However, as a more experienced improviser, I became familiar with the standards they played, and a doorway into another way of improvising appeared. Later on, it opened. This source of inspiration in listening, responsiveness and spontaneity has continued to inspire my own performing practice.

These formative music experiences are the origin of this research. An interest in players whose playing surprises me has led me to investigate what process they use to do so. The conflict between playing what I already know I can play and finding new ideas is a common one for the improviser. My own creative practice involves the development of aural architecture that allows me to move beyond familiar routines. Both Konitz and Peacock are able to deal with these types of playing challenges—the predictable versus the spontaneous—and pursue a ‘newness’ in their playing, aiming to avoid reproducing prepared material. Konitz prepares himself to be unprepared (Hamilton 2007:102), something explained in chapter two. These themes form a basis for the enquiry.

**Methodology**

This study explores the process in which melodic ideas are discovered while improvising. This discovery is important because improvising can become repetitive if new musical ideas are not found. There are potential problems in forming conclusions based on transcriptions of improvising because of its fleeting nature, and thus this research focuses on the processes of the improviser rather than the finished product as a musical work.

This research uses a case study methodology through musical analysis, transcription, and a consideration of the case studies’ published interviews, with auto-ethnographic reflection thereby bringing my own creative practice into dialogue with the two players.
My initial research question arose from my examination of my improvising practice, which led me to undertake research into the two exemplars of this imaginative approach, after which I have been able to examine my own improvising by exploring the resulting findings in my own playing.

Because the approach elucidates elements of a practice-led approach, while sometimes moving into practice-based output, it necessarily has an empirical outcome. Many of the ideas explored would have to be experienced by the practitioner to be tested. For instance, it does not attempt to elevate any musical ideas for pure musical merit, or even absolute novelty. It rather tries to examine the nature of musical responsiveness to a set of stimuli, largely within the jazz tradition, by drawing in a wider set of considerations including the philosophical approaches of the case studies. This involves moving between practice-led research and research-based practice as I navigate and examine these issues.

The exegesis is accompanied by a CD, *Unanchored Music, an Improvising Journal 2013-16* (hereafter known by its short title *Unanchored Music*), which demonstrates my improvising as it has developed from study of the case studies during the time of writing. The philosophical and aesthetic analysis and discussion is then substantiated with supporting musical examples and transcriptions. The research allows examination of the ways in which these ideas are able to be adapted into my own musical development, which includes composition, improvisation, technical work and ear training.

There are three chapters; the first two examine key ideas of Peacock and Konitz, and the third is an exploration of these ideas in my ongoing creative practice. This chapter will analyse an approach to developing aural imagination in response to the case studies and propose a new theory of musical aesthetic stimulus called the divergent field.

This approach focuses on issues of intention and aural perception promoted by the improvising of Peacock and Konitz and then through the prism of my own creative practice. It shows the investigation of an aesthetic of improvising that is spontaneous and perhaps less methodical and encourages the reader to examine this process. This method allows me to investigate and articulate aspects of my own improvising that result from an engagement with these ideas.
Literature Review

There is a vast literature particular to improvising. This research identifies the momentary awareness or ‘imaginative presence’ as an aesthetic stimulus to improvising. Both case studies used in this research explain and demonstrate concepts that form keystones for this approach. This section reviews the key concepts and related sources investigated in the research, as well as situating these ideas in a broader context.

In this research, musical intuition is a strong theme. It is defined by Peacock in a 1993 interview (Peacock 1993) as connections or actions between musical elements formed by the improviser in the moment and unlabelled (see also Williams 1963). Peacock is describing the ability to cross-relate musical ideas without verbal language, conscious thought and instructional dialogue. This is a key idea for this research. According to dictionaries including the Macquarie (s.v. ‘Intuition’) and those of psychology (Coleman 2006) and philosophy (Runes 2001), intuition is defined generally as the understanding of something without conscious thought or apparent reasoning. As will be shown in chapter one, Peacock argues strongly for the use of intuition to inform improvising.

Peacock also articulates the importance of musical depth (Peacock 1993:60). This can be understood as a profundity of musical ideas in which more is experienced than is immediately apparent on the surface or in theoretical explanation. According to the Macquarie Dictionary, (s.v. ‘Depth’), apart from its common physical use, depth is used to describe ‘emotional profundity …[the]…extent of intellectual penetration, sagacity profundity…[or]…the remotest or extreme part… [and]…thoroughly, intensively’ (488). The ability for ideas to ‘reach beyond’ their nominal appearance is an area this research outlines in chapter three. The notion of depth relates to a central research question, which explores the ways in which Peacock and Konitz are able to move through familiar ideas into deeper music currents. Something with depth could be seen as being in contrast to that which has the appearance of substance, skimming upon aspects of the music without addressing any of its more meaningful elements; for example, improvising without any musical understanding, from a set of instructions but with no musical intention (Gordon 2001:4). However, the research examines ideas for their musical merit only; no depth or profundity is imputed to exist beyond the syntax of the music itself.
In the same 1993 interview, Peacock uses the term ‘technology’ to describe the use of musical ‘information’ (such as ‘this chord goes with that scale’) in outlining a difference between music expertise and actual musical statements. The term does not refer herein to electronic musical devices or other common uses of the word.

Another term for this thesis appears in same article, where Peacock asks the musician to ponder the origin of their musical ideas, stating that that any musician has to confront their mechanicalness. The ‘mechanical’ is a term used by Peacock to refer to musical production on an instrument that is determined by finger placement and/or technical instructions, rather than the intention to articulate something heard or intuited either internally or externally. Peacock outlines this as a key objection to the musical paint by numbers approach of the chord-scale school of thinking, lamenting the lack of depth that follows static formulae (Peacock 1993:54). In his DVD *The Acoustic Bass* (1995), Peacock demonstrates melodic examples that transcend the chord-scale formula (see chapter one). His improvising also features throughout the Jarrett Trio’s extensive ECM catalogue, in particular *Standards, Volume I* (Jarrett 1983), *Standards, Volume II* (Jarrett 1983), *Still Live* (Jarrett 1988), *Tribute* (Jarrett 1990), *Tokyo ’96* (Jarrett 1996), *Changeless* (Jarrett 1989), *The Cure* (Jarrett 1991), *Standards in Norway* (Jarrett 1995) and *Whisper Not* (Jarrett 2000). His own earlier *December Poems* is a glimpse into his freer melodic conceptions (Peacock 1977). His playing with Bill Evans on *Trio ’64* (Evans 1964) also gives insight into his spontaneous capacity to develop interesting and complex ideas quickly, as does his freer playing with pianist Paul Bley (Bley 1964).

This thesis explores Peacock’s terms and ideas in detail, drawing upon other articles on him, for example Williams (1963), Solomon (1979), Micallef (1995), Jung (1999), Elphland (1996) and Pettinger (1998). A comprehensive Keith Jarrett trio discography can be found in Carr (1991), which forms much of Peacock’s recent recorded output.

Related to Peacock’s use of the term intuition, is the notion of unconsciousness. This key idea comes from Eckhart Tolle (2004: 81-5), who examines the ability to live in the present moment. Tolle, like Peacock, refers to the use of thought processes that are unlabelled in the moment of their actual occurrence. These are connections, extrapolations and references across areas that are complex and thus operate outside verbal communication. This idea of unconsciousness forms a central tenet of the
research, creating a platform for a process to inform the artistic act, but not be wholly ‘known’ to the protagonist. Philosophically this refers to the part of the mind that lies ‘outside’ the consciousness (Runes 2001: s.v. ‘The unconscious’). In psychological understanding, consciousness therefore refers to one’s normal state of awareness in action and of being aware of which mental process leads to certain results (Coleman 2006: s.v. ‘Consciousness’).

‘Presence’, another idea developed by Tolle (2001, 2003, 2004) and Sogyal Rinpoche (2002), is another core term in this research. Although neither is an academic writer, both authors espouse key concepts featured in this research. My interest in exploring these ideas musically, as I will discuss in chapter one, was spurred by the discovery of Peacock’s own ten-year retreat into Zen Buddhism after serious illness. Like Peacock, both Tolle and Rinpoche address an awareness of the current moment or ‘presence’ (the term adapted for the title of this thesis), the state perceived to be optimal for improvising. Buddhism and Zen philosophy places great significance on the ability to be aware of the present moment, and to let go of attachments to the past and the future. Tolle and Rinpoche both draw attention to this state of presence in examples drawn from Buddhist training, philosophy and other religions, both exploring concepts of allowing things to be, by accepting rather than resisting what is. Although neither author is speaking in musical terms, the ideas they present allow for the understanding of experiencing the musical moment in a similar way, as Peacock suggests (1993). Since my experiences have reinforced the effect that state of mind can have on improvising, this links tangibly to the research topic. This is a key idea for this thesis, as it explains specific moments in improvising that allow new ideas to emerge from musical information formed in the present instant. The divergent field (in chapter three) defines a framework to observe multiple musical possibilities that are available in that moment.

Presence is used here in a musical context only, inspired by Peacock’s interest in this idea, as explored in chapter one. In common usage, presence is: ‘The state or fact of being present, as with others or in a place’. ‘Presence of mind’ is a common term for a state of mind that ‘…allows one to act quickly’ when required to (the Macquarie Dictionary, s.v. ‘Presence’). This context is central in the research where present moment awareness, listening and discovery determine how improvisers react musically. The present can also be defined philosophically as: ‘That momentary and transient part
of time in which all events and experiences take place.’ (Runes 2001: s.v. ‘Presence’). This thesis explores presence as the transience that is at the core of improvising. In spontaneously articulated music, there is a quality available only in that moment, an aspect of discovery and newness in the improviser’s experience.

Edwin Gordon coined the phrase ‘audiation’ to describe the ability to imagine sound in one’s mind. This covers all musical aspects; monophonic and polyphonic sounds, key centres, tonality, form, structure, timbre, articulation and rhythm. Gordon defines audition as ‘the recognition of something as something aurally’ (Gordon 1989:3). One is therefore audiating when imagining music, hearing pitches internally, or on a more subtle level, imputing connections from a single note sounded. Peacock also explores this notion of re-setting an imaginary context for any single note sounded (Peacock 1995: 20.30). Gordon goes on specifically to rebut modern music education’s emphasis on notation and facts ‘about’ music, and the paucity of emphasis on aural development (Gordon 2001:1-9). His argument for heightened aural awareness is something very close to core ideas articulated by both case studies, Peacock and Konitz. Gordon also imputes the existence of depth in audiated music, as music that is wholly ‘meant’ rather than represented as a surface (Gordon 2001:4). This also mirrors ideas of Peacock and Konitz.

As stated earlier, key questions explored in this research were formed in my performing experiences with Konitz, as well as with Australian musicians Tony Gould and Graeme Lyall. Their approaches involve using a standard tune as the raw material for improvising without any planned arrangement, style or approach that was ever articulated. Instead, listening, interaction, surprise, and use of aural skills in melodic invention generated wide spanning ensemble playing which had elements of novelty.

My initial intention for this research was to interview Konitz in person; however, on his most recent visit to Australia he suffered a minor stroke and was hospitalised. We were able to meet and while I attempted to offer some solace, organising a more formal discussion was inappropriate. Despite this unfortunate setback, I have been able to source many of Konitz’s key ideas from literature such as Hamilton (2007), which ably replaces the need for an interview, particularly given Konitz’s reticence in speaking about improvising (Kastin 2010 : 1).
Hamilton’s book is a comprehensive set of conversations with Konitz on his approach to improvising, which outline key aspects of his melody-based aesthetic. In a series of interviews and questions, Konitz talks about his approach and speaks directly to the problem of improvisers playing what they know, rather than truly improvising. It also includes commentary on Konitz’s playing from others who have performed with him.

There are many interviews and journal articles available, which span Konitz’s lengthy, career, for example: Morgan (1959), Tesser (1980), Enstice and Rubin (1992), Kastin (2010) and Iverson (2011). In all of these sources, Konitz outlines central ideas explored in this thesis, in particular his ‘ten step’ approach to improvised melodic development. This starts with simple ‘embellishment’, but always centres on the melody, rather than on chord-scale thinking (see chapter two). Much of his philosophical and pedagogical approach is available in these written sources as well as in online material of interviews and master classes, which contrast with the chord-scale approach that is the basis of jazz pedagogy, such as outlined by Spera (1977) or Crook (2006).

Examples of later recordings from Konitz’s lengthy career used here are *Rhapsody* (Konitz 1995), *The New York Album* (Konitz 1988), and *Angel Song* (Konitz 1996), from which excellent support material for research into the ideas of melodic imagination is found. A more comprehensive discography can be found in Frohne (Frohne 1983) or Hamilton (Hamilton 2007).

This thesis is situated within a wide context and discourse. A large part of this setting is the music itself and pursuant written commentary. Live performance is the outcome of musician’s creative research, as are recordings, although recording can itself affect the documentation process (Pressing 1988). Study of improvising from inside the medium often entails an autotelic approach that has a different outcome to the common written academic model (Vincs 2011). Musicians who are active practitioners are exploring the medium from inside. Although this process is not always a written academic discourse, it is prime material for subsequent written discussion. Ethnomusicologist Margaret Kartomi highlights this aspect of performer output, and its uncomfortable fit into academic frameworks. She introduces the concept of ‘performativity’, to discuss the broader elements of music practice that affect the ‘magic’ of performance (Kartomi 2014:196).
There are several categories of academic literature on improvisation. There are studies of ‘how we improvise at all’, which are approached scientifically in the form of analysis of objective data, surveys and empirical observation of brain function. There is also philosophical material referred to in this review that focuses on the nature of the improvisational experience as such, including some debate as to whether improvisers are improvising. Defining what is improvising has an effect on this discourse, because it affects the nature of what can be examined, as is shown below.

If the nature of improvisation is as an impromptu creation with what lies at hand, can this include pre-learned material, influences and history? These elements form a platform for the reconstitution model of improvising (where one is seen to put together pre-learned material in a novel fashion). See for instance Martin (2002:133-152). However, there is also discussion by improvisers on the nature of improvisation as a philosophy. Of course, texts on basic jazz improvisation theory are plentiful, as are more advanced educational texts on jazz performance. These categories are explored later.

Written aspects of a broader dialogue are also found in performer interviews, some from published music journals and some sourced online, but there is less academic focus on reconstitution versus spontaneity in improvisation models per se. However there are wider theories of improvisation in the research field including Pressing (1988) Berliner (2009) and studies of cognition and perception in jazz improvisation by Mendonça and Wallace (2003) or Engel and Keller (2011). Most studies posit improvisation as a reconstituting of elements rather than a completely novel process, but few go further than this.

There are some excellent readings dealing more broadly with the philosophical discourse on improvisation by improvisers, sometimes in its broadest form (for example free extended-technique improvising). One good example is the Arcana series (volumes I and II), (Zorn 2000, Zorn 2007) where the discussion related to this research is presented, which includes commentary and discussion of various approaches to improvisation. Derek Bailey’s book Improvisation (1992), also takes a wide view of the concept of improvised music by focusing on various improvising traditions. Another collection of writings Under Currents: The Hidden Wiring Of Modern Music (Young 2002) features related dialogue, including David Toop’s examination of ‘emergence’ (243), dealing with what comes by chance in free improvising. This forms
an idea that is further developed in chapter three, and helps to introduce the author’s new term, the **divergent field**.

Generally, research of the brain in this field focuses on how we improvise at all, for instance Engel and Keller (2011) or Limb and Braun (2008) who examine the use of the mind and its relationship to other forms of improvisation. Benson (2003) or Sommervelle (2001, 2009) examine philosophical aspects of imagining music, or Berkowitz explores information on the theory of improvisation in a style (2010). Although commentary from the improviser is considered in these models (Engel and Keller 2011), the referential format is often a statistical and objective model from the scientific tradition. Whilst such studies of improvisation are academically rigorous, they often do not address the core substance of the study (i.e. the improvising produced). Perhaps to some extent an objective model does not observe actual music as a process in action unless in a confined framework. As an example of the limitation of the scientific method, Berkowitz and Ansari’s 2008 study of improvisers did not use skilled improvisers to test the neural correlates of improvisation because they could not be objective (Berkowitz 2010: 132-3), which seems an oxymoron.

