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Examining creativity in collaborative music performance: constraint and freedom

Abstract:

Music performance is a creative activity that frequently occurs in collaboration. As stated by Robinson ‘creativity is a process more often than it is an event’ (2011: 152), where this process involves not only generating new ideas but also evaluating them. While researchers have examined the creative processes that occur in the musical collaborations that take place in orchestras, bands, choirs and smaller ensembles where musical ideas are both generated and evaluated in the act of performance itself, this article examines creative constraint and creative freedom in collaborative music performance, focusing on the musical interactions and communications between a piano accompanist and a solo performer. Drawing on the work of Katz (2009) and others, this article analyses an autoethnographic narrative to explore the creative dimensions of music performance for a collaborative pianist with both singers and instrumentalists. It concludes that while all musical collaborations share similar creative constraints and freedoms, there are significant creative differences for a piano accompanist when performing with singers and instrumentalists, adding to the understanding of the significance of creativity in collaborative music performance.

Biographical note:

Dr Judith Brown is Senior Lecturer at the Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music, CQUniversity, Australia. She lectures in piano, studio teaching methods, musicianship and history. As a collaborative pianist, Judith has performed with some of Australia’s leading classical musicians and is also an accomplished performer of music theatre and cabaret genres. Building on this creative practice, her doctoral thesis used autoethnography to examine the experience of flow in collaborative music performance as a piano accompanist. In 2009, she was the recipient of the CQUniversity Vice-Chancellor’s Teacher of the Year Award, and in 2010 she received an Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Citation for outstanding contributions to student learning. Her research interests include performance pedagogy and lifelong learning in the performing arts and she has published internationally and nationally on these issues.

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Introduction: creativity in collaborative performance

Music performance is a creative activity that frequently occurs in collaboration with other musicians. Music making in groups and ensembles is a musically challenging activity (Mills 2003) as well as being intensely social (Sutton 2004, Schmuckler 1997). The combined emotional, physical and psychological connection that occurs between members of a music ensemble during collaborative music performance can provide intense joy and personal satisfaction to each member of the group (Berenson, 2008, Kennedy 2007, Rybak 1995). Robinson argues that ‘creativity is a process more often than it is an event’ (2011: 152), and the act of engagement in collaborative music performance by musicians in various types of ensembles reinforces this notion of creativity as a process. Robinson goes on to state that this process of creativity involves not only generating new ideas but also evaluating them. This resonates with Schön’s concept of ‘reflection-in-action’ when a ‘skilled performer adjusts his responses to variations in phenomena. In his moment-by-moment appreciations of a process, he deploys a wide-ranging repertoire of images of contexts and actions’ (Schön 1987: 31). He also compares ‘reflection-in-action’ to what happens when people play jazz in collaborative music ensembles. The improvisation process relies on each musician responding to the music as it unfolds, making an immediate creative and critical response to the musical ideas that one musician provides for another. The idea of creativity as a process is the subject of this article, which explores the nature of creativity in collaborative music performance with particular reference to the musical collaborations between a piano accompanist and a solo performer.

The piano accompanist as collaborative artist

The term ‘accompanist’ has been used for centuries to describe the person who provides musical accompaniment, usually on piano, for a singer or instrumentalist (Burkholder et al. 2006). Over the last thirty to forty years the nomenclature has changed and the term ‘collaborative pianist’ or ‘associate artist’ has come into use (Graves 2009, Katz 2009, Service 2012), especially when one considers that the work undertaken by a pianist in the performance of a violin sonata of Brahms or Beethoven, for example, is far from the conventional understanding of ‘accompanying’. The collaborative pianist plays an important role in many types of music ensembles such as orchestras, bands and choirs, as well as smaller ensembles such as duos, trios and quartets (Davidson 2005, Good & Davidson 2002, Juslin & Laukka 2003, Juslin & Timmers 2010). In these ensembles, the collaborative pianist plays an important role both in rehearsal and performance. In rehearsal, members of the ensemble may discuss musical ideas and arrive at an agreed interpretation of a piece of music, while during performance, the act of musical interpretation often occurs without verbal discussion, but is created in the moment of performance and non-verbally evaluated by each member of the ensemble as the performance is enacted (Good & Davidson 2002).

