

Our first meeting was to introduce ourselves by performing as best we could with our current musical knowledge and abilities, not knowing what more was expected.

We began playing in duo groupings, then trios, mostly with short duration limitations. During these first few weeks you were requested to subvert your 'habitual' musical patterns, disturbing ideas of what music was, and many of the resultant sounds were strange or even considered 'unmusical'.

A primary message was to attempt to suspend judgment of the music being heard, of the mental process, of the experience in general and just jump in.

Performance durations became shorter, simple formats were devised, such as;

- sequence of short pieces separated by periods of silence
- each person in the group takes a turn in beginning a new piece
- each person in the group experiences being the focus of the others musical attention
- and think of '*playing to*' the other musicians in your group

We then considered our musical activity as inventing a kind of language from scratch, invented in the moment of making the sounds. Physical or mental limitations were employed to further undermine habitual, ingrained behaviours and generate fresh experiences.

The duo and trio groupings expanded to include more performers, and so stimulating more awareness of the social dimension of our practice.

On the seventh meeting I announced that it was time to go further in search of expressive depth, in search of rawness and a new experience.

I asked you to think of 'transforming the performance space', your own head space and the head space of the listener; your sounds create the environment within which the listener exists. The blindfold strips were also employed to restrict your physical abilities in music making.

The eighth meeting saw a transition to an expanded experience.

We began vocalizing sounds, what sounds come from the feet, from the hips, from the chest, etc. Gathering in a circle with eyes blindfolded, we were now around a campfire, thousands of years ago, before organized language, surrounded by darkness and the unknown. What are the sounds that come out when we try to tell our stories to each other, without the aid of speech?

Theatricality and expressivity of body as extensions of sonic expression arose through an encouragement to move whilst playing or at anytime in the performance.

The dismantling or rearrangement of instruments and the sounding of any surface or object within the space during the performance broadened the potential and possibilities of the experience.

The ninth meeting began with a 20 minute directed focused listening process (see below*) which then moved into a long duration performance with everyone blindfolded. What followed was a sustained and intense experience where fear, trust, doubt, hope and more were felt. Listening and touch became our only means of sensing.

At the completion of this meeting it was clear something unorthodox had just occurred.

The next meeting the blindfolds were gone, you were asked to consider the sonic field a little more. The VCA students were asked to facilitate a more pleasant experience for the less experienced by focusing on the other, more carefully considering the others experience. You were asked to move to different locations to play with others, to consider the effects of relentless sounding and persistently strong dynamics on others.

And so we ended with generosity of spirit and intent, consideration and respect, and the creation of a listening space where the heard sound, although indicative of the music making event, is only a part of the total experience. Where we encourage our selves and each other, to more and more expressive release, discovering each time a new way of being together in music making.

*Listening:

listen to the sounds inside you outside you around you

hear the sounds free of their significance

one sound is no more important or less important than any other sound

when the thought of what is making that sound arises in your mind;
let that thought go

We always seek to identify to name to ascribe value
to judge the usefulness of a sound

but here, we let go of all this activity and
just listen to the being of that sound

One sound, has a particular characteristic that distinguishes it from another
sound

Investigate the details of that characteristic with your ears; not with your mind,
not with your thoughts

Allow your ears to roam through the soundscape fully accepting what is to be
heard now at this moment

When a new quality of the sound is heard or the sound changes
or a new sound is distinguished

allow yourself to *stay there just listening to the sounds, nothing more is
needed*

JUST BEING HERE, BREATHING WITH THE SOUNDS

*When any thought interrupts your listening leave it alone, and go back to just
listening, just hearing*

FREE YOURSELF OF THE THOUGHT BY RETURNING TO THE SOUND

USE THE SOUND TO REMIND YOU, TO ONLY LISTEN

JUST LISTENING TO THE SOUND, IS ALL THAT IS NEEDED