An interesting contrast in parameters emerges when comparing objective model studies. Whereas the study of the perception of musical spontaneity is the focus of Engel and Keller’s study (2011), Limb and Braun (2008) observe the areas of the brain that are active during the act of improvising. The framing of improvisation itself is a key point here. The Engel and Keller’s study only addresses the appearance of improvisation, while Limb and Braun take improvisation as a given. Working with improvisation as a reconstitution model, Berkowitz and Ansari’s study (Berkowitz 2010: 32) (as stated earlier) cannot use improvisers, therefore nullifying the mental substrates that Limb and Braun’s perspective identifies in them. In these contexts, the framing of the nature of improvisation itself becomes central to whichever aspect is researched.

There is therefore a need for literature that examines the detailed process of practitioners. This thesis attempts to position itself in this cleft. Literature specific to the topic of imaginative jazz improvisation is less common, perhaps because many in this field are practitioners rather than researchers. Pedagogy in this area involves theories of improvisation with links to mathematical theory (Keller 2012). Academic writing such as Pressing (Pressing 1988) catalogues the skill-sets that contribute to the development of
Improvising, outlining relevant literature of error-correction, style, fluency and motor memory. Similarly, Bailes (2010) examines the cognitive analysis of pattern recognition in melodic comprehension, focusing on a statistical study and breakdown of melodic elements for recognition. There is rarely examination of the improvising produced, rather tending to prove the mind-state of improvising, as if the musical process itself is somehow outside the gamut of these research models. However, if a key discourse for the improvising practitioner occurs in performance, then this discourse is enacted in the improvising process worldwide.

Benson (2003) proposes that all musical activity (composition, performance, interpretation) is improvisation, an interaction with the imagined. He describes a graduated scale in levels of improvisation on known music that spans faithful reproduction to a free commentary upon the music with little statement of its original material (26-30). He also argues that only in the improvisational translation–or performer interpretation–of music, can genuine musical statements exist (182). This parallels the ideas of both Peacock (1993) and Konitz (2010), who see truth and depth as genuine improvising. Benson’s claim is also supported by Bailey (1992), who makes a similar point. Both Benson and Bailey state that in the pre-Beethoven era, musicians improvised and varied thematic material from memorisation, much like jazz improvising on standard song form. This ‘logical structure of openness’ created a state of indeterminacy (Benson 2003:15), which was curtailed by the advent of conducting and scoring music (Bailey 1992:6). Benson also applies phenomenological underpinnings to commentary about the process of improvisation in music as a whole, but uses no musical examples of improvising, despite stating ‘Only in the improvisational ‘translation’ of performance, can there be any genuine speech’ (Benson 2003:182, Benson’s emphasis).

‘Performance-enhancing’ literature is plentiful in music pedagogy, for example Werner (1998), Green and Gallwey (1986), or Leisner (2008), dating back to Buck (1943), but they do not address musical content directly. These approaches are aimed at creating a relaxed and positive state of mind that can generate elevated performance in the developed player. Most writers approach performance from a psychological standpoint rather than focusing on musical events themselves, and thus these sources remain outside the focus of this research.
The spread of jazz theory books is very broad. The best-known approaches are repeated in many books across the idiom including Crook (1999, 2006), Baker (1972) and Schuller (1968, 1991). Crook (2006), for example, succinctly describes jazz improvisation as ‘time and changes’, which encapsulates the common jazz pedagogical method. In this song-form based model, improvisation is governed by ‘time’ (steady jazz pulse) with adherence to the ‘changes’ (harmonic rhythm) of the original form (in jazz ‘standard’ repertoire, often 32 bar song form). Attention is not directed initially towards the study of melody (as in Konitz and Peacock’s model) except as a consequence of vertical (chord-scale) agreements or motivic development.

Other examples of this approach include Galper (2013) who expresses developmental ideas in a similar vein, but with motivic emphasis and perhaps more mathematical variation. This differs from Peacock’s intuitiveness (chapter one), Konitz’s emphasis on a more melodic basis for improvisation (chapter two) and the ideas of unexpectedness in the *divergent field* (chapter three).

Ran Blake’s book *The Primacy of the Ear* (2010) addresses significant factors in the aggregation of aural awareness or imagination and its consequent effect on improvisation. He reminds the reader that music is an aural art, and that one can develop this by paying careful attention to what one hears, and cultivating a personal sonic pallet (or sound library) by ones listening. This is relevant source material for the creative practitioner (see chapter three) and relates to core ideas of Peacock and Konitz.

Key concepts that inform this research come from Peacock, Konitz, Gordon, Tolle, Rinpoche and Toop. Their ideas of intuition, depth, the unconscious, the mechanical, audiation, presence and emergence create the bedrock on which an imaginative method in improvising can be understood.
CHAPTER ONE Intuitive imagination: Gary Peacock

This chapter examines Peacock’s musical approach and philosophy of improvising. Samples of Peacock’s playing and his aural approach are discussed, as well as a transcription in which I analyse his improvising in detail, in order to explain the intuitive aspects of his improvising and creation of melodic overrides.

The American double bassist was born in Idaho, in 1935. After a junior high school background playing piano and drums, he was drafted into the army in Germany in 1954, taking up the double bass by default when another bass player was demobilized. Peacock found this a very natural transition (Williams 1992:30). He progressed rapidly and by the 1960s had established himself in the higher echelons of jazz bass playing in performances with Miles Davis, Bill Evans, Albert Mangelsdorff, Paul Bley, Art Pepper, Dexter Gordon, Bud Shank, Barney Kessel and Clare Fisher (Ullman 2014). A member of the vanguard of new bassists whose members included Scott LaFaro and Charlie Haden, Peacock famously gave up walking bass (a mainstay of bop bass playing) in the 1960s to pursue broken time playing and his ideas of melodic intuition.³

Although Peacock had deputised in groups led by Davis, Evans and Guiffre, his own musical inclinations led him away from ‘improvised music … rooted in chord progressions, constant meter and fixed form’ into the freer music of Albert Ayler, Don Cherry, and Sunny Murray (Peacock 1993: 30). After this stellar early period, Peacock suffered an alcohol and drug-related illness in 1964. He withdrew from music for a time. Moving to Japan to study Zen philosophy and medicine, Peacock returned in the early 1970s to record while studying microbiology in Washington. This period of Eastern philosophical immersion forms a key aspect of Peacock’s mindset. It informs philosophical currents of an experiential nature that are pursued later in this chapter, and allow an insight into his focus as an improviser. This focus led him towards seeing the intentionality of musical information as being paramount to its merit.

³ Broken time is jazz bass accompaniment or dialogue which avoids any regular patterns—i.e. 4/4 in crochets—and is thus a more conversational style
From 1973, Peacock taught music at the Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle. In 1983 he began the association with pianist Keith Jarrett and drummer Jack DeJohnette that would establish this trio’s pre-eminence in the modern era (Ullman 2014). Peacock’s playing presents a strong alternative to the ‘meat and potatoes’ of the traditional bass role. Like Konitz, Peacock is also a strong proponent of using the ear to guide improvising. Despite another recent serious illness, octogenarian Peacock continues to perform and record with characteristic fearlessness.

In a 1993 interview, Peacock outlines a dichotomy between technical skill and musicality:

> If you think your musicality will improve as a result of your technical proficiency, you’re in serious error … it develops by asking things you can’t answer with your head, so you have to look deeper. (Peacock 1993: 53)

According to Peacock, the mechanical pre-preparation of ideas in improvisation, leads us into a theoretical conceptual process, where we may use intellectual constructions, pattern learning and other approaches to negotiate a set of harmonic changes or to construct an improvisation. This approach might involve knowledge of chord-scale relationships, digital dexterity, patterns and licks or a mapping of the chord changes. This approach, for Peacock, sees the improviser “…coming out of a loop of listening to what they already know they can play and regurgitating it” (Peacock 1993: 54). Other commentators, such as respected jazz scholar George Lewis, state a similar point of view: “With the revival of the 1950s form of jazz now in full ‘swing’ much has been made of the importance of the jam session…as forums for the maintenance of tradition, [these] often degenerate into sites for the exchange of canonised ‘clichés’.” (Zorn 2007: 88)

Peacock also addressed this issue, but in a different way. “The real question is: where does what you play come from? I don’t think many musicians really reflect on that. If they did, and they were really ruthlessly honest about it, they would have to confront their own mechanicalness.” (Peacock 1993: 54)

Peacock’s argument is for the development of musicality over the ossification of improvising by using an unconscious approach over a worked out one, of being in the moment rather than using goal-oriented thinking. Perhaps this is a product of Peacock’s
late 1960s Zen study, where a core of its meditation practice is similarly to allow things simply 'to be' without interference, by simply observing. A musical exercise in this activity, according to Peacock, is to sing a diatonic scale very slowly and to observe the passing from one note to another as an experience. One may become aware, for instance, of the space that separates notes from one another, a product of our imagination’s participation in informing our listening. Peacock calls this “living the experience of melody and rhythm… You can’t use this, but this isn’t an aspect of technology - this is just an experience… If you don’t try to apply these musical experiences, they’ll take hold at an unconscious level.” (Peacock 1993: 58)

Peacock’s uses of the terms unconsciousness and intuition, refer—in musical terms—to thought processes that are unlabelled in the moment of their actual occurrence. In ordinary dictionary definitions (as stated earlier), intuition is described as the understanding of something without conscious thought or apparent reasoning (Runes 2001: s.v. ‘The unconscious’) (Coleman 2006: s.v. ‘Consciousness’). These understandings are connections, extrapolations and references (senses) across musical areas, which are complex and thus operate outside of word-based communication (Tolle 2004: 81-5). As stated earlier, consciousness refers in psychology to one’s normal state of awareness in action, in being aware of what mental process leads to certain results. Philosophically the unconscious refers to the part of the mind that lies outside consciousness. Peacock’s use of intuition also describes unlabelled musical understandings found in the moment. It refers to an ability to cross-relate musical ideas without verbal language, conscious thought and instructional dialogue (Peacock 1993, Tolle 2004).

Intuitive musical responses, such as those which Peacock champions, can operate along unusual lines and logic; something described by Csikszentmihalyi, for instance as ‘flow’ (1996: 98-9, 201-3, 113). These themes are explored in chapter three, where I examine the nature of fragments that relate to other parts of the music than those currently being stated. An anacrusis phrase, which relates to a new key, would be an example of this, when the phrase is explained by a later tonality. This aspect is characterised in chapter three as a divergent field. Musicians can often intuit an upcoming point of melodic or rhythmic cadence, something Peacock theorises as some of the deeper possibilities of the unconscious in music making. This potential for divergence in experience and interpretation is a key part of improvisation and music making more widely as is
characterized, for instance, by Jankelevitch as the Ineffable (2003:74-5). Connections moving both forward and backwards from an event can occur in a less conscious domain. This idea of untethered intuitive mind-state is supported by researchers Limb and Braun (2008: 3), who have identified, by observations of brain patterns, that the free associative concentration during improvisation is related to the mindsets of dreaming and meditation. Thus this unlabelled experience of music, according to Peacock “will effervesce, this will unfold by itself when appropriate, so you’re not drawing on anything mechanically.” (1993:58)

For Peacock, the more improvisers are able to act unconsciously, the more they can experienceaurally and then freely associate intuitively. Aural training by focussing the ear can develop this awareness of the present, because one is paying deep attention to what is heard at the precise moment. If premeditation increases, the ears are corralled by a mechanical musical focus, perhaps because one’s concentration is no longer focussed on the present. The process of improvising can instead become a side issue, a tool to apply the mechanical. See for instance Hamilton (2007:109) and see also Sommervelle (2009). Peacock also states that greater depth⁹ results from playing ideas that naturally surface and are not forced. “But the way to slam the door in the face of that sense of inspiration is to strut your stuff. Then the door is closed” (1993: 60).

Peacock’s ideas suggest an alternate approach to improvising, as a process of constant change. This allows imperfect music to have impact in a way that perfect music may not. This is examined below.

The following transcription is a recorded excerpt, from the release Standards Volume II (Jarrett 1983) (see audio track 1). Here Peacock’s freely phrased answering counterpoint is played fractionally sharp in pitch and then corrected, yet carries through as an idea of musical merit. It also allows something to open for the listener—in its very unpolished nature—revealing the process of improvisation, rather than its perfection.

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⁹ As used by Peacock (1993) also Gordon (2001:4), depth here describes musical ideas in which more is experienced than is immediately apparent in any surface or theoretical explanation.
Colleague, bassist and academic Nick Haywood, who has studied with Peacock, stated in a recent conversation with me that Peacock cared most about the intention of a phrase. Although this excerpt above has seemingly ‘flawed’ intonation, the gesture and intention of the phrase can, my thesis argues, overshadow judgments of its technical perfection as, for example, in this 1998 review of another bassist “…the real problem with this album...can be summed up in one word: intonation... some of this is excruciating…Hard to figure out what note he is playing” (Wolf 1998:71). Such commentary is not unusual, but it can also lead improvisers towards emulating a precision that lacks any depth and away from the process-basis for improvising that Peacock advocates. Peacock’s more holistic viewpoint is that music ‘technology’ (Peacock’s term for empty musical information) or a quest for perfection, can lead away from the musical. It illuminates the predilection for making value judgments that value the mechanically correct over the musical. By giving precedence to intention over technical correctness, examination of Peacock’s improvised phrase (above) can reverse this. It also develops a type of unexpectedness, with Peacock’s musical utterance sitting amongst Keith Jarrett’s unresolved D/Bb voicing (in bar 4, above, audio track 1), creating an imaginative fissure of the phrase, and carrying its own divergent tuning alongside a strong intentionality.
The example above is examined here as a recorded process, rather than as a perfect product. This gives priority to the overall intention of an idea. Peacock explains the priorities of the ECM recording producer of many of Peacock’s recordings:

He never stops listening...what Manfred is doing is listening for the magic... He is listening for something that goes beyond the music. There are times when I have recorded and he says, “Yeah your solo was great but nobody else sounded good. Let’s throw it away” And he’s absolutely right... It’s the music, right, the music; let’s listen to the whole musical statement being made. (Jung 1999)

The invitation in the musical example above (Figure 1.1 above) sets a tone. Instead of the perfect, we have instead the ‘anything might happen’ or ‘I don’t know what will happen next’. By avoiding the generic, ideas are found as they come, and the listening process is as much attendant on the creative process as on the product. Whereas a flawless take might say ‘here is the finished product’, this example says ‘here is the experience of the musician’s improvising’ (see for instance Van Manen 1982: 38).

Guitar pedagogue, Mick Goodrick, in The Advancing Guitarist, echoes a similar invitation to the process of improvising in the following way:

No one who is listening to you has any idea of what you’re going to play next. You don’t have any idea of what you’re going to play next. I would suggest you look for these things at the end or completion of a melodic phrase. Maybe you’ll begin to see why I make such a big deal out of silence... The first time a person becomes aware that ‘no-one knows what’s next’, it can be pretty frightening. However this realisation can change into a truly amazing understanding. At first, it seems like the sting of a bee, but it can become a sweet as honey later on. (Goodrick 2011:99, p 99)

This invitation to engage with the intention of a creative act asks the listener to use a similar process. This thesis describes thus the emergence of this imaginative presence in examples such as this one of improvised musicality. One such example as Peacock’s phrase in So Tender reminds us that performers are not (music) machines.

In examining the idea of intuition, Peacock is contrasting the mechanical aspect of playing with what he sees as the intuitive.
Peacock defines the mechanical as knowing what to play, while the intuitive is hearing or imagining what to play. Hearing allows for the influence of other players to affect what takes place. In chord-based harmonic improvising, a mechanical approach is proposed by Peacock to be quite different to this intuitive one. For example, I might choose to play a 9\(^\text{th}\) on a minor chord (e.g., F-9) because I know it as a colour tone theoretically. This knowing might encompass the location or mechanical action required to play that note (etc.). On the double bass that might mean placing my finger in the place where this theoretical knowledge tells me the note is (i.e., move a whole step up from the place on the fingerboard called F). There may be no audiation present (no imagining of sound).