In examining the nature of collaborative music performance and the role of the collaborative pianist, this article explores the duality of both creative constraint and creative freedom with particular reference to the partnerships between a piano

accompanist and a solo performer. Drawing on my doctoral research (Brown 2011a, Brown 2011b) this article looks at the musical interactions between a piano accompanist and a solo performer and asks if there are creative differences for a piano accompanist when performing with singers and instrumentalists?

Methodology

My primary research (Brown 2011a) used an autoethnographic research design that Ellis and Bochner describe as a 'study and procedure that connects the personal to the cultural' (Ellis & Bochner 2000: 739) where 'authors use their own experiences in the culture reflexively to bend back on self and look more deeply at self-other interactions' (Ellis 2004: 46). There is growing interest in this genre of subjective qualitative research (Chang 2008, Denzin 1997, Richardson 1992) and particularly for musicians who use this methodology to examine their own practice as creative and performing artists (Bartleet 2009, Bartleet & Hultgren 2008, Dunbar-Hall 2009, Emmerson 2009, Schindler 2009, de Vries 2000, 2006). The autoethnographic narrative vignettes (Humphreys 2005) that are the data of this research project focus on various experiences starting from my early years as a piano accompanist, focusing especially on those experiences that were particularly memorable in both positive and negative ways. Autoethnography is the only methodology that gives me the opportunity to investigate my experiences as a piano accompanist from an 'insider's' perspective (Naples 1997, Smith 2005).

Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that uses reflexive inquiry to investigate a subjective phenomenon providing a case study of the self. In an autoethnographic study the researcher is also the researched. Emerging from the postmodern view of the world, autoethnography acknowledges and acclaims the role of the insider in bringing to light an intensely personal and subjective experience. Its epistemological position acknowledges that 'it is impossible to separate the inquirer from the inquired into' (Guba & Lincoln 1996: 163). In the case of autoethnography, this relationship between 'the knower' and 'the known' is merged totally.

Data and analysis

The data for this study was written in a narrative style and includes description and scene setting, as well as direct speech to create an evocative narrative, thus drawing the reader into my experiences of collaborative performance as a piano accompanist. Many autoethnographers incorporate narrative as part of their research (Bartleet 2009, Bartleet & Ellis 2009, Bartleet & Hultgren 2008, Bochner & Ellis 1996, Ellis 2004, 2009, Gergen & Gergen 1997, Strong-Wilson 2005, de Vries 1999, 2000, 2006) allowing both the researcher and the subject of the research to merge in the autoethnographic analysis. Schwandt (2000: 190) notes that qualitative inquiries pay 'attention to the fine-grained details of daily life'. Consistent with many other autoethnographers, I used memory, artifacts, member-checking (Lincoln & Guba 1985) and other devices to reconstruct my experiences and to gain new understanding and perspectives on these experiences. The researcher's values will also play a strong

part in this type of research process. Ellis and Bochner assert that ‘more and more academics think it’s possible to write from the heart, to bring the first-person voice into their work, and to merge art and science’ (2000: 761). The use of the first-person is evident in the narrative that forms the data for this particular study.

The analysis of this data took an iterative approach as suggested by Chang (2008) and other autoethnographers (Kidd & Finlayson 2009, Humphreys 2006, Muncey 2005). Muncey comments that while the ‘iterative nature of any research is a messy business belied by the neat conception of it in its written form’, through careful analysis and interpretation of the data, important research themes were identified and used to develop a theory for understanding the research question (2005: 3). This inductive reasoning, where the ‘researcher discovers recurrent phenomena in the stream of local experience and finds recurrent relations among them’ (Miles & Huberman 1994: 155) as well as an intimate knowledge of the field (Merriam 2009) enabled the researcher to build a theory for understanding the research questions posited.

Excerpts from this narrative appear in the discussion and results section of this article in italics to clearly differentiate them from quotes from other published literature. These excerpts also serve to clarify the analysis and subsequent discussion relating to the topic of this article.