For Peacock, a mechanical approach is often used in the ‘reconstitution’ model of improvisation, in which already known elements are being employed (Peacock 1993: 58), see also Berkowitz (2010: 28). This method is distinct from the process of imagining the ‘pure’ sound and playing it from that impulse, (sometimes without thinking, according to Peacock). Although the two results may be the same, the derivation, intentionality and meaningful result of the two ideas is quite distinct. The audiated and imagined musical impulse is also the seat of the depth Peacock promotes.

The conscious knowledge-base of a harmonic improviser like Peacock can generate many theoretical and mechanical solutions, but the alternative, an internally-heard approach, represents an originating impulse born of mental imagining. It is also presents a very concrete answer to the theme this thesis examines, that a process for the generation of melodic ideas can have an imaginative and conceptual aspect that may transcend conscious labels (knowing), synthesised into a deeper understanding by allowing the unconscious to participate.

Another process that illustrates the process of intuitive hearing while improvising is to examine the effect of melody on harmony, as distinct from harmony providing the grounding for melody. As Peacock describes, the pedagogical canon for tonal improvisers playing over chord changes often becomes one of working at hearing what the melody is in relationship to the bass notes and chord tones (Peacock 1993, p. 56-8). Reading chord charts during improvising can accentuate this further. Playing, for example, *Stella by Starlight* (see figure 1.7), I could sound the first bar's bass note ‘E’ as the bass note of an E-7b5 chord, not from musical impulse but rather because the
chord chart says to do so. Mechanically, no audiation is required and thus may not be present. I could perhaps place the fingers in the place called ‘E’ (or sound the open E string) rather than sound a note resulting from audiation of the bass note derived from the melody itself. A mechanical action without audiation is contrary to Peacock’s model.

Musical information (chart and note knowledge) thus creates a mechanical surface replication of the music (the correct note E) but with no intention present. The playing is then just a command structure, a musical paint by numbers, if you will. As such, it only presents stepping stones to the real picture. Peacock states:

The general approaches to developing harmonically, melodically and rhythmically are goal oriented, learn what the notes of this chord are, and then you can play the scale over the chord. It’s a kind of musical technology; it’s not the real germ of music. In improvising, you hear something and then you go to the instrument and find out where it is. The more you do this the more things can happen automatically, so when you hear something you know where it is. In improvisation what comes last is technique. (1993, p. 56-8)

Taking Peacock’s ideas further, a fundamental shift in musical impulse can occur if one plays bass notes—which the melody suggests—as a consequence of the harmonic implications of the melody. This is quite a different process to placing my first finger on the place called ‘E’ in the case of *Stella by Starlight*. Hearing the opening phrase of the same tune—the b5 to 11—as implying the underlying harmony (E-7b5) is a different musical experience, wherein Peacock suggests that musical depth begins to develop.

When a melody reveals the underlying harmony, this exposes a more dynamic relationship. This idea also allows one to delve deeper into the implications of broader harmonic streams than are confined within the notation of the music, and to suggest alternate harmonic implications than those implied by a chord chart (see also Salzer 1962: vii-viii, 3-28).

Peacock’s demonstrates this approach to harmony in a short excerpt from his improvising on *Ballad of the Sad Young Men* (see audio track 2, for the full track see audio track 3). Here he illuminates the broader harmony (G major or E minor) whilst the underlying piano accompaniment outlines movement towards D minor. This excerpt also alludes to the opening statement of the melody (the notes G, A, B, G, E, F# G) of the tune (see Appendix items 1a and b). The dynamic moment reveals a non-static relationship of melody and harmony, in Peacock’s melodic reference to the global
G major/E minor tonality and a deeper relationship to the underlying melody and harmony.

Figure 1.2. Excerpt from Gary Peacock’s solo on Ballad of the Sad Young Men (ECM, 1990) see audio track 2, transcribed Robertson.

According to Peacock, forming melodic ideas based around ideas thus intuited is therefore different to those that are mechanically derived. An idea may be played on one hand as a mechanical action and on the other as the result of a more intuitive imaginative process (for example, the audiated 9 over the theorised and geographically located one). Even though the imagined impulse may have the identical result as the mechanical impulse, one is real and one is representative only. The real is also the imaginative place wherein the depth that Peacock refers to, is generated. For him a chord chart is therefore “… a description; it’s a map. If you mistake the map for the territory then you will miss the experience.” (Peacock 1993: 59)

Thus, experienced musicians, such as Peacock, may store an accumulation of ideas formalised into patterns, shapes and other structures. These can concretise the knowing part of musicianship. He opines that these pre-ordained ideas can compete for attention with intuited ideas in the moment, so that one only using the moment to reproduce pre-prepared musical material. Others address this same issue in improvisation. For instance, experienced improviser Graeme Lyall says the continual reproduction of licks is unethical; he believes therefore that improvisers are obliged to transcend and move beyond the devices that inform and structure the very understandings that allow them to create melodic language (Lyall 2013). This transcendence is one vital tool in the ‘maintenance of naivety’ of the layman that pianist Bill Evans asked the musician to preserve (Evans 1966). An unconscious and perceptive response that is non-mechanical can move beyond known material, presenting a more direct conduit to the audiation and imagination of honest musical ideas and reflect a greater depth.
The use of chord-scale relationships to determine note choice is a good example of what Peacock refers to as a mechanical approach.

![Chord-Scale Relationships](image1.png)

Figure 1.3. A typical representation of chord-scale relationships; this is a common resource for many improvising musicians (Spera 1977: 30).

In his 1995 instructional DVD, Peacock shows that the relative meaning of chords and scales depends upon their harmonic context in music (Peacock 1995: 51-53 min), rather than having one generic meaning (as is illustrated above). He illustrates this by demonstrating the use of notes from the tonic blues scale over an IV7 chord in a blues progression instead of an IV7 scale. The static nature of chord-scale relationships—such as is illustrated above—will yield the dominant scale to match the dominant chord ignoring its function (meaning) as an IV chord in a G blues.

![Peacock's Melodic Phrase](image2.png)

Figure 1.4. Peacock's melodic phrase reveals an alternate global harmony of an F7 blues over a IV7 chord (Peacock 1995 50-55, transcribed Robertson).

The dynamic meaning of the IV7 chord is different to the static label of a chord-scale relationship. Peacock suggests that in intuitive melodic invention one may sense an alternative tonal interpretation, if one is not bound to a meaning literal to the chord
symbols. Melodies to tunes often reveal this to be the case, as Peacock has shown (Peacock 1995: 52min.35sec).

Peacock demonstrates a global harmonic possibility in two striking examples. In the first, he improvises in C major tonality when the chord sequence runs C - B7 - Bb7 - A7, thus:

Figure 1.5. Peacock shows a melody revealing its own harmony in a typical chromatic turnaround chord sequence (Peacock 1995, 50:33 transcribed Robertson).

In the example below, Peacock improvises a melodic line that remains in the key of Bb over the opening bars of *Stella by Starlight*. Both of these examples suggest that a strong melodic impulse, rather than a chord-scale relationship, is their origin.

Figure 1.6. Peacock demonstrates a melody played over bars 1-4 of *Stella by Starlight* revealing its own harmony (Peacock 1995, 52:30 transcribed Robertson).

In terms of vertical chord-scale harmony, many of the note choices above could appear wrong, but these examples, rich in intention and pointing always towards an overarching main tonality, are profoundly right. Here the melody actively reveals more global harmony than a chord-scale formula might suggest.

Searching for possibilities by working in one key allows Peacock to hear chords as harmonic entities, rather than as static functions, which allows him to derive imaginative melodic examples such as are shown above. As he states: “The line [above] is so diatonic that the [new] harmony now becomes revealed [to us by this melody] in a way that becomes like harmony… [rather than a chord-scale approach in which] … each chord starts to sound like a tonic function.” (Peacock 1995, 52:35)
According to Peacock, labels, chord symbols and the associations improvisers can infer from them, such as melodic licks, tend to bypass the dynamic function available in the music. He suggests that we can instead respond intuitively, as seen in his example above. Peacock is thus describing a new process where the traditional chord-scale vertical analysis for an improvising method is reversed. By using melodic implication from above, the harmony is revealed. This is unlike the chord-scale system where the harmony determines the relationship of the melody.

The implication for free improvising is also relevant. In the moment of creation, possibilities other than those intended by the players can appear. These might become part of the vocabulary of the new music that is improvised. The important aspect of this is the appearance of harmonic implications provided by a melody, rather than the traditional approach, which operates from below as the arbiter. The divergent field (chapter three) explores this concept further.

A dynamic state is illustrated here in the possibilities presented by these examples from Peacock. A further example of this can be found in the framing of the melody of Stella by Starlight (see below).
As Peacock points out, something he learned from studying the improvising of alto saxophonist Paul Desmond was that all but four pitches from the melody are from the Bb major scale (see the first eight bar melody notes below) (Peacock 1995, 51:56). The chord changes commonly used are at times a harmonic ‘divergence’ from Bb, in re-
harmonising the raw Bb major tonality of the melody. These harmonies suggest other harmonic centres than this tonic key. Thus, we have two modes of harmonic variance already present in the basic tune and harmonic rhythm relationship. The improviser then can develop melodic commentary (or parallel melodic counterpoint) on at least two of these dynamic states, the revealed vertical harmony (related to the tonality of the changes) or the revealed broad harmony of Bb major. A third possibility would be a melody that may have little immediate relationship to the original harmony, such as used by Konitz (see chapter two) (Rogers 2011: 2-3).

Figure 1.8. In the example above, the raw melody notes and harmony in bars 1-10 of *Stella by Starlight* (Young) are shown collapsed, revealing at least three harmonic suggestions and the seeds of divergence.

In the illustration above, the raw compressed melody, using mainly notes of the Bb major scale, is written in crotchets. Two possible chord relationships are indicated above. In the first, harmonic relationships can be derived from the vertical harmony of each ii-V-I; namely D minor, Bb major, Eb major and Db major. Below the staff, all bracketed chords can be related to the original key of Bb major. Peacock is suggesting that we allow melodic ideas to take precedence, suggesting versions of the harmony rather than allowing any one static function to govern melodic note choice. An imaginative and intuitive process, such as Peacock advocates, penetrates the veil of information that often shrouds sets of chord changes, by suggesting a simpler melodic route for improvisers that is reflective of a deeper current in one’s intuition.

We can now move onto a more detailed example of Peacock’s improvising.

**Peacock’s solo on Never Let Me Go**

In order to explore these ideas further I will examine Peacock’s improvised bass solo from a hallmark early recording with the trio of pianist Keith Jarrett and drummer Jack DeJohnette. The solo is over the song *Never Let Me Go* (Livingston/Evans) from the ECM release *Standards Volume II* (Jarrett 1983) and is astonishing for its flights of well-articulated phrases throughout the chorus. Jarrett and DeJohnette provide superb
accompaniment to the bassist, at times moving the tempo around to accommodate Peacock’s phrasing.

This 1983 recording is of significance because it is Jarrett, Peacock and DeJohnette’s first trio release. They have since gone on to accumulate a prodigious live recorded output. In these initial studio sessions at the Power Station, New York, the trio recorded *Standards Volume I* (Jarrett 1983) and *Standards Volume 2* (Jarrett 1983) as well as a free record *Changes* (Jarrett 1983) in the series of sessions. Although much of the trio’s later live output is noteworthy, this early recording is perhaps the truest representation of the trio’s mindset, of which Peacock stated; “One element of the spirit of the music is that every time we play together it is the first time and the last time… There’s no contract… There’s no ‘we’re going to keep playing’… It’s a spirit. It’s kind of inside, internal energy… You only play a piece for the first and last time…” (Jung 1999, p.5)

Peacock was reluctant to record ‘just jazz standards’ at all when Jarrett first approached him to record in 1982, but realised that it had to be “about something a little further than that” (Elphland 1996, p. 17). Of the trio’s approach to playing standards, Peacock stated: “… you become seduced, you become drunk, you drown. If you’re willing to drown, then you’re giving up all your stuff. You can’t define what it is you’re drowning in, really. But there’s a love affair going on, there’s a drunkenness, a diving in, and rapture, an ecstasy.” (Elphland 1996, p. 18)

*Never Let Me Go* is played as a ballad with a strong melodic motive running throughout and unfolding harmony (see below). Jarrett’s biographer, Ian Carr, described this version as “a superb rendition of the melody with a resonance and eloquence which are almost unbearable evocative” (Carr 1991: 147). The song has a 36-bar ABC form, with two 8-bar sections and a final 12-bar section. The first eight bars are in Db major tonality while the second eight bars modulate up a fourth to Gb major, before returning to the first tonality through a turn-around. The tune never states the ultimate tonic (Ab major) until the penultimate bar; this is one of its distinctive characteristics and provides rich harmonic tension and development throughout the form.
Figure 1.9. Never Let Me Go lead sheet (Evans/Livingstone) (Sher 1988). My transposition.
Figures 1.10. Peacock’s solo on *Never Let Me Go*, page one (Evans / Livingston) from the ECM release *Standards Volume II* (Jarrett 1983). My transcription, see the audio track 4, bass solo excerpt. For the complete version, see the audio track 5.
Figures 1.11. Peacock’s solo on *Never Let Me Go*, page two (Evans /Livingston) from the ECM release *Standards Volume II* (Jarrett 1983). My transcription, see audio track 3, bass solo excerpt. For the complete version, see the audio track 4.
Peacock’s improvising opens by re-phrasing an element of the original melody (bars 1-2) in a two-note motive, resolving on the Eb-7 chord of bar 3 (audio track 6).

Figure 1.12. Peacock solo excerpt.

Peacock’s line then descends gracefully in bar 3 with a scale-based passage that resolves upward into Db in bars 4-5 (see below). Using notes that occasionally lie outside of normal chord-scale agreements, (i.e. using a G natural over an Ab7 chord) the phrase is so well formed that it generates its own independent tonal agreements (see audio track 7).

Figure 1.13. Peacock solo excerpt.

Notable in bar 6 (see below) is a fully formed and beautifully articulated demisemiquaver phrase that resolves on an implied F# tritone substitution on beat 4. This presages the upcoming tonality shift into B major (bar 6) (audio track 8) by functioning as its dominant, creating a V-I movement. The fact that Peacock is able to develop this phrase with such rapidity is quite remarkable. The overall harmonic conception and articulation here shows a rapid developmental approach of great mastery.
This is a hallmark of Peacock's phrasing, also evident in his early playing with Bill Evans (see for instance the album *Trio '64* (Evans 1964), where Peacock also plays rapid phrases with unexpected harmonic and rhythmic content to great effect. Renowned bassist, Steve Swallow, once commented of Peacock “His concern for velocity is fundamental to what he has to say. With Bill Evans, he will interject, in a single moment—even between Bill’s rapid phrases—a finished idea. I need half a chorus to develop an idea most of the time.” (Williams 1963: 115)

The next four bars (bars 9-12), contain the recapitulation of the harmony and melody transposed up a fourth, Peacock's solo line reflects this, with a motivic echo of the first two-note phrase of the solo (see below and see audio track 9).

This two-note motive reappears again in the solo, at the peak of an explosive rapid F minor scale passage (bar 17 below, see audio track 10).
The solo peaks in a strong cadential part of the song’s form (bars 24-5 below, audio track 11) where the original tune has its opening motive for the last time.

![Figure 1.17. Peacock solo excerpt.](image)

Peacock uses quite a few rapid ascending runs to achieve tension and then release, with most of them arriving at a strong higher register melodic phrase. Many of the faster phrases are formed mainly from the notes of F minor or Ab major (the final tonality of the tune, see for instance bars 3, 8, 14, 17, 20 and 23). These really function as interjections, or unexpected commentaries on the tune and as a revelation of the broader harmony of Db and Ab major. In this aspect, they are unpredictable, and maintain interest throughout the solo.

Some ideas appear to come from Peacock’s response to Jarrett or DeJohnette’s accompaniment. An example of this is in bar 12 (see below, audio track 12):

![Figure 1.18. Peacock solo excerpt.](image)

Peacock’s first three-note phrase has a strong relationship to the open high-hat phrase drummer DeJohnette plays immediately beforehand. In many ways, it proves the spontaneous nature of Peacock’s creativity at this point, in that it is highly attendant upon the momentary influence of another, rather than on pre-ordained material.

Throughout the solo, Peacock develops varieties of phrasing from his rhythmic placement, starting many long phrases away from the first beat of the bar (see for example bars 6, 7, 8, 12, 14, 15, 18, 22). He also lets many phrases spill over into a second bar rather than containing them (bars 3-4, 9, 12-13, 16-17, 19-20, 23-24, 26-28). The solo has a strong melodic core throughout, evident in the continual reference to the two-note motive in bar 1 (revisited in bars 8, beats 3-4, bar 9 beat 1, bars 11, 14 and 17).
It displays elements of surprise and spontaneity that are a hallmark of Peacock’s playing and conception.

This examination of Peacock’s approach indicates his frequent use of harmonic overrides to reveal a global tonality. This gives insight into the improvising process of a bassist who is melodically driven and able to transcend the confines of barline and harmony. Peacock’s characteristic fearlessness gives him an ability to create purposeful phrases that override exact chord grammar at times. This solo is inspiring in its imagination, melodic invention, and expressive qualities and for the way it demonstrates the intuitive improvising that he champions. Peacock is able to create depth in his improvising by creating phrases with strong intentionality. The fact that these phrases bypass elements of conventional harmonic grammar allows a deeper aural field to emerge than is apparent in the confines of harmony and the bar.

Peacock’s improvising highlights the gap between musical skill and musical profundity. Skill has breadth, whilst profundity has depth; Peacock believes this is accessed when playing unconsciously, where innate ideas can come forth in an imaginative way. He uses strong melodic ideas to show the way melody can reveal the dynamic nature of harmony, rather than always letting harmony dictate the ground on which melodic ideas can be improvised. In this process, the intention of the musical idea is paramount to its merit, not its technical accuracy. Recordings can be used to capture this process, rather than to make the perfect product.

The realisation of these ideas allows an imaginative opening to occur in the music. More is apparent than is immediately explicable. Peacock attributes some of this to intuitive divination, inspired by elements outside of conscious reasoning. It allows listener and player to participate in an imaginative process in which music is suspended above a multiplicity of elements and possibilities, some of which are called in from a supporting undercurrent which has been maintaining the buoyancy of the music at all times.
CHAPTER TWO Melodic presence: Lee Konitz

This chapter investigates Lee Konitz’s improvising. His melodic approach is contrasted with the chord-scale approach, allowing a comparison of spontaneously conceived ideas with pre-organised materials. There is then an analysis of a Konitz solo that explores these themes in more detail. In this chapter, I outline ideas of Konitz, which, along with Peacock’s approach (chapter one), inform my theory of the proposed divergent field, to be explored chapter three. This chapter is followed by an interlude that compares the solos of Konitz and Peacock and contrasts their methods.

American saxophonist Konitz was born in Chicago in 1927. Christened Leon, he moved from the clarinet to the saxophone, developing a cool and understated sound. In 1947, Konitz (now known as ‘Lee’, or sometimes ‘Coates’ after a Stan Kenton gaffe) joined Claude Thornhill’s band, which was a starting point for many in the so-called Cool School. This was a group of players influenced by the ideas of pianist and pedagogue Lennie Tristano (1919-1978). Tristano’s main tenets included improvising in an understated manner with smooth straight-quaver articulation, unusual note groupings across the barline in displacements or melodic canon, and regimented rhythm section accompaniment. With Tristano as a major early influence, Konitz’s cerebral style was firmly established with the release of his Subconscious-Lee in 1949. Tristano’s impact was also noticeable in saxophonist Warne Marsh and influenced players like Paul Desmond and Australian Graeme Lyall (among others) to pursue a Cool School aesthetic.

Konitz formed an association with Miles Davis from 1948 to 1950, that bore fruit in Davis’ Birth of the Cool, featuring a jazz nonet with Gil Evans’ rich arrangements for rhythm section, French horn, baritone saxophone, alto saxophone, trombone and trumpet. After this period, Konitz moved away from Tristano’s aegis, branching out on his own to lead smaller groups. He recorded the classic Motion (1961), with bassist Sonny Dallas and drummer Elvin Jones, in this period. Konitz continued performing in the 1970s, forming a nonet based on Davis’ earlier incarnation. He famously contributed to a celebration of Charlie Parker’s birthday on April 8, 1973 by
improvising along with a tape recording of Parker playing *Hothouse*\(^{10}\). He also continued his association with fellow Tristano student Warne Marsh, and performed throughout the 1980s, although these were quieter years for the saxophonist. In this period, Konitz largely withdrew, playing at times with Paul and Carla Bley and remaining active as a teacher.

Konitz's sound is a distinct contrast to Charlie Parker's, with a smooth, even, almost classical approach to all registers of the instrument without the melodic formula of bop. His more careful approach to melodic improvisation influenced European jazz along with players like Art Pepper and Bud Shank (Bradford-Robinson, 2014). In recent times, continuing to improvise fearlessly, Konitz remains a proponent of what he would see as honest improvising, playing what comes in the moment rather than what is prepared beforehand (Tepfer 2014). This is closely related to Peacock's approach. On Konitz's honest attitude, contemporary pianist Dan Tepfer recently said of him: “He is known in particular for his intense focus on improvisational integrity, a desire for each musical choice to reflect the present moment as much as possible instead of a pre-made plan or habit” (Tepfer 2014). In his 87th year at this time, Konitz has had a long and illustrious career spanning more than 60 years, with performances and recordings worldwide. An excellent biographical account of Konitz's musical life and discography can be found in Hamilton (Hamilton 2007).

Like Peacock, Konitz demonstrates in both his playing and his words that his approach is firmly based in melodic variation and motivic development. This allows him to sidestep repetitious ideas in order to improvise new material. This is evident in the transcription analysed later in the chapter. As is explained in this chapter, Konitz—again like Peacock—advocates forming aural connections to musical ideas as a high priority. Theoretical information can then follow this. There are earlier advocates of this approach. In 1942, for example, theorist and composer Paul Hindemith, wrote in the *The Craft of Musical Composition* that ‘A true musician believes in only what he hears. No matter how ingenious a theory is, it means nothing to him until the evidence is placed before him in actual sound’ (Hindemith 1942: 156)

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\(^{10}\) Konitz comments on this occasion that Charlie Parker, upon hearing a other players imitating Parker, told Konitz that he “…didn’t intend it to be that way…” adding that he was pleased to hear Konitz was playing in his own way. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyM5bbQusJI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyM5bbQusJI) Accessed 27.10.2014
For Konitz this aural connection is or has become intuitive, it is as if materials he once may have studied have become less conscious in his improvising (Iverson 2011:2). This approach counters one of the challenges facing the improviser who is generating melodic ideas over familiar sequences of chords (like ii-V-I progressions) which can be governed by theories of static chord-scale relationships such as Peacock describes in chapter one (pp. 28-31). In this situation all improvising has the potential to sound the same, unless informed by things other than a generic approach. It is crucial for Konitz that improvising in performance generates new ideas and is not replicating mechanical patterns (i.e. non-audited configurations, similar to Peacock’s use of the term) that have already been practiced (Rogers 2011: 2-3). Konitz addresses the potential to play worked-out material in his own playing thus. ‘If you want to go someplace non-mechanical you have to simplify quite a bit I think’ (Rogers 2011: 141). He states that as soon as he hears himself improvise a familiar solo melody, he stops and waits (Rogers 2011: 103). This ability to move away from the habitual is a key characteristic of the inventiveness and imagination in Konitz’s improvising.

A collaborator of Konitz’s, contemporary American jazz pianist Ethan Iverson, describes Konitz’s influence on performance preparation thus:

I was really impressed when we played a gig together in Pori (Finland) last year. Before the gig you invited the band to your hotel room to sing and tap together. I’ve seldom been with other musicians who took warming up for the gig that seriously. Then, when you heard me play a Bud Powell solo on the backstage piano, you got a little angry at me because you felt we’d been opened up by the singing, and there I was putting mechanical licks back into my playing. (Iverson 2011: 2)

Other players who have been influenced by this approach, for instance Australian saxophonist Graeme Lyall, reveal a similar aesthetic “Licks that you learn, I don’t call improvisation at all. When you improvise, it’s unethical to reproduce your practice routine… It may… have been creative originally… if it’s your lick and not someone else’s lick that you’re learning…[but] once the lick’s been created; thus ends improvisation”. (2013) This statement needs to be understood in the context of the considerable time that great improvisers spend in assimilating the ideas that they use to improvise, in then seeking imaginative content.
Peacock also echoes this, when he censures “...an enormous number of younger players don’t really listen. They hear only what they have already rehearsed. So they’re coming out of a loop of listening to what they know they can play and regurgitating it. It’s really quite tiring.” (Peacock 1993: 54). Avant-garde composer John Cage\textsuperscript{11} (1912-1992) for instance famously rejected improvisation in his own compositions, because he thought players tended to improvise what they already knew. In such worked-out material, he thought: ‘you only do what you remember’ (Feisst 2009: 5) see also Toop in Young (2002: 243).

For Konitz, in addressing his own approach to developing ideas that are not worked-out or ‘prepared’, he states:

\begin{quote}
I can’t describe what I feel, because it’s different for every chord. I’ve stopped trying to analyse what it is and just react to the sound of the chord. When I sit alone, I play a cluster or something and I sing something and I check the notes I sang, maybe in a six- or seven- note phrase, and very often it has little to do with that chord or cluster. I think we’re free to do that if we put notes together in a musical way. (Rogers 2011: 2-3)
\end{quote}

In the transcribed excerpt (figure 2.1) below, Konitz demonstrates this freedom when he phrases in a vertically ‘unexpected’ way across the harmony. The result is musical, imaginative and inviting. A combination of displacement and melodic inventiveness yields this result, when vertical considerations might not. Undoubtedly Konitz’s early background of study with Tristano—as mentioned earlier, in which melodic displacements and note groupings across the barline were a strong feature—is a contributing factor here. The development of such studied ideas does not negate the intuitive potential of the moment. Nor is it related to a ‘lick’, which is more or less a direct reproduction of a known musical motive. An idea such as a melodic displacement has more scope and is not confined by one context. Influential improvising pianist and long time colleague of Konitz, Paul Bley, points out this key aspect in Konitz’s improvising: ‘He’s been playing with ideas. The word idea is not prevalent in improvising as much as it should be. It’s one thing to be a conversationalist, it’s another to say something, and it’s a third to say something that contains an idea’ (Hamilton 2007: 192).

\textsuperscript{11} John Cage is a well known as a composer and catalyst of the avant-garde. From the 1950s, he was one of the earliest composers to include element of indeterminacy or unpredictability in his compositions. He avoided improvisation and sought to bypass it in his works by setting challenges for performers that were non-skill based. Feisst, S. (2009).
In figure 2.1 Konitz phrases in a displaced fashion, to present an intriguing and engaging idea. This phrase seems to resolve in an almost naive fashion into the root of the chord a beat late. In figure 2.2, the phrase is moved earlier, perhaps revealing what is displaced. This unexpectedness and the harmonically obtuse quality of the original phrase (above) against its accompaniment is striking and creates added depth.

Konitz describes what he sees as a ‘mechanical’ approach to improvising melodic ideas in Hamilton (2007: 109). This description involves using ideas from the note sets as determined by the scales related to the chords, a pedagogical chord-scale method which is used in contemporary jazz education, and for most—if not all—jazz improvisers is an essential tool of trade (see for instance Crook 2006). Although this remains a key learning basis for most improvisers, Konitz believes the chord-scale approach is not necessarily an endpoint. Although much jazz improvising uses the chord as the governing arbiter—a hegemony used for learning agreements of harmony, tonal centre and rhythmic cogency—a melodic approach allows melody to affect or govern the music in an equal, rather that subservient, fashion. As Peacock has also stated, one can listen to a melody and allow oneself to imagine its harmonic implication. This can lead to the generation of harmonically divergent ideas to the chord-scale plan, one that may see a
player such as Konitz going off the plan, creating novelty, interest and ultimately depth. This is pursued later in chapter three as a **divergent field**.

Despite the seeming self-deprecating nature of the statement: “Sometimes when I hear a piano player and bass player talking about changes real fast, I can’t follow it. ‘Two, five, seven, eleven…’ I say, ‘Wait, a minute, I don’t know what that’s about right now’ ” (Konitz in Rogers 2011: 2), Konitz is articulating an alternative to a chord-scale approach in which the relative strength of melodic counterpoint can overshadow chord grammar. Prepared material—described by Cage as the already known—can lead to a safety that players like Konitz and Peacock do not rate as highly as inspiration. Konitz states: “That means going into it with a clean slate” (Hamilton 2007: 104). This approach could result in silence, activity or a melodic gesture towards or away from something, rhythmic or tonal counterpoint or dissonance; and thus may be more varied. Melody often reveals the harmony in his improvising, rather than the obverse of letting chords dictate the melodic substance. Konitz, like Peacock, shows that this allows for the development of personality, individuality and ultimately depth with this imaginative approach.

As mentioned earlier, Konitz outlines his theme and variation approach to melodic improvisation in a 1985 interview. His ‘ten step’ system shows the gradual progression from a melody through to more developed embellishments, always referring to the original melodic material in some form (Kastin 2010: 3-4).

Konitz illustrates his developmental approach as an outgrowth of ideas, a gradual process of abstraction, as in figure 2.3 and 2.4 below:
Figure 2.3. Konitz’s ‘Ten steps of theme and variation’, (1-5) which are based on the melody to the standard *All The Things You Are* (Kern) My transcription of Konitz’s handwritten notation (Kastin 2010).
Figure 2.4. Konitz’s ‘Ten steps of theme and variation’, (6-10) which are based on the melody to the standard All The Things You Are (Kern) My transcription of Konitz’s handwritten notation (Kastin 2010).
Each of the melodic inventions in figures 2.3 and 2.4 above refer to the melody of *All the Things You Are*, in increasing gradations of departure. Melody notes are used as anchor points to organise each melodic phrase with ornaments and figures leading away or towards them. Gradually Konitz’s written melodic ideas become more abstracted until he leaves the last example (10) a blank space asking for ‘pure inspiration’ to inform the musical impulse. He implies that one might arrive at this point by working through these theme and variation steps.

To further illustrate this approach of Konitz I will now examine a complete solo.

**Konitz’s solo on Everybody’s Song but My Own**

This solo is taken from Konitz’s *The New York Album* (1988), which features Konitz with Jim McNeely (piano), Adam Nusbaum (drums) and Marc Johnson (double bass). Konitz’s soprano saxophone solo on *Everybody’s Song but My Own* follows immediately after the melody, which is on an AABC form jazz waltz written by well-known UK trumpeter Kenny Wheeler (see below). The song has superb motile harmony, which weaves itself though a number of key centres, all of which are negotiated in a melodic fashion by Konitz.
Figure 2.4a. *Everybody’s Song but My Own* (Wheeler), lead sheet.
The solo (see audio track 14) has been chosen for the way in which it demonstrates the concepts for improvising advocated by Konitz. It uses elements of the melody as a point of departure, it ‘sings’ at the same points the melody does, and it shows examples of Konitz sidestepping repetitive phrases and using melodic and rhythmic note combinations that, I suggest, create dynamic fields in which the opportunity for the less predictable can arise.

In transcribing and studying this improvisation, I chose to memorise this solo in its entirety—as with the Peacock solo in chapter one—adhering to a method espoused by both players. Learning to sing it slowly (phrase by phrase) and then as a final step, once memorised, I moved to playing it on the bass. Working in this way, as opposed to playing a written-out solo, is slow but rewarding. In learning to sing the solo it became immediately apparent which parts of the solo I could not quickly audiate (understand as something), because I could not reproduce them from memory. I also gained the most from these phrases because I wanted to understand them as music, not merely imitate them. In looking in depth at any complex sections, I was gradually able to understand them by breaking them up into smaller parts, and thus my own aural understanding benefitted as a result. The process of then putting these ideas onto the instrument was much quicker, because I then understood the ideas as musical information and process. The unconscious side effects of this learning method in my own playing were noticeable: I became aware of new possibilities in my own improvising. The very last step in the solo ‘transcription’ was the literal notation; by which time most of my analysis of the musical process had already occurred.