Discussion

In my role as a piano accompanist, I have worked with all types of performers. Very early on, I learnt to work with singers who have needs unique from those of instrumentalists. Unlike instrumentalists, they rely on the accompanist to provide the tonal environment for their music. Regardless of whether the singers are singing in the classical style or contemporary, the accompanist also provides the rhythmic and stylistic environment for their performance. When accompanying instrumentalists, I had to learn each of their unique characteristics: the wind and brass players need time to assimilate their breath within the phrase, string players often shape their sound as the note progresses with their ability to be able to vary the sound with the bow and the use of vibrato, and the jazz ensemble works closely with the rhythm section to establish the groove of a piece. In each case as the collaborative partner, I experienced both creative constraints and creative freedoms in the various performance experiences.

Accompanying singers

As musicians, singers are in the unique position to work with text as well as the music, and since they usually perform from memory in performance, they often make a very strong visual connection with their audience. Welch observes that ‘the singers communicate intra-personally by the moment-by-moment acoustic stream providing diverse forms of feedback concerning musical features, vocal quality, vocal “accuracy” and “authenticity”, emotional state, and personal identity’ (2005: 255). One of my musical partners was a gentleman who had much experience as a solo performer. *‘Oliver always told the story of the song and was extremely skilled as a*

vocal communicator. The audiences loved his performances' (Brown 2011a: v.2, part 20). He was always aware of the visual connection between singer and audience and exploited it to his advantage, drawing the audiences into his performances. At this stage in my accompaniment career I was quite inexperienced with singers and was often surprised by the expectations of the style of music we were performing. The notated scores did not always provide a clear indication of the nuances of the performance, and so when Oliver paused on a particular note, I did not expect this, playing on while he was a beat or two behind me.

It didn't help matters that I was unfamiliar with many of his songs and so I kept getting caught out with his tempo changes. Neither did he wait for me. Oliver sang on regardless of where I was and it was clear he was in charge of all his musical performances (Brown 2011a: v.2, part 20).

This part of the narrative clearly indicates that the collaborative partnership between singer and accompanist is a two-way relationship. The singer needs to communicate their intentions to their accompanist and the accompanist needs to follow the singer, while at the same time be sufficiently aware of the stylistic characteristics of the music to be able to anticipate some of the expected temporal irregularities.

Throughout the narrative I draw attention to my musical associations with various singers and the specific challenges I faced in each type of performance situation, as well as the skills that I developed to meet these challenges. In my early accompaniment experiences, these new skills were often developed through my contact with the music teachers of these singers. Through them, I gained valuable advice in the development of my accompaniment skills supporting the findings of a recent British study, which suggested that highly successful music students studied, on average, with more teachers than did other less successful music students (Davidson et al. 1998). These singing teachers were not my formal piano teachers, but as Jaffurs (2004) noted in her study, much learning can take place outside of formal settings. These singing teachers were experienced in working with soloists and accompanists and were interested in the development of the whole ensemble, not just the work of their own pupil.

One such vocal teacher was very forthcoming with advice when I was accompanying his singing student in preparation for a singing exam ... "Make sure you play those notes in the left hand quite strongly," he pointed out after I began the introduction timidly. "The singer needs to hear those bass notes. They are the notes that provide the foundation for everything. And as the singer goes higher, bring out your bass notes even more."

I have used his ideas for many years working with singers and learning how to provide adequate support so that they feel comfortable and can then give a performance that is true to the musical style (Brown 2011a: v.2, part 11).

I learned much about the idea of 'supporting performers' and particularly singers when I began to do more accompanying for music theatre performances. Later in the narrative I describe the mentoring provided by Robert who was a regular répétiteur for one of the local amateur theatre groups, but who was keen to remind me that *'it is the singers who are 'treading the boards'. They're the ones putting themselves out on*

a limb on the stage. You've got to really support them in their task' (Brown 2011a: v.2, part 9). He was a very confident accompanist who had a great deal of skill as a vocal accompanist as he knew exactly how much support was needed at any time in their performance. He appeared to be constantly aware of their needs in terms of breath and pitch. Robert was able to slightly adjust the temporal aspects of the piece to accommodate their breathing and if they ever faltered in their pitch, he was quick to pick out their notes in the accompaniment giving them strong aural support.