Much transcription study uses vertical theoretical analysis. Despite the importance of this, I will forgo details of it here to examine aspects closer to Konitz’s conception. It can be considered a secondary (but not unrelated) consideration to deal with chord-scale agreements to the primary importance of understanding Konitz’s melodic variation and development model. Therefore, the salient aspects of this solo highlight Konitz’s melodic improvising processes (see audio track 14 for the solo, track 15 is the full version).
Lee Konitz's solo on "Everybody's Song but My Own" (K. Wheeler)

SOPRANO SAXOFLON

EASY JAZZ WALTZ 1 = 120

My transcription, from The New York Album (Konitz 1988).

Figure 2.4b. Konitz bars 1-49 soprano saxophone solo on Everybody's Song but My Own (Wheeler). My transcription, from The New York Album (Konitz 1988).
Figure 2.4c. Konitz bars 50-102 soprano saxophone solo on *Everybody’s Song but My Own* (Wheeler). My transcription, from *The New York Album* (Konitz 1988).
Konitz’s initial development of the two-note motive in the opening statements of the solo (bars 1-4) shows him improvising a simple melodic statement to create variety and avoid repetition. It relates closely to the two-note motive of the original melody, which Konitz uses frequently as inspiration for this improvisation (Hamilton 2007, p. 104).

These opening statements present a development of the opening motive (see audio track 16).

(bar 2, Eb-F-C)

and two variations

(bars 2-3, D-F-C#)

bar 3 (D-E-B).

Notably, there is no single exact repetition of the same melodic phrase in these iterations here. Although each phrase has a similar contour, each version is an inventive variation of the previous one. This opening motive then moves sequentially down a tone and develops into a new set of variations of the same 3-note melodic idea C-D-Bb, bars 5-8 (see audio track 17). This time the variations are rhythmic ones. Bar 5 in quavers, bar 6 in triplets and bar 7 with the last note of the three-note set displaced by a quaver.
The melodic resolution, mirroring the initial melodic statement,

```
\begin{music}
\begin{staff}
\rhythm{8/4}
\bar{1}
E>G\quad C\quad G\quad D
\end{staff}
\end{music}
```

occurs in bars 8-10 where the three-note group is extended and resolves in a longer descending line (bracketed below, see audio track 17)

```
\begin{music}
\begin{staff}
\rhythm{6/4}
\bar{5}
C7/Gb\quad A7
\end{staff}
\end{music}
```

Figure 2.7. Konitz solo excerpt.

Konitz’s commitment to varying themes rather than repeating them is made clear here, demonstrating his stated desire to avoid familiar ideas. He is able to avoid the immediately obvious—often by a side-step procedure—to introduce the less-expected variation.

Another concept used by Konitz in a similar fashion is the chromatic modulation of a two-note phrase. This appears as two quaver note ‘interrupters’ on beat 3 in bar 15 to beat 1 of bar 16 (Ab-Gb, then A to G) and again in symmetry on beat 3 in bar 17 to beat 1 of bar 18, Eb-Db then E-D of the solo transcription (figure 2.8 below, see audio track 18).

```
\begin{music}
\begin{staff}
\rhythm{4/4}
\bar{15}
C7/Gb\quad A7\quad D7\quad G7
\end{staff}
\end{music}
```

Figure 2.8. Konitz solo excerpt.

Both of these interrupting two-note phrases (often called enclosures or circle tones) have a dual function, in that they are used to end and start a phrase. This small field of
divergence allows the solo idea to recommence on a new path and perhaps lead it away from a more predictable outcome that the phrase in bars 15-17 may have been heading for. It is the second-step idea following a first recognised phrase that sidesteps the predictability emerging in Konitz’s melodic line.

Konitz’s conviction that ‘two good lines form a counterpoint’ (Hamilton 2007:127) is found in the relationship between his solo and the original melody. Most of the melodic statements relate to the melody as much as they do to the chordal harmony. This idea of strong melodic ideas forming a counterpoint is also evident in Konitz’s tuning and rhythm. Konitz’s tuning is sometimes sharp, something he is aware of (Hamilton 2007: 177-9 ), but the phrases retain an internal consistency, as do examples of notes grouped against expectation. In both these cases, the strength and consistency of the ideas allow them to become an extended element of the vigorous countermelodies that Konitz improvises. These ideas are explored further at the end of this chapter.

In this solo, there are a number of intricate chromatic lines, which are grouped differently to common categories of triplets and semiquavers. These ideas divert to another time alignment than suggested by jazz waltz time. The first and second of these occur in close proximity, between bars 33-5 and the second spanning bars 37-9 (see audio track 19).

![Figure 2.9 Konitz solo excerpt.](image)

The first example (bars 33-5), is a grouping of triplet quavers grouped in sets of four over 4+ beats, creates a rhythmic illusion of groups of four, as could be shown (hypothetically) below in semiquavers (Figure 2.9a).
Its noticeable that even these three downwards variations of the solo (bars 33-5) are each different in intervallic content to each other–1) tone, tone, semitone, 2) tone, semitone, minor third, semitone, 3) tone, tone, minor third–and do not form a direct pattern. This is much like the three variations from the first phrase of the solo (bars 1-3, see figure 2.5 above).

The second example–bars 37-9 in figure 2.9 (see audio track 19)–follows almost immediately as an outgrowth of the first idea and is also a grouping of triplet quavers grouped in sets of four notes over more than four beats, creating a similar illusion, as below.

Similarly, in both examples an exact melodic interval pattern (or sequence) is not followed, with variations to each four-note group following in an iteration of the basic contour. These variations display a continued commitment to developing motives in this way that is a hallmark of Konitz’s improvising.

There are also further examples of phrasing in these similar groupings in the second chorus of the solo, which have the same ‘illusory’ quality. For example, in bars 61-63 (figure 2.10 below) Konitz once again groups a descending triplet motive in melodic groupings of four notes thus (see audio track 20):

Figure 2.9a. Triplet phrase in bars 33-35 in groups as semiquavers.

Figure 2.9b. Second triplet phrase in bars 37-90, grouped as semiquavers.

Figure 2.10. Konitz solo excerpt.
These groupings in sets of four create the effect of being something else, perhaps as suggested by the following example.

![Figure 2.10a. Konitz solo excerpt, showing the triplet phrase in bars 61-3 grouped as semiquavers.](image)

The device of grouping triplets in four-note melodic sets is a feature of all of these melodic lines. Konitz again uses a strong set of subtle intervallic and rhythmic variations to avoid them falling into the category of patterns or licks.

Konitz’s solo reaches melodic zeniths in each D major bridge of the tune. In keeping with his adherence to variations emanating from the song’s melody, his solo achieves a sense of joyful release in the upper register that corresponds to the harmonic and melodic singsong character in Wheeler’s melody and harmony. The first chorus’ bridge is approached from a lower register in bars 18-19 (see audio track 21), as below in figure 2.11.

![Figure 2.11. Konitz solo excerpt.](image)

The second chorus’ bridge has a higher, longer phrase (bars 68-71); this releases even more powerfully than the first (see audio track 22), as seen below in figure 2.12.

![Figure 2.12. Konitz solo excerpt.](image)
Both of these phrases achieve the singing quality that Konitz is able to align with that same quality in the original melody, showing his adherence to this melody as a prime source of inspiration.

Towards the end of Konitz’s second and final chorus, he develops intricate semiquaver lines (see figure 2.13 above). These conclude the solo on a complex, musical highpoint (bars 81-88). The lines commencing at bar 81 (see audio track 23) and bar 83 (see audio track 24), then bar 85 (see audio track 25), are all chromatic, as though twisting in upon themselves. They expand chromatically beyond scale patterns, and conclude this rewarding source for study of Konitz at work.

This examination is by no means exhaustive. It presents the aspects of Konitz’s playing that resonate with my own understanding and aural comprehension. As I seek an understanding of his approach to improvising in order to develop my own, rather than exactly reproducing it, then the elements that I concentrate on are those that I have been able to understand as musically meaningful in the improvising process.

Konitz’s improvising here presents a commentary on the melody and chord changes of Wheeler’s *Everybody’s Song but My Own*, rather than a description (i.e., outlining with chord tones) of them. This is in keeping with his theme and development model, where melody is the prime motivator of the ideas generated. Therefore, high, release,
and pedal points of the original melody are often the high, release and pedal points of Konitz’s solo.

Konitz’s melodic approach represents a strong contrast to the more common chord-scale hegemony. He firmly believes in non-mechanical musical utterances, and thus he is able to discover new ideas in his own playing. To this end, he will desist in reproducing ideas if he begins to recognise them as having been played before, in order to find a more imaginative and spontaneous way to improvise. He is able to demonstrate his approach in his ten-step system for deriving variations, and the solo examined in this chapter reflects this approach with its strong motivic development. He eschews pattern-derived playing, and instead follows the melody and varies ideas constantly in an engaging manner.

The levels of invention in the solo also show the careful development of his ideas outside the common improvising model. My own study of this solo has been fruitful in guiding me through Konitz’s way of thinking and connecting ideas, where he varies them in ways that are new to me. It is the perfect source for studying an imaginative improvising process at the highest level.
INTERLUDE

Konitz/Peacock Synthesis: Presence and imagination

This section contrasts the solos of Peacock and Konitz. It examines the different ways that they arrive at often similarly spontaneous vocabulary.

Konitz's solo is more directly related to the melody of *Everybody’s Song but My Own* than Peacock’s solo is to the melody of *Never Let Me Go*. In Konitz’s solo, the relationship to the melody follows his stated theme and variation model closely, forming a strong melodic counterpoint to the original melody. Peacock’s divergent melodic commentary on the harmonic content of *Never Let Me Go* is a starting point for imaginative and intuitive melodic flights, although he still uses a melodic motive as a starting point. Although both solos have a melodic basis, Peacock allows some of his lyrical statements to reveal their own harmony, which divert from chord-scale formula.

Peacock’s solo ‘leaps off’ each harmonic movement in flurries, creating an intuitive opening in the harmonic potential each chord presents. This is partly due to the fact that the tempo and harmonic rhythm of *Never Let Me Go*—approximately $\text{q}=60$, with one chord per bar generally—is slow in comparison to *Everybody’s Song but My Own*, which is performed at around $\text{q}=120$, mostly with two chords per bar. Peacock’s improvised lines offer the strong divergence of harmonic counterpoint, whereas Konitz’s solo offers a divergent melodic counterpoint. It is not that every inventive phrase is constructed anew in every moment of these improvisations, but rather that an imaginative cleft is created by the very observance of other possibilities to the obvious ones.

Each solo demonstrates the way each player is able to create interest by using these alternate or second steps to what might be predicted. Konitz stops or sidesteps the already familiar, and Peacock develops intuitive harmonic flourishes that suggest alternate or further harmonic possibilities.
Both soloists divert from the predictable and create secondary layers of melodic information, which can be heard standing alone as commentary and in contrast to the original melody and harmony. The divergent points of these ideas create a multi-faceted listening experience. The listener can be aware of the background (tune and harmony) and the idea (solo) as interrelated entities to the rhythm, harmony and original melody; but all of these ideas simultaneously revolve in an exchange of interdependent orbits. Some intersect and thus interact, and some do not.

Konitz uses a more steady rhythmic language than Peacock’s more explosive interpolative style. Konitz’s solo uses quavers primarily, with triplet and semiquaver variations and develops longer phrases relative to the faster harmonic rhythm of the tune. Peacock’s solo is on a tune with slower harmonic rhythm, so the real feature in his improvisation is his ability to create the illusion of harmonic activity in a relatively slow-moving harmonic framework. A case in point would be the phrasing in bar 6 (figure 2.14), where he creates harmonic movement and density, melodic contour and some harmonic suggestions that extend the basic harmony (see audio track 26, see also pages 41-2).

![Figure 2.14. Peacock solo excerpt.](image)

Whilst Peacock’s improvising creates an illusory harmonic movement, Konitz creates interest and connection through faster moving harmonic rhythm and lines; in both player’s cases lines are produced that transcend any restriction imposed by the harmony. Konitz avoids mechanical arpeggiation of chord tones and creates strong melodic counterpoint, which stays true to his aesthetic and skills, even when it diverts from the harmony completely. Peacock, working with a slower harmonic rhythm, creates direction by ignoring any static function that chord-scale relationships may imply (bar 22, see figure 2.15 below), and points the listener back to the overarching tonality of the whole piece (see audio track 27).
Here the notes of this expostulation (figure 2.15) are formed from F natural minor or Ab major, whilst chord-scale grammar often suggests F major for such an ii-V-I (G-7 C7 F) progression. Because Peacock is heading for the upcoming tonality of F minor in bar 23, a harmonic choice like this creates tension and subsequent release, where the resultant harmony in bar 22 justifies the earlier melody (figure 2.15).

Peacock’s interjections are more condensed and rhythmically varied than Konitz’s melodic lines. The soprano saxophonist, by comparison, wends his way melodically in unexpected phrases and note groups, but these are formed out of quavers, semiquavers and triplets in flowing combinations. Once the bassist embarks on a rapid phrase, the note choices usually comprised of diatonic scale groups (bars 8, 12, 14, 16-17, 20, 22) whereas Konitz's faster groupings produce more convoluted lines (bars 37-40, 81-88, see figures 2.16-23 below).

The examples below show a comparison of Konitz’s faster lines with Peacock’s faster passages.

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**Figure 2.15.** Peacock solo excerpt.

**Figure 2.16.** Konitz solo excerpt bars 34-39 (see audio track 28).
Figure 2.17. Konitz solo excerpt bars 81-87 (see audio track 29-31).

Figure 2.18. Peacock solo excerpt bar 8 (see audio track 32).

Figure 2.19. Peacock solo excerpt bar 12 (see audio track 33).

Figure 2.20. Peacock solo excerpt bar 14 (see audio track 34).

Figure 2.21. Peacock solo excerpt bar 16.

Figure 2.22. Peacock solo excerpt bar 17 (see audio track 35).
While Peacock uses a scale basis for these rapid-fire phrases, Konitz uses more convoluted rhythmic and interval content for his note choices.

Playing Lonely

Both Konitz’s and Peacock’s improvising has a quality which allows them to stand away from the accompaniment. I would suggest that these qualities generate a tangible almost physical isolation due to their sometimes idiosyncratic tuning. Peacock justifies this in his own prioritisation of ‘intention’ over accuracy (1993: 58), whilst Konitz addresses this in a less direct way by discussing what he sees as good and bad days with his tuning (Hamilton 2007: 177-9). Despite this, when this playing is coherent unto itself, the idiosyncratic tuning of both musicians tends to portion sections of the improvising away from the tunes and song structure, whilst maintaining a internal soundness.

Thus at these points, Konitz and Peacock are playing sonically alone, somewhat apart from the other players. This, I suggest, is a manifestation of the internal structuring that both players use. Both player’s abilities to separate themselves from the accompaniment creates self-referential phrasing which holds true, despite not always being exactly attuned to the surrounding accompaniment at that point. Unto itself, the intonation is logical (i.e. as a set of melodic intervals moving horizontally) although notes may not always be intoned truly when related to the accompaniment. Because of this, the strength of the musical statement and its intention can be seen to override the need to be vertically closely related or justified.

Because Konitz and Peacock are playing self-referentially at these points and they project their ideas so strongly, both are convincing. These are not the same as
preconceived ideas, which can also be a product of internal referencing. Rather these moments have a quality of standing apart, not just in tuning, but also because of the use of an alternate broad harmony. This occurs also in rhythm, such as when Konitz groups in unexpected pulse-related groups (see the earlier Konitz solo transcription). In these note groupings Konitz will swing a seven-note grouping as if it is separate from the pulse and actually part of a different meter. Peacock also uses melodic groupings that override common rhythmic divisions, which he would see as rhythmically intuitively derived. These elements generate the sense isolation, a searching quality noticeable at these points in both players’ improvising.

A theory such as that proposed by Charles Kiel suggests these variances are the fabric creating the power of groove and character in improvised music (Berger 2009: 81). Keil labels these as ‘participatory discrepancies’ in jazz improvisation, which in turn can explain and make sense of this idiosyncratic tuning. If this is the case, a disparity in tuning can be seen as the result of the inventive improvising of Konitz and Peacock. If the internal intentionality of the phrase is strong enough (Peacock, coming from intuitive musicality, while for Konitz, melodic counterpoint) then it forms melodic, harmonic and rhythmic overrides that outweigh the technical considerations of correctness.

Both of these solos demonstrate the way in which each player is able to discover their ideas during the moment of improvising, without always defaulting to what they already know. Listening to them improvise one cannot help but marvel at the imagination that lifts these ideas into musical life. This buoyancy elevates both musicians beyond repetition into improvising new things to play in familiar musical material. Lyall told me that he had once asked Konitz, ‘Boy you really like All The Things You Are; you’ve been playing it for nearly 50 years: why?’ Konitz replied (straight-faced) ‘Well… I haven’t finished with it yet!’ (2013).
CHAPTER THREE What happens next: Do I improvise?

This chapter addresses a synthesis of Peacock and Konitz’s ideas with my own creative practice. It explores several principal concepts addressing ‘what happens next’ in improvising, and introduces a new concept—the *divergent field*—to explain the multiplicity of choices available during the improvising process, as well as a related idea of nominality, an examination of note reorientation, hybrid scale creation and multiple tonality practice. These core concepts are explored as an outgrowth of themes presented in chapters one and two, which have examined the imaginative potential in improvising. Recordings of ensemble improvising are considered in which I have attempted to enact this approach.

The challenge to generate new ideas is very real for me; it is something that I address every day in creative practice. For instance, complex music beyond one’s immediate understanding could be played mechanically—without audiation—but it will not generate the depth, which like Peacock and Konitz and I, believe should inform improvising. I therefore have sought a way to understand new musical ideas not as fixed things, but as engines for change with wider, active implications. Gordon and Blake also describe this process as key for the interior development that informs aural understanding; the recognition of something as something musically, not as nothing (Gordon 2001:5-9, Blake, Rogers et al. 2010).

In my own creative practice, I am also aware of the potential for audiated melodic ideas to become predictable. Therefore, Konitz and Peacock’s indications to use intuition and melodic variation have provided key ways to model an inventive approach in my improvising. By examining their improvising, this modelling has not resulted in imitation, rather I have aimed at understanding of how they arrived at the music they made while learning the solos examined in chapters one and two. As described in these earlier chapters, the central concepts of Gordon, Peacock and Konitz were applied by memorising the solos, before attempting to locate any of them on my instrument. The notation occurred later.
Following Peacock’s ideas, that in improvisation, technique (and by extension theory) follows the idea (1993:58), I worked with hearing and imagining the phrases I was learning, then later went to the instrument to work out how to get those sounds. Learning the musical ideas in these solos by ear was vital, as it is a way of internalising them. I could then practice the process of moving from an internally held part to its musical articulation. Once I could sing entire solos from memory, without relying on the recording, I then worked with playing them, grappling with musical ideas that had already become memorised, rather than playing them by referring to notation. Taking my lead from Peacock and Konitz, I used this approach to inform the interior development of my playing process. Working with this internal approach to these melodic ideas bypasses the need for any labelling of information directly, allowing an intuitive grasp of musical elements: melody, phrasing, note duration and dynamics. This was also instructive in the analytical process used in chapters one and two.

The memorisation of these two solos, as opposed to notating them, seems to have manifested itself in an uncontrived understanding of them, appearing in my playing intuitively and naturally, as is advocated by Peacock (1993). The research of Limb supports this approach, showing that memorisation or internalisation of any melodic material is very different to the playing of it from notated music, since the way the brain is used in both cases differs considerably (Limb 2008:3). I found that, by extension, this way of working with the solos illuminates a pathway from impulse to articulation on my instrument. It is as if this route is slowed and allowed to take two parts: the ideas themselves (learnt melody and solo) and then the articulation of these musical ideas after becoming lodged in the aural (thus not mechanical) memory. Since a perfect imitation of the transcriptions is not my aim here, I seek rather an internal understanding of the musical processes involved in improvising in the time of their creation.

Usually, in real-time improvising, these two elements—ideas and their articulation—are developed together and I am grappling with them simultaneously. In this slower process, problems or barriers in improvising that may need attention can be separated into the internal impulse and then the production of the sound. This way of working seems to allow this separation to happen more easily. The practice room offers this rare chance to examine improvised ideas, slowing the time span from the impulse to articulation and developing perhaps newer pathways via this process of working from an internal musical germ to the instrument. This aural approach is often defined as pivotal in the
improviser’s education, according to Sommervelle (2009:3) Blake (2010) and Gordon (2001: 1-9). Exploring Peacock and Konitz’s central concepts and their solos has led me towards the themes that are now developed in this chapter.

**The divergent field**

A result of the exploration of the way unexpected elements are engines for new ideas is a proposed overlapping ‘field’ in which the improviser can simultaneously adapt to alternate modes of reference for given melodic, harmonic and rhythmic frameworks. Whether this field falls into the category of intuitive responses is an open question. This notion relates to ideas expressed by musician and author David Toop (in Young 2002). Toop describes ‘emergence’ as occurring in total improvisation, where indeterminacy generates musical results rather than the 'hand' of the artist. As referred to in chapter one, John Cage developed structures to create chance in the performance of his compositions so that indeterminacy, rather than the musician’s choices, affected what was played (Feisst 2009: 3). Toop contends that a similar emergent improvising framework concerns adaptation to what comes to improvisers. He refers this occurring in free group improvisation, which has a sonic rather than purely tonal or atonal basis, and where a very broad sound pallet may be used.

This research suggests a different focus, which identifies melodic, harmonic and rhythmic points of bifurcation and uses the term *divergent field (df)* to label a moment of overlap between simultaneously coexisting possibilities in musical material. This concept can manifest itself in the musical imagination if it is utilised in the development of improvising.

The pathway proceeds along these lines. Instead of predicing all improvisation preparation on the idea that audiation, pre-hearing and general aural skills are only about predicting or already knowing what will happen, these same skills can also allow one to make music out of the things that do happen, or emerge, rather than just predicting the outcome. In Toop’s case, this refers to any sound, which—in combination with other sounds—forms a connection as found in that moment. In this research however, a related space (the proposed ‘df’) is made apparent when two (or more) tonal

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12 Total improvisation is free improvisation using extended instrumental techniques.
possibilities may be available. These possibilities may also appear as tonal ambiguities to the listener.

A *divergent field* can demonstrate ambiguous qualities available by using a non-predictive approach in improvising. The examples below demonstrate how multiple connections between two simultaneous contexts can be experienced as musical events.

In the example below a melody note is re-harmonised a beat earlier than expected; here an F# is stated on a B minor chord, under which the harmony then moves on beat 4 to a C major (i.e. such as found in bars 1-2 of Bill Evans *Time Remembered* (Sher 1988).

![Figure 3.1. Demonstration of a divergent field (df) with two temporary harmonic possibilities, one going into the next bar and one holding to the last.](image)

There is, in the above example, a sudden vertical re-casting of the F# by the placement of the C maj7#11 chord, which relates to both C maj7#11 and B minor7. Heard alone (without harmony) both harmonic contexts are suggested. Usually the improviser defaults to one of the two—but the duality exists as an aural crossroads—where what one chooses to hear is entirely subjective, especially when this is framed imaginatively and addressed internally. Although re-harmonisation is a common feature of improvising, and of course in all music, it is of interest here because of its dynamic state, and therefore its ability to generate unplanned possibilities during an improvising process. The hypothesis suggested here labels this feature (*divergent field*) as an example of a driving engine of change available in the act of improvising.

A divergence such as this can also be a consequence of the unpredicted in ensemble improvising, especially where volition is given over to elements beyond the control of any individual player, who is not able to predict something other players will do. A pianist or bassist may, for instance, re-harmonise a single note melody in an unexpected
fashion. In the example above, the *divergent field* has a compositional context and hence can be predicted and expected. However, the effect of this event when unpredicted allows the field to exist as a real possibility when one listens imaginatively.

A further example of this is in exploring the notion of ‘nominality’. This is the representation of a musical element that has been transposed into a new framework, whilst retaining its original meaning as a referential basis. A nominal musical element (*n*) may be a further cause for a *divergent field* because it allows simultaneous understandings to exist.

An example of nominality is shown in rhythmic phrases that suggest something other than themselves. For example, a nominal dotted crochet over a 3/4 bar (a type of 3 against 2 hemiola common in jazz) once it is swung, retains its nominal function. In actuality, it is now metrically grouped as five and then four triplet subdivisions (see below).

![Figure 3.2. A demonstration of rhythmic nominality (*n*), with two coexistent rhythmic contexts as a dotted crochet. This is usually understood as an even division of a ¾ bar both when played straight and when swung, even though it is actually an uneven grouping of five and then four triplets (the *divergent field* here is this overlap).](image)

In a further example of *divergent field*, a rhythmic phrase is ‘heard’ as in two bars of 4/4. If the last beat is redefined as a new beat 1 of a new bar (effectively 4/4+3/4 in 7 beats) then one can experience a false beat 8 and decide it is a new beat 1, or one can hear it as originally phrased as the beat 8 and splinter off afterwards. A nexus exists here, a *divergent field* where two ‘possibilities’ coexist (albeit briefly) the 8/4 and the 7/4. Here the nominal position of the on beat (8) can be experienced in its nominality or transfigured in a new position. In a free setting with no barline, that decision will rest with the improviser (see below).
These divergent and nominal fields are important aspects of the application of aural imagination and presence as defined in this thesis, by using a structured aural imagination to form connections across two simultaneous contexts.

Note reorientation can have an important role in generating these unexpected outcomes and divergent fields. In the act of improvising, un-oriented notes that can become productive—after the fact—by one’s acceptance of them and adjustment of subsequent material by note reorientation or other processes so as to accommodate the idea creatively. These ideas follow on from earlier themes in this chapter and from the ideas of Toop (in Young 2002). It is useful to examine these as they occur, and are incorporated, in my own improvising as key indicators of new fields of possibility. Sommervelle (2009), for instance, explores these aspects of knowing (from known to unknown knowns) which describes similar possibilities for the improvising musician.

One example of reorientation is the post-hoc justification of something melodic that can occur in resolving, by semitone movement, pitches that sound out of place initially. Such intentional reorientation of an idea is musically justified, for instance, in a phrase that resolves later in the music. Other less obviously defined unconscious rationalisations are possible here too. For example, improvised phrases heard by another player on the other ‘side of the beat’ can be re-imagined in the split seconds after the fact as occurring where they are. Similarly, after the fact, one can reformulate an understanding of a rhythm misheard after the fact, as featured in discussion of the divergent field. This type of rhythmic overlay is a common illusion in many displacements and so-called ‘tricks’ of rhythm.

An understanding of the importance of reorientation leads to an understanding of the processes an improvising musician uses to deal with what emerges and the efficacy of assimilation of these ideas after the fact. It is a valuable tool in the improvising process.
Distinguished pianist Tony Gould told me in 2011 that he did not want to know everything about the music he was improvising; he wanted to maintain an unknowable element. Gould’s statement is corroborated by another fine pianist, Barney McCall, who in the 1990s reminded me in conversation of the need for mystery in music. Not everything needs to be knowable.

In my own creative practice, a note reorientation technique is to move from a harmonically misplaced note that is outside the harmony, to a note a semitone away—that is usually inside the harmony—so allowing reorientation to occur. There is a sense in which the result is tonally emergent, to the extent that the result is less predicted than a clearly foreseen melodic and harmonic connection might be.

Reorientation is useful when improvising on combinations of chord changes that are challenging, as a way to avoid resorting to mechanical formula (such as the arpeggiation of chord shapes or using root notes). This idea of reorientation can also apply to harmonic relationships that I am not able to predict (as occur often in free playing). It also can become a functional melodic voice-leading exercise, as is demonstrated below.

The generally accepted principles of voice-leading are that the nearest diatonic note choice is usually the one that guides the ear most easily. The ability to achieve this in melodic improvising is challenging where the harmonic movement itself is not close in movement, for example, when moving from E-7 to Bb-7, or E-7 to F-7 (two key centres at the extremes of harmonic distance from each other. See Appendix item 6). In this instance, a direct transposition of melodic ideas across a tritone or semitone tends to accentuate the distant nature of the key centres rather than connect them. This difficult harmonic movement presents is problematic for melodic improvising. Movement by smaller melodic intervals of a tone or a semitone disguises this harmonically disjunct character.

By using semitone reorientation during melodic improvisation, I can reorient myself through obtuse harmonic changes. One exercise explored in my improvising practice is to play a continuous scale (diatonic, comprised of tones and semitones) from the bottom notes of the bass to the highest notes on a set of difficult or preferably unknown/unpredicted chord changes. If I re-orient in the direction of the melodic line, this will mean correcting upwards in an upward scale movement and downwards in a
downward one, with no greater intervals than a semitone or tone. This allows new harmonic information to emerge from the reorientation (see figure 3.4 below).

One extension of this concept is to apply it more widely to any melodic contour, while continuing to adhere to a semitone correction movement in the direction of the line. Arpeggios and wider intervallic ideas will suit this. Thus a type of active intentional reorientation can be used, based on this idea of adjusting a pre-existing line’s contour either up or down to maintain its continuity. This can become a type of improvisational tonal emergence, which can be used as a tool to develop novel, sometimes unpredicted, ideas. An example is shown below.

![Figure 3.4. Semitone reorientation upward, through harmonically disjunct chords.](image)

Here the semitone correction is in the upward direction of the line, as indicated by the arrow. Further examples are included in the Appendix (see Appendix item 6). This process can be further shown in examples of chord changes with a similar reorientation overlay.

Using a chord excerpt from *Giant Steps* (Coltrane, bars 9-13, see Appendix item 2), the composed line and corrections below shows voice-leading links that are semitone-based across harmonically remote chord changes.

![Figure 3.5. Melodic examples of semitone reorientation in obtuse harmonic sequences. Here the arrows indicate the upward semitone correction.](image)

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13 I am indebted to the great Melbourne pianist Peter Jones for showing me this idea, an exercise dealing with *Giant Steps* and similar challenging harmonic progressions.
Although it is possible to systematise an idea like this, it runs against the theme of this thesis to do so, instead this idea is carried developed later in this chapter in an exercise with hexatonic arpeggios over changing harmony. These examples support the idea that reorientation can be used as a spontaneous tool to deal with what comes in the process of harmonic improvising. These ideas are applicable to a free context also, as they produce novelty where the harmonic, rhythmic and textural context is unpredicted.

**Early recordings of the unexpected**

I first identified my use of this reorientation approach when improvising in an early recording, *Lirik* (1993) and a later recording, *Mickets* (2006-7). Both featured what I now identify as the use of divergent fields to generate the unexpected.

*Lirik* (1993) was a CD of unplanned trio improvising I recorded in a studio over a three-hour period with pianist Tony Gould and percussionist Steve Heather. I asked the engineer Chris Corr to be as spontaneous as we were being, in adjusting levels as we went. There was little preparation of the nature of the music and its parameters, apart from setting up microphones in their appropriate positions. The first notes we played were recorded, and there was no mixing after the fact. Musically, there is significant (deliberate) ambiguity of bass notes, harmonic relationships and melody in the improvisations, which are ‘explained’ in the music that emerges (rather than being the product of any pre-conceived plan). There is little structured rhythmic material. Many of my musical decisions were made unconsciously because of the music that had emerged, once something I played was met with Gould or Heather’s musical ideas. The result of this process was often my mental aural adjustment, a post-hoc explanation of what had been played and heard. At other times, there may have been no attempt to resolve a significant ambiguity. The next musical impulse was then informed by this reformulated understanding (see audio track 38). This has become a key strategy in
playing freely improvised music. This means allowing and expecting the unexpected to occur, as Konitz also advocates (Hamilton 2007:102), by sometimes using note reorientation to make sense of the next choice. This approach was further developed and applied in the more recent *Unanchored Music*.