Once I began to master more of the stylistic demands of vocal repertoire, I started to feel that my skills as a pianist were growing to accommodate the more complex role of vocal accompanist. In audition situations, the challenge is to be able to instantly capture the intention of the music and the singer without a prior rehearsal.

As each auditionee enters the room, they present the pianist with their music and there are only a few moments to look at it before they start to sing – this is sight-reading at the edge. It requires an intense level of concentration, yet at the same time, an awareness of the performer for whom you are accompanying. You need to be attuned to their volume, tempo, and nuance so that your style of playing can match the intent of their performance. After all, they are giving their all to secure a role in the music theatre production and as the accompanist, you are part of this presentation (Brown 2011a: v.2, part 28).

One of the methods singers use to communicate their intentions with the accompanist is the use of breath. The intake of breath creates bodily movement, which, in turn, communicates to the accompanist notions of tempo as well as intensity. Much of this is caught in my peripheral vision.

Accompanying instrumentalists

Unlike singers, instrumentalists often spend much of their time practicing without the aid of an accompanist. They are less dependent on another instrument to provide them with tonal and temporal support. The addition of an accompanist to their performance preparation often occurs quite close to a performance event requiring the accompanist to be particularly adept in managing a number of attention demands during the brief rehearsal periods: quick learning of often difficult scores and becoming familiar with the performance cues of the instrumentalist.

Just as singers communicate their intentions through their breath and body movements, Dahl and Friberg (2007) reported that most instrumentalists move their bodies during performance and many of these movements are directly related to the emotional qualities of the music they are wishing to convey to their audience. 'In the course of a musical performance, an instrumentalist will often use body movements and facial expressions to anticipate and elaborate affective properties conveyed by the music' (Thompson et al. 2008: 1469). Davidson (2005) also found that instrumentalists used their body movements to communicate with their musical partners or other members of an ensemble. In a study of the musical coordination between members of a string quartet, these movements can be quite large: 'eventually, the first violinist created a large upward sweeping gesture of her bowing arm and

whole upper torso to indicate an imaginary quaver upbeat to precede her first played note' (Good & Davidson 2002: 197).

I have found that this is a skill that needs to be specifically taught to young instrumental performers for they need to use similar physical gestures to indicate to the accompanist when they will be starting to play. When working with young instrumental performers, I make a point of helping them learn these temporal indications so that our ensemble can be as coordinated as possible.

While the intake of breath is essential for wind players and singers to maintain their sound, it is also a useful tool to convey performance cues and information about phrasing and attack to their other collaborative partners.

Since they were all wind players, their body language and their intake of breath gave important clues to me as accompanist. The players would move their bodies in an unconscious way as they expressed the emotion and intensity of the music. It was my job to find a way to work with them, even though the exact placing of my breath is not essential to my performance of the piano part. Just as with singers, I found myself breathing with the wind players, allowing the phrases to be shaped by their breath. At times the rhythm was strict and our breath had to become short and sharp – quick intakes between the accented and driving melodies. At other times the rhythm took a more relaxed path and so our breath could be drawn in more slowly to match the melodic shape of each lyrical phrase (Brown 2011a: v.2, part 24).

Performers of non-wind instruments also use their breath to communicate their intentions with their musical partners. This can include audible sniffing and breathing. While such communication could be difficult to use in a large ensemble such as an orchestra, in small ensembles and duos between an instrumentalist and their piano accompanist, this type of communication can be effective in conveying musical cues such as the beginning of phrases, the tempo of a section and the type of attack required.