*Mickets* (2008) featured the improvising of the piano trio of Tim Stevens, drummer Dave Beck and me. There was a more premeditated approach to most aspects of this recording. The music is structured in song form with melody and chord changes over all of which the improvising occurs. In this context, much of the melodic material in my own bass improvising allowed the unexpected to emerge. In the tunes, some of the harmony was polyphonic (i.e., featuring ‘slash chords’ which have at least two possible interpretations) and some of the fast moving harmonic rhythm (at tempos of 220 beats per minute) had no obvious key centre. Sometimes the harmony moves against the tonality that precedes or follows it. I often used note reorientation by a semitone when a piano harmony conflicted with what I had just played. Here a sort of post-hoc harmonic result was in play. Not all of the sound that occurred was actually predicted as such. However, it was accepted and developed without thinking: ‘That was wrong’. In fact, the relevant thought at that time was: ‘that was what happened. What happens next?’

The approach outlined above is a moment-to-moment one, especially when a harmonic progression moves beyond my ability or desire to accurately predict what is coming or understand what has just occurred. The tempo of some tunes on the *Mickets* recording was often a factor here, as my own ability to pre-hear shifting harmony was stretched to its limits by occasional odd-time signatures and faster tempi.14 This is a method of acceptance of the harmonically divergent nature of what was played. It allowed me to use note reorientation once my aural feedback had caught up. Looking at my own preparation for *Mickets*, which involved ear-training by singing root progressions, looking for possible key centres and looking for alternate global harmonic centres, I was able to develop harmonic coherence in complex music. Although I sometimes used structures like playing a triadic shape from location knowledge on the instrument—such as playing an A triad to orient myself in A major harmony—my preference was to always use melodic ideas which build from the harmony and melody. By using this method, a

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14 Reassuringly, this is an issue for Lee Konitz also. He states that he need to be given time to ‘react’ to sounds. (Hamilton, 2007:106-11)
creative narrative is developed in these performances, which displays this process (See audio track 39).

In other improvising contexts, such as the recordings supplementing this thesis, where I interact with musicians whose ideas I may not be able to anticipate, I can allow and accept what happens, rather than trying to predict it. Although this idea has its origins in free music (as in Young 2002: 243-9), it is applicable in a narrower confine such as this: music that is unpredictable, but still uses harmonic logic. There is often no broad harmonic plan stated, but one may emerge.

The idea of harmonic divergence—allowing one to re-adjust what is, or will be played to a new context—was crucial in the free setting music made in *Lirik*, and also to unpredicted movements in the complex harmony of *Mickets*.

**Practicing the unexpected**

Another example of the overlap of a *divergent field* is in the study of nominality in less common modes and scale fragments. The altered scale is in common modern jazz use (the mode formed from the 7th degree of the ascending melodic minor scale). It is helpful to compare the significance of scale-step degrees with what is aurally apparent. Here a *divergent field* is in the overlap of two simultaneous possibilities for the same note, as a major third and as a fourth scale degree. We have the presence of a nominal as a fourth, meeting the ‘apparent’ divergent third.

![Figure 3.7](image)

Figure 3.7. In the figure above a C altered scale provides a *divergent field (df)* with two coexistent harmonic contexts (major 3rd and forth scale step). This is understood as a third and fourth simultaneously. The *divergent field* here is the overlap.

In investigating the themes that allow me to work with the unexpected, I have also explored further ways of extending this in the following musical exercises.
Following from Peacock’s suggestion of playing a diatonic scale slowly and experiencing it without label (1993: 58) I developed an experience of involuntary novelty by superimposing a second unpredictable element. If I play a slow C major scale and simultaneously sing a slow Bb minor scale at the same time, an unexpected harmonic field of polytonality develops, as each note sounds. One may vacillate between hearing Bb minor in conflict with C major, C major in conflict with Bb minor or hear some new harmonic possibilities in the tones as each pass. Polytonality is not a new idea, but producing both tonalities and experiencing them as a vacillation allows a divergent field to be formed. At least three contexts seem to be simultaneously at play in this example: C major, Bb minor and the unique possibilities each note combination might suggest. Although I might eventually codify and catalogue this particular experience, it is not of prime concern here. What is germane is the ability to generate novelty in a harmonic setting, the very experience of which can generate new material for improvising.

This polytonal experience exercise may be at the extreme end of my aural abilities, but it does simultaneously reinforce two key concepts found throughout this investigation, a) that I can create levels of unexpectedness, and b) it reinforces the idea (stated by Konitz) that “any two good lines form a counterpoint”, no matter what they are (Hampton 2007:127). In the case of this polytonal exercise, although the counterpoint is in a state of extreme tension, each scale has strong internal logic. In my own improvising, this has become a valuable method; I am hearing more than one possibility and thus I am creating a field for a second step, like Konitz uses, to emerge. It allows for the discovery of melodic possibilities that are less obvious.

In this pursuit of harmonic divergence and unpredictability, I was able to define several other methods for the creation of fields of indeterminacy. Some examples are listed below. The first involves practicing the bass in longer arco notes in double-stops and then singing a third note vocally at the same time. Because I was dealing with the tuning of three pitches (or at least tuning two, if I used an open string as the third), it was interesting to experience the dynamic relationship between each note as I made all three sounds. The manipulation of any of these three notes immediately affected the other two tangibly. I was able to create new ideas from this process where I used the second-step process to find new possibilities; I found divergent tones from the expected. As
Peacock has suggested, this is the experience of a dynamic musical state, rather than an item of musical technology to be catalogued (Peacock 1993:58).

A further development of divergences involved my trying to avoid mechanical scale patterns. One of the striking aspects of the modes of the ascending melodic minor scale is the way they contradict the tone and semitone patterning of the major scale pattern. Each mode is distinctive aurally and therefore can be challenging technically, having a compressed diminished fragment of four steps (semitone, tone, tone, semitone) and a whole tone sequence of five notes (tone, tone, tone, tone) found in varying positions throughout the different modes.

Figure 3.8. The (B) altered mode, built from the seventh degree of the ascending C melodic minor scale. The first box shows the diminished fragment, and the second box shows the whole tone sequence, which creates a challenge to the expectations of note groups learned in the major scale.

The investigation of common phrase groups and leaps helped my musical understanding of these modes. As they became familiar, I realised that it was the very expectation that the modes did not deliver that gave them harmonic interest and tension. I began to wonder if I could create a scale to further explore such contradicting expectations. I arrived at a hybrid scale that then opposed some of the expectations of the combinations I had now developed from these minor modes (as well as contradicting other modes, major, minor and pentatonic scales). This new scale (semitone, tone, tone, tone, tone, semitone; featuring—from the tonic—tone, minor second, minor third, perfect fourth, perfect fifth, major sixth, major seventh) contains an even more intensely compressed chromatic section (from major seventh to tonic, to minor second), which generates considerable tension and unexpected triadic combinations. Naturally, a triadic or scale-tone chord expression of this hybrid scale also has some novel features. It has a nominal third a tone apart (major seventh to minor second) and nominal sixths, a seventh apart (minor second to major seventh) (see below). These are technically stimulating and often surprising for the aural imagination.
Another harmonic basis for **divergent fields** is the use of hexatonic (six-note) arpeggios that involve combinations of tonal centres as exercises in real-time tonal reorientation. An example of this would be to play an arpeggio that stated three notes from C triad and then 3 from D major triad—namely moving upward C, E, G, A, D, F# and so on—to the next adjacent triadic note from each tonality over three beats, finding different triadic intersections as I go. By using more obtuse harmonic combinations, this exercise presents a greater aural challenge. Beginning with simple combinations, I gradually introduced harder combinations to develop what I could accurately audiate and then play in tune.

In the illustration above, the boxed notes are examples of notes that can be heard in relation to either key, setting up two **divergent field** possibilities. These represent **divergent fields** because they represent notes heard simultaneously in two contexts. In bar 2 the D is both the seventh of the E major triad and the fifth of the G minor triad, creating options in hearing, and alternatives in what one chooses to play next. These present a challenge for the double bassist. It is important that they be so, because they compelled me to develop new ways of audiation in order to use them. They also
replicate closely the challenge that moving harmony presents when one is improvising in real time, and thus help me to layer sound combinations in my aural imagination. Because the double bass has few guaranteed note locations, unlike the piano, this exercise involves using audiation to imagine the moving harmony between two tonal centres while I play. Finding these notes on the bass, when heard as harmony (not just theoretically), is a similar challenge to being able to sing them. Any difficulty I experience is aural in origin, but this skill improves considerably with practice and concentration. Examples of challenging combinations are given here in one key only: C/F# major, C major/Ab minor, C major/Ab major, C major/Bb minor, C major/Eb major. Further possibilities would include the same exercise in further triadic combinations, using three tonalities, using more chord tones (sevenths, ninths and so forth) and using randomly generated tonalities negotiated as they come.

The divergent field in these examples of nominality allows multiple musical meanings to be possible. These musical polymaths allow a levity that sustains improvising, because they are not fixed.

**Recording the unexpected, an improvising journal 2013-16**

The record of the improvising that forms the creative component of this thesis, *Unanchored Music*, was therefore propelled by the desire to capture the processes of spontaneous utterance as closely as possible. I scheduled recordings of spontaneous improvising with several ensembles, where I enacted ideas researched over the period of writing this exegesis. Of concern to me was the fact that the recording can itself become a type of enshrined ‘event’ which may have some special significance over normal playing, thus affecting the very process I was attempting to empirically document. Crucial to these considerations is the idea that the recordings capture the way the music develops rather than the final product. This notion is supported by Jackson (2013), who argues for the precedence of process as the central tenet of jazz over its product. Given that in the era before recording, the word music was a poetic metaphor for ‘that which cannot be preserved’ (Byrne 2012:75), recording therefore represents the solidification of this ephemera, the freezing of a fleeting movement. I therefore considered the various factors of making a recording that might help to capture a truly spontaneous document.
Headphone monitoring was eliminated from the recording sessions. We all could hear ourselves acoustically and adjusted our playing volume appropriately when necessary, rather than relying on an electronic interface. It allowed for a fast and spontaneous session that was more like a live performance.

It was a prime concern to keep the recording engineer in a similar spontaneous mode as the musicians. Engineers were therefore canvassed who would agree to embrace this novel and spontaneous process, mixing ‘on the fly’. An engineer with experience of improvisation was an ideal choice.

Given the nature of the studio, it was clear that I sought to create a recording environment that could allow us to be spontaneous. Of its nature, the aural aspects of this research are ideal for improvised musical events that arise in the moment. This does not mean that every part of the music is improvised, but perhaps the approach to music which may be already known—i.e. a melody and chord form of a standard as is used in track 4, Unanchored Music—is spontaneous and the performance arrangement is immediate and needs not to be planned.

A typical performance of jazz standards, for instance, has many of these features, and rehearsal is not needed. Instead, what can result are musicians thinking as one, in song forms that need little mapping to be navigated. In the case of On Green Dolphin Street (track 4, Unanchored Music), there was little discussion, except the very deliberate choice to play it in an unexpected key (F# major, Green Dolphin Street is most often played in C or Eb major). This allowed us to find new ideas, avoiding the familiarity that comes with playing the tune in the common tonality. Neither of us had deliberately prepared for this in the recording: although the idea of playing anything in any key was central to our desire to discover the new. What happened next in the improvising is the unfolding of a musical understanding, problem solving and reorientation, in real time.

Due to the limitations of electronic recording equipment (especially computer-based software in the contemporary studio environment), many things need to be almost ‘predicted’ first. Microphones and pre-amps are extremely sensitive and have a relatively narrow dynamic range in comparison to the human ear. Most musicians are usually asked to play a sound-check at a volume they intend to play, so the engineer can
‘set levels’ and experiment with microphone positions to allow for problems resulting from extremes of loudness and quietness. Although often unavoidable, this already begins to limit spontaneity for the musician. Thus, the music often ‘starts’ when the engineer is ready. To promote a creative process, I asked the engineers to allow the recording to occur continuously whenever it was possible.

Multiple takes and exhaustive examination of takes are sometimes part of studio work for musicians. The truly spontaneous act can disappear in this context unless the recording studio process actively pursues it. The ability of the engineer to make changes ‘on the fly’ is also somewhat inhibited in modern computer based recording where in the past most switching and assigning was done manually. In the modern era, an engineer will have to call up a new ‘screen’ to dictate commands to the functions they want to assign. This allows for enormous complexity in operations and programming of multiple mixing functions but involves elements of inertia restriction for the flow of a musician’s output. I attempted to keep the recording process to a representation of the process we were engaged in, rather than to perfect any takes.

Historically, Souza (of marching band fame) was opposed to recorded music because of its potential to reduce music to the output of machines (Byrne, 2012 p. 82). Although this seems on face value a Luddite—or anti-technological—view, Souza’s statement remains an accurate prediction of the development of sequencing and more mechanical electronic ‘cut and paste’ music in the technological era of post-1980s recorded popular music. Modern electronica often does not attempt to replicate an actual performance. ‘Live’ performances of contemporary popular artists often feature the prevalence of miming and using pre-recorded music. Much performance is made with pre-recorded backings, which allow a greater level of predictability than is possible with real musicians. Although historically the original intention of recording was to capture live performances (for instance the His Masters Voice recording logo is a boast, showing a dog listening to a gramophone recording mistaking it for ‘his master’s voice’), modern performance now attempts the converse, to replicate high standards of recordings, creating impossible levels to match (Byrne 2012:87).

In capturing improvising the recording process can affect what it is seemingly documenting, despite the fact that a listener can imagine being present at the improvising. In its early historical origins, recording imposed extreme limitations upon
some musicians and rarely represented the way musicians performed at that time. Drummer Mel Lewis discussed this in a fascinating radio series conducted in the late 1980s on WKCR Radio. Lewis pointed out that in the early recording era, jazz drummers were not allowed to use the kick drum at all, due to the sensitivities of the microphones at that time. Players in this era played very differently in recordings than they did in real life (Lewis 1989). At the time of writing there are still limitations imposed upon spontaneity in the recording studio, many of which are related to the inhibitions Lewis addressed; thus, I attempted to circumnavigate some of them by emulating ‘live’ performance as closely as possible.

If the recording session as such could present obstacles in this goal of the unplanned, I felt a rigorous philosophy needed to be developed. Questions to be considered were: Is the performance to be edited and adjusted? Is there a time limit? Will there be multiple takes? Will I listen back to everything I play? For some musicians this can be a major obstacle to a truly spontaneous approach. We therefore elected to play completely unplanned pieces with little discussion of musical elements apart from ideas like ‘what about the bass starts this one’ or ‘start with a duet’: Tracks 1, 4, and 8 all featured this approach, for instance.

The philosophy of the recordings was to attempt to draw our attention towards the musical moment rather than an awareness of the recorded musical product, in the hope that this would yield a greater musical depth.

I decided not to listen back to what we had played during the session because the attitude of my performance might be altered by it. I was concerned that the imprimatur of listening back would impinge upon my awareness and that I would not really play in a way that was of the moment, but would play in a way that was conscious of the consequences of my actions when I played. In any recording there is the option to improve upon the improvisation using modern recording techniques of the ability to fine tuned editing, the use of tuning correction, editing between takes, the deletion of unwanted material and so on. This was avoided in these recording sessions, and the emphasis was kept on the performance and discovery process rather than the product.

Such an approach does bring into question the nature of what exactly the recording is documenting at all. In the same way we voluntarily suspend disbelief when we watch
and enjoy a film, a similar deception can occur when listening to recorded improvisations. We listen as if the improvising is happening now, and hear (and perhaps marvel) at the process itself, alongside the product. Nevertheless, there is a difference between this and the moment of creation.

Using imagination, audiation and intuition to spontaneously improvise musical material as a path to the generation of depth involves responding to immediate impulses. Once one starts to work out and perfect musical ideas, then the necessity for spontaneous response diminishes. It can replace the safety of known material. In the studio, if I am able to change, repair and perfect musical ideas in retrospect, then it is no longer as important to use spontaneous skills such as audiation and note reorientation, which are so important in unadulterated live performance. Because the recording artist can manipulate musical material in the way a composer might do, the imperative to use spontaneous skills, such as note reorientation, diminishes. It is the very knowledge of this fact that can begin to erode improvisation’s demand, to deal with what comes your way. Theoretically, the non-improviser can create the same things in the studio as someone who has created that thing spontaneously by using compositional processes. Thus, we attempted to suspend awareness of recorded consequence to remain spontaneous in this situation.

The sense experience of music is often different to the recorded document that replicates the event. Recording by its nature does not necessarily intrinsically demand that audiation occupies the pivotal role it has in live performance, where the unexpected/indeterminate will alter what happens next. Recordings have the greatest chance of capturing this process, but can still miss it. For instance, Peacock articulates this as follows:

…the music we recorded never captured what was live. It just didn’t capture it. It came close and there’s enough on there that someone can get an idea or sense what it’s about … the difference [of hearing the live performance] is so profound in a way, you realise that what you have in a CD or a record is a snapshot. You don’t really have a full experience… I talked with Keith [Jarrett] over and over and I used to say, “Keith, it’s not on the CD, God damn it.” He says, “What?” I’m saying where I’m standing when I am playing with Keith and Jack [DeJohnette], I hear things that Jack can’t hear because he’s over on the other side. I can hear things coming from the piano and its such a privileged position because I’m up above the harp so I can hear things that maybe Jack doesn’t hear. So when I hear the CD I’m like, “Where is it? That should be there. That should be on there. That should happen.” (Jun 1999, p. 4)
Many musicians would report a similar experience of this difference (see for instance Peters (2009:37-8). Listeners need to accept the idea that recordings are the actual performance of music (at least to some degree) rather than a frozen ‘snapshot’, in much the way film or ‘virtual’ experiences rely on us suspending disbelief. In reality, recordings are almost hyper-real. Instruments are close-miked and thus listened to in a way that is physically not possible for one set of ears. Various effects are used to create the illusion of locations, room size and proximity. These closely represent the actual performance but do not replace the multi-sense experience of witnessing music performance.

These considerations led me towards establishing a recording environment where some of the limitations imposed upon spontaneity could be eliminated, to better pursue the aim of documenting the imaginative process. This needed to reproduce the direct and less contrived (in this sense) replication of the experience of live performance and was informative about the improvising process, both at the time and in retrospect.

In the free improvising on *Unanchored Music* (tracks 1-3, 5-7) there was no particular playing plan. We all shared a performing history with a common interest in tonal relationships and abstraction from ‘obvious’ or predictable musical ideas. Significantly, improvising that had divergent, open qualities occurred early in all of the recording sessions. I used minimal preplanning of what to play, and chose the notes I played from instinct, happenstance and the desire to enact ideas from my research. For example on track 7, my bass improvising, in extreme harmonic contrast, encircles pianist Gould's chord-based ideas. This creates a parallel inter-reliant dialogue of sorts, which while in relationship to both Tony Gould and drummer Dave Beck’s input, that has an obtuse quality.

Listening back to the recordings, I am also aware of a mismatch, at times, between my own ideas for creating new musical material and the other musicians’ intentions. I can hear myself trying to create divergences in the harmony and melody while another musician might have been attempting to be tonal, predictable or compositional. In my own case, I tried to avoid obvious sounding musical melodies or harmonies and cadences, but other musicians did not necessarily understand (or agree with) this
approach. Pianist Luke Howard commented in this, after my telling him of my abstruseness after our 2013 recording (Unanchored Music track 5), saying ‘I wish you had told me that’. In the next track (track 6), where three years have elapsed, you can hear a development towards a more minimalistic approach in the playing of the same trio. It is also evident that the bass occupies a different role in the improvising. Howard informed me after this more recent recording, that he had learned ‘not to force me anywhere’ (he is speaking musically) and that he ‘just lets me go’ sometimes. This sort of freedom allows the bass to occupy a divergent role in creating new ideas during improvising (track 6).

Gould was clearly being compositional at times (Unanchored Music tracks 1, 3 and 7) and he and I did (and continue to) discuss the crossover between improvising and composing. My own approach allows for improvising to be a distinct process from composition, whereas Gould sees a unity between the two. It is clear to me that I cannot influence the path of an improvisation like this in such a new way unless some preliminary discussion occurs. This is an important future area of development.

The solo bass improvising (Unanchored Music track 2) has many of the hallmarks of ideas investigated in the previous three chapters. Notes with one harmonic implication to me at the time of playing, are often quickly re-cast into new harmonic contexts to allow a new idea to emerge from this new context. Major thirds becoming minor thirds feature throughout. There is also evidence of the ideas resulting from the playing of hexatonic arpeggios, and their potential to suggest new possibilities. Any note in used this sense during the improvising exists in a type of superposition. This superposition allows a continuous flow of revolving possibilities, avoiding my being stymied by repetitive patterns and loops.

What results in Unanchored Music is probably more important than an analysis of what produced the choices. The resulting split dialogues are accepted and new, unpredicted music results. This is clearly not the case all the way through the music, but whenever notes are reframed by other musical choices, they form the divergent field, from which new material can be heard emerging in the music that results.

In this chapter, I examined my own processes and the challenges of creating inventive ideas while improvising. My study of the solos of Konitz and Peacock involved
memorisation and development of my aural understanding, so that I could investigate notions of the unexpected. Exploration of specific ideas demonstrated an understanding of the *divergent field* and the use of note reorientation. I carefully developed an aesthetic of recording, which documents a process rather than a product of improvising. In *Unanchored Music*, I hope to shed light on maintaining fluidity over any fixed notions of musical function, showing how this generates new and imaginative possibilities during the act of improvising.
CONCLUSION

In this thesis, agency for the discovery of musical meaning, depth and novelty has been placed with the improviser, not the improvisation. Imaginative presence is found in the process of improvising (as a verb) rather than treating an improvisation as a noun or static, finished entity. Such a distinction may seem gratuitous, but it has been explored and examined in the preceding chapters as it pertains to the processes used by Konitz and Peacock to generate ideas in the moment of improvising. Improvisations often become fixed as the subject of transcription and recordings. Although these are an important body of knowledge, they present a challenge to the very improvisatory process. That process is spontaneity. Placing the agency for improvising with the improviser assigns stronger significance to the process of improvising than to the product.

Agency is often used as a philosophical term to describe the ownership of volition and origination of action, thought or intention. This research has argued that imaginative potential is available in the act of improvising. It does not necessarily make the same claim about this quality in a finished improvisation per se. Instead, I describe the multifaceted potential of changing elements during the act of improvising and their influence on the improvising process. Although a player might reproduce the improvisation of another by transcription, imitation and memory, the improvisation is fixed and some of the dictates of spontaneity are no longer open. Rather (although I do use these techniques, but to different ends), the research promotes learning solos in order to grasp the players’ improvising process in the moment. Although one is clearly not improvising in this situation, one may be learning a lot about the process of improvising. A similar situation would exist, for instance, between composing and composition. One is clearly not composing while playing a composition, nor is one improvising when reproducing an improvisation.

The study of improvisation has been taken here to refer to the act or process of improvising, in which the materials available in a present moment have the highest
priority. An improvisation as a set piece has only been examined or accessed as it informs the momentary process of spontaneous creation itself. Generally, a wider examination of its compositional merit is outside the thesis’ scope.

While examining the case studies I worked towards understanding them in an ongoing, continually developing performance practice. During this time, the writing went through a process of change. I came to realise that, like the approaches of the case studies, the goal of the paper was not to develop fixed notions. In responding to the music and literature, I continued to develop musically; thus, my playing conceptions were altered.

Two changes occurred. One was in meeting the challenge of writing about playing. Written literature seemed removed from the process of preparing for improvised performance. In the process of refining my own research and the focus for this thesis, I found literature and materials more central to this core idea of maintaining a flux in the improvising process. After this, and once I was able to reflect on this aspect in relation to Konitz and Peacock, I found myself being thrown back into the process of improvising, which I now understand and value more highly and into finding the novelty that I sought. In a personal conversation with guitarist and improviser Stephen Magnusson (in 2013), he described to me a pivotal free improvisation exchange with fellow guitarist Ren Walters, who admonished him “don’t lock it down!” This statement epitomises beautifully the state of play in the imaginative experience.

The second issue is that a conclusion implies that something need be settled, when in a very real sense (for me, the improviser) nothing is fixed, because performance brings the opportunity that something that can be discovered, found, or adapted. Improvisation itself is that process of discovery, for the very idea of confining individual ideas in a static form runs against the core of what this research has examined. The basic notion of improvisation is as discovered here; a spiralling, orbiting cycle in which the very nature of novelty and discovery of new ideas during performance demands that elements are left open to multiple possibilities. Although musical elements may be able to be understood as individual meanings when isolated, when they are present as a multiplicity of possibilities they are not, of their nature, static. This allows a flux to occur which is at the core of the improvising experience.
The timeline of the process of writing this document also reflects this changing core. Ideas kept emerging in my own playing, resulting from my study of the music of Peacock and Konitz. New areas appeared while I circled in a creative orbit around this topic. The issue remains that improvising occurs in that transit. Improvisers orbit a constellation of possibilities in rhythm and harmony, melody, sound, texture and human interaction.

Initially my research investigated meaning in music and I limited myself to pure musical language. This, I discovered, was an approach long known as formalism, used in academic and historic study of music. I also explored the idea that learned formula runs counter to the process of discovery of improvisation. These concepts created limitations because they were setting up things to oppose, such as broader musical meaning and learning structures in jazz education; the point of the thesis, however, was not to oppose but to explore and develop the matrix of possibilities experienced in the buoyancy that sustains improvisation.

Therefore, I began to examine more closely those elements in Peacock and Konitz’s improvising that affected me subjectively. It became a dialogue of sorts. I make no claim that this is absolutely their process; I rather make the claim that this is a development from the dialogue that I have engaged in. It explains the performance aesthetic I have developed as a result, based on my understanding of their ideas. Essentially these are; Peacock’s intuitive divination of the dynamic state of any note, and then Konitz’s ornamentation of melody and avoiding things he has heard himself play before. For both players this means letting strong melodic ideas redefine harmony. All of this explains, in a way, how musical possibilities fit together as non-static functions allowing a discovery of new ideas in play and the way that spontaneous response determines what happens next. This demands an approach that is often instinctual, and this generates depth.

This examination of the improvising and philosophies of Peacock and Konitz has shown their commitment to ‘the idea’, the germ of music that overrides many other musical aspects. Both players avoid allowing musical elements to have static function; therefore creating a possibility that is only answered in the impulse of the moment. Any disavowal of improvising as being non-spontaneous is really a criticism of fixed concepts, whose very aspects inhibit a more open set of musical choices. Konitz and Peacock’s music has
the integrity of the genuine. Their ideas are plumbed from a deep current and carry
strong intentionality. This, I argue, creates a level of musical depth and meaning, which
overrides the need for it to be perfect in a technological or mechanical sense. The
improvising of both Peacock and Konitz presents an attempt to embrace a fundamental
aspect of improvising, ‘to do something unforeseeable’ (Feisst 2009:13).

It is only now toward the end that this research that has developed its central trait, a
model that itself does not imply a fixed element. My notion of a *divergent field*
illustrates multiple coexistent possibilities in improvisation in which there is no endpoint.
The recorded results show me discovering the new. A revolving, growing set of
possibilities, containing both the familiar and unfamiliar, the unpredictable and
indeterminate, is at the core of the improvising experience.

Improvising involving the discovery of new elements must involve features of
unpredictability. This generates the new, so that what happens next, after the new, is
crucial, and must remain unknown until it occurs. Finding new ideas that result from
unexpected aspects can short circuit the tendency towards reproducing what one has
practiced. This research identifies notes that are in a dynamic state, allowing them to
function as engines for change during the act of improvising.

An important future direction of this approach is to develop these three core ideas: the
*divergent field*, letting melody reveal harmony and being intuitive. These central
notions can be expanded into an ensemble philosophy that shares a unity of vision.
Developing compositions that allow this state of unanchored possibility could be
valuable in improvising settings. Hence my conclusion: the seat of imaginative presence
is in one’s awareness of this potentiality during the act of improvising, rather than in the
outcome.
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APPENDIX:
Appendix item 1a. Ballad of the Sad Young Men (Landesman/Wolf).

Ballad of the Sad Young Men
from the musical "The Nervous Set"

Words & Music by Fran Landesman, Tommy Wolf

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Appendix item 1b. Ballad of the Sad Young Men (Landesman/Wolf): (2).

trying not to drown.
All the sad young men sing in the cold.
Trying to form a love.
All the sad young men get they're growing old.
All the sad young men choke on their youth.
Trying to be brave.
Running from the truth.
Let your gentle light guide them home again.
All the sad young men.

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Appendix item 2. Giant Steps (Coltrane).

Fast Swing  
\( \frac{j = 286}{(tenor)} \)  

Giant Steps  
John Coltrane

Bass walks in 4 for solos.  
Tenor sounds one octave lower than written.  
Head is played twice before and after solos.  
During the head, piano comping has the same rhythm as the melody.

Appendix item 3. Stella by Starlight (Young).

STELLA BY STARLIGHT
VICTOR YOUNG

MEDIUM TO UP TENPO

\[ \text{\textbf{G}} \]

\[ \text{E} - \text{A}_7^{b9} - \text{C}_7 - \text{F}_7 \]

\[ \text{F}_7 - \text{Bb}_7 - \text{E}_b7 - \text{A}_7^{b9} \]

\[ \text{Bb}_\Delta - \text{E}_b7 - \text{A}_7^{b9} - \text{D}_7 - \text{Bb}-7 - \text{E}_b7 \]

\[ \text{A}_7^{b9} - \text{D}-11 \]

\[ \text{G}_7 - \text{C}_7 - \text{A}_07 - \text{D}_7^{b9} \]

\[ \text{G}_7^{b9} - \text{C}_7 - \text{A}_07 - \text{D}_7^{b9} \]

\[ \text{A}_7^{b9} - \text{D}-11 \]

\[ \text{E}_7 - \text{A}_7^{b9} - \text{D}_07 - \text{G}_7^{b9} \]

\[ \text{C}_07 - \text{F}_7^{b9} - \text{B}_b \]

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Appendix item 4. Time Remembered (Evans).

Time Remembered

Bill Evans

Solos swing (in 2).
Abmaj7(#11) in bar 8 is not anticipated during solos.
Melodic rhythm is rather freely interpreted.
Appendix item 5. Relative tension of Key Centres.

In isolating the wider harmonic shift in sets of chords from different tunes, the key centres (in ii-V-I progressions) are often strongly opposed to each other. As the movement progresses further from any one given point to another around the cycle of movement up a fourth, this opposition increases. This is visually demonstrated in the cycle of movement up a forth, as below.

It is common knowledge that in terms of harmonic tension, the most opposed keys are a tritone and a semitone away from each other (i.e. the keys with the most different notes from each other, the maximum being 5 different notes). The keys closer to each other around the cycle have more common notes, until the nearest key centres (i.e. C major to F major) have only one note that is different (i.e. F major adds a Bb to a C major scale). Thus C, as a tonal centre, (choosing one arbitrary point of any of 12) is the most ‘opposed’ to F#, B and C# majors. Each of these keys has five notes different from each other and only two in common. As these are the most opposed keys then correcting by a semitone works safely, because one can almost always move by a semitone up or down in melodic direction to a note that relates to the new key (with the exception of landing on the 4th step of the new key).
Appendix item 6. Further examples of semitone voice-leading and reorientation in the direction of a melodic line.

Here the harmony descends by a semitone but notice that the semitone upward ‘correction’ is still the same.

The same logic applies to the downward melodic contour, but with ascending harmonic centres. A downward ‘correction’ in the direction of the line yields the same result.

In chords that descend the same bridging ‘correction’ works.

A similar process applies to bridging notes, which correct in the direction of an arpeggiated melodic fragment, as the examples below illustrate. Both use the same correcting semitone. In these examples, the goal note would conform to the logic of the line devised in thirds, but be ‘corrected’ by a semitone.

or
or downwards

2. Tritone modulation of chords.

Here again the same the semitone ‘correction’ is in the direction of the line (upward) indicated by the arrow

Alternatively, downwards where the same concept applies.

This example once again features the ‘corrected’ logic of a line built in thirds when the goal note is adjusted by a semitone, where the same logic applies.