Constraint and freedom

The degree of creativity that can be found as a piano accompanist in collaborative music performance is constrained by two factors. Firstly, the repertoire chosen for performance, regardless of the genre of music presented, constrains all the performers as they honour the composer's intentions as transmitted through the reading of the score (Gudmundsdottir 2010). Scores can be totally notated (as in classical genres) or provide for performers merely the outline of the melodic and harmonic structure (such as in lead sheets for contemporary or jazz tunes) (Davis 2005). Regardless of the genre, the performers have an obligation to be faithful to the composer's intentions, yet there is also freedom to create a unique performance that inspires and thrills both performers and audience. Rosen comments on this duality in the performance of music. In discussing the act of playing music from memory he notes a paradox:

It makes the performance seem a spontaneous creation of the pianist himself, but woe to the pianist who deviates from the text! "Playing by heart" is a pretty turn of phrase

that hides a poisonous sting. With the public demand that the pianist play from memory came the demand for textual fidelity (2000: 8).

In the act of music performance the audience demands an emotional and creative expression of the composer's intentions yet the adherence to the precision of the score seems to work at odds with this creation of a performance. There is a fine line between honouring the composer's intentions and making the performance unique to one's own creative interpretation. In my study, I reflected on the experiences of collaborative music performances with both instrumentalists and singers across a range of genres, where the importance of textual fidelity varied according to the traditions of each musical genre (Brown 2011a). I was able to document many examples of creative freedom found within the constraints of the performance conventions of both classical and popular genres, highlighting this dichotomy that faces musicians: working within the constraints of a composition written in the past, yet acknowledging the creative forces active within the immediacy of live performance (Chaffin et al. 2007, Cook 2008, Juslin 2003). The study pinpointed times when these performances came together in dynamic and memorable ways, creating an experience of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) or optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1996). Flow refers to an experience of highly focused attention when one is engaged in a challenging activity that requires the application of skills that match the challenge. The positive experience of flow provides a strong motivation to continue the activity for the sheer enjoyment it provides the participant. Collaborative music performance, even within the constraints of compositional structure, genre and performance convention still provides opportunities for creative freedom and expression, often resulting in an experience of the phenomenon of flow.

Of particular note are those collaborations where the music score is new, perhaps a new composition where performance conventions have yet to be established and it is up to the collaborators to arrive at a musical interpretation that honours the composer's intentions as related in the score, and true to the stylistic genre within which the work exists. My narrative recalls several collaborations with singers on music theatre songs where the compositions were new and required more careful negotiation of the interpretation. In both experiences I recall a significant amount of creative freedom as we were not tied to specific interpretive approaches and could work directly with the musical phrases and the text to create our own unique version of the work during the performance.

We worked hard on the repertoire with quite a few long rehearsals together. It was important to get to know each other as performers and as the accompanist I had to come to understand Courtney both as a musician and as an interpreter. She was never afraid to dig deep into the meaning of the lyrics and use her wide range of vocal colours to tap into the emotions of the song.

This was particular evident in her performance of How Could I Ever Know from The Secret Garden. As with many of the songs presented in this recital, it was totally new to me. I was familiar with many of the musicals written in the 1960s and 1970s but the show had only just recently closed on Broadway and this was probably the first public performance in our city of one of the songs from this musical. It is a heartfelt song and

works easily in recital as it recounts the sense of loss that comes from bereavement yet looks forward to a life that is reconciled and accepting of the grief. As we got to know each other on a personal level and feel comfortable with each other as performers, we both started to empathise with the dramatic journey presented in the song. Lucy Simon's music was particularly well suited to the story, building strongly to the same climactic points as the lyrics. Given the closeness we had developed in our musical partnership, the performance of this song in particular was one of those spine-tingling moments when all elements of the performance came together perfectly and remains vivid in my memory (Brown 2011a: v.2, part 22).

This excerpt demonstrates the importance of the personal relationships in collaborative music performance. Both performers need to build respect for each other as musicians so that when musical decisions are made in rehearsal and in the moment of performance itself, they are comfortable to explore these creative opportunities in the interpretation of the work.

Over the years, I have played thousands of accompaniments, especially in the music theatre repertoire, so that there are very few new pieces for me to learn in this genre. Therefore, finding new works and playing rarely performed gems in this repertoire is a real treat.

Love Never Dies written by Andrew Lloyd Webber as a sequel to his highly successful music theatre work The Phantom of the Opera, first opened to the public in 2010. Its scoring emulates the lush scoring of The Phantom of the Opera and I recently had the opportunity to play selections from Love Never Dies in a concert performance with an accomplished tenor. Although the music score itself was not difficult to play, the challenge came in finding an interpretation that would allow the combination of melody, harmony and lyrics to work together in a seamless whole. We had little time to rehearse together, and recordings of the songs were scarce at this time leaving us only the music score to work with in developing our interpretation.

Given these challenges, the public performance looked like it would have all the ingredients to become something special, or a complete disaster. I was looking forward to bringing a unique interpretation to this work and during the performance itself, it seemed my attention was drawn to many places at the one time: watching the score, listening to the singer and responding to his breath and phrasing, shaping my dynamics and phrasing to anticipate these musical ideas and responding to the singer's ideas as they were created. The performance itself was particularly memorable as we worked the phrases and the rubato drawing out the lush romanticism of the music. It really felt as if the work was being created as we performed, and was even remarked on by an audience member after the concert.

"I could see you working together with that song from Love Never Dies," she remarked enthusiastically.

"Yes, it was really different in performance than the rehearsal," I replied. "I felt as if we had found new musical ideas even as the performance was progressing."

"You just captured the passion of the music. It was like you were feeding off each other." (Brown 2011a: v.2, part 29).

This second example from my narrative again highlights the importance of intense concentration when working with a singer in the interpretation of a new work. The heightened level of awareness that ensues through this level of concentration allows the collaborative pianist to be attentive to a range of performance cues emanating from the singer himself, as well as those present in the notated score. When these attributes are in place, there is an opportunity to work together to create a unique interpretation of a piece and take the performance to a new level of emotional intensity.

Secondly, the nature of the musical collaboration itself provides its own set of constraints and freedoms that affect the creativity of the music performance experience. Young performers need a lot of support from the piano accompanist as they often lack confidence in their own performance skills and musical decision-making (McPherson 2005, Schneiderman 1991) and rely on the accompanist to make some of the decisions regarding the temporal and interpretive aspects of the music (Katz 2009, Service 2012). As performers grow in their technical ability, as well as their knowledge of musical style, the collaboration between soloist and accompanist moves to a more equal footing. They become co-creators of the music performance in real time, responding to each other in terms the nuance of phrase, dynamic and temporal flexibility that is the hallmark of great collaborations (Mansell 1996, Moore 1962, Newton 1966). This meeting of minds in collaborative music performance sets the scene for optimal experience or flow, as both performers are able to challenge the musical partnership in the moment of performance itself – each using focused attention to meet the constraints of performing the score accurately and with stylistic authenticity. Yet this type of co-creating collaborative performance allows for a unique type of creativity – the type that allows for a memorable performance to occur as each performer creates the music in real time.

The data for my study recreated many memorable experiences as a piano accompanist, with the narrative recalling my experiences working with both instrumentalists and singers, as well as groups or musicians and soloists (Brown 2011a). The study was looking at the characteristics of flow for a piano accompanist, identifying some of the factors that contributed to the phenomenon of flow in collaborative performance. However, an intriguing reflection, additional to the study, has been the consideration of the role of creativity in collaborative music performance, and the way the mechanism of this collaborative performance provides its own constraints and freedoms for the creative process. The ‘memorable performance’ occurred with all genres of music and all types of performers, yet it is with singers that the greatest creativity has occurred in my experience as a collaborative pianist. The singer’s connection with text as well as with the music adds a compelling layer of interpretation to a music performance. The creativity of singer and accompanist is challenged as they connect the text with the music, and convey a meaning to the audience that goes beyond the abstract nature of the music itself. The narrative from my study recounts a concert performance of the duet *Bess You is my Woman*, from George and Ira Gershwin’s opera *Porgy and Bess* that provides an example of creativity in the act of performance through the interpretation of both the words and the music.

In between each vocal phrase, the supporting harmonic structure builds intensely towards the next phrase. As I caught the excitement of these orchestral sections, the singers could then latch onto this emotional intensity and use it to propel them into the next phrase ... This performance had everything. The singers had the vocal capacity to realise this music to its full potential. I felt a part of that performance as I took the accompaniment and shaped it to draw every last piece of expression from it. The spine-tingling finish left me breathless. Something magical had just happened on the stage – the performers, the music, my accompanying – it was truly memorable (Brown 2011a: v.2, part 29).

Accompanying instrumentalists also provides many opportunities to explore the creativity inherent in music performance. The classical music performance tradition demands a strong adherence to the notated score, yet even within this constraint there can be creativity in the performance as nuance of phrase and timbre are developed in the moment of performance itself. This is particularly true in the performance of nineteenth century duo sonatas by composers such as Caesar Franck and Johannes Brahms. The performance of their duo sonatas requires a flexible approach to the timing known as *rubato*. *Rubato* allows for an ebb and flow of the timing, and in this highly charged passionate music from the Romantic period, performers use *rubato* to express the emotion inherent in the rhythmic, melodic and harmonic structure of the music. The *rubato* is created in the moment of performance by both the instrumental soloist and the piano accompanist, relying on the body language to signal intent and expression.

One of the interesting aspects of sonata performance, and in particular the sonatas by Brahms, is that the composer gives equal importance to both parts. Each performer takes it in turn to lead the musical development of the work with the phrases passing between each player throughout the work's progress. We worked phrase by phrase pulling the music apart to gain as much of the expressiveness as possible from this nineteenth century Romantic work. I returned to quite a few of Joanne's lessons before her exam and by then we had become a real team, listening to each other and feeding off each other's musical impulses and cues (Brown 2011a: v.2, part 18).

This excerpt from my narrative also highlights the importance of teamwork in collaborative music performance, and this is achieved through dedicated practice and working together on the musical interpretation of the work. This type of teamwork is of particular importance when working collaboratively on new music compositions. In these collaborations, there is no performance history to draw upon regarding the interpretation of the work, and each performer needs to remain open-minded to the intentions of the composer as expressed in the score, as well as their own music experience that can inform the development of the performance. Regardless of the genre, mutual respect is needed to realise the creative act of the collaborative partnership.

Conclusions

Collaborative music performance provides many opportunities for the musician to explore their creativity, even when the constraints of the musical genre dictate a

particular, and often strict, approach in the expression of the musical style. This article has explored the role of the collaborative pianist, or piano accompanist, in a range of performing genres and the opportunities these roles presented for creativity in the moment of performance. The article drew on data acquired from an autoethnographic enquiry on collaborative music performance for a piano accompanist to explore the characteristics of creativity within the constraints of instrumental and vocal accompaniment. Analysis of the data suggests that there are differences in the level of creativity that emerge in the moment of performance that could be attributed to the peculiar characteristics of both instrumental and vocal collaborative performance and these have been summarised in the following table:

<i>Genre of collaborative music performance</i>	<i>Creative constraints</i>	<i>Creative freedoms</i>
Accompanying singers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notated score and composer's intentions; • Stylistic authenticity; • The piano accompanist needs to provide tonal support for the singer; • The piano accompanist needs to also provide temporal support for the singer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both singer and accompanist using the words to evoke a meaningful and truthful interpretation of the song as a whole; • Both singer and accompanist using the music to evoke mood and nuance as related to the intent of the lyrics; • Using the breath as a means of communication as well as collaboration with the singer to bring a truthful interpretation of the work in rehearsal and performance.
Instrumental accompaniment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notated score and composer's intentions; • Stylistic authenticity; • Often less time spent together in rehearsal due to lack of dependence of instrumental soloist on the accompanist. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of body movement and breath by both performers to communicate temporal and dynamic variation; • Abstract nature of the music opens both performers to creative freedoms within the stylistic demands of the genre provided there is a mutual musical respect that allows the moment-by-moment musical decisions to materialise and flourish.

Table 1. Summary of creative constraints and freedoms in collaborative music performance for a piano accompanist

This case study provides some intriguing insights into the act of collaborative music performance, and the importance of non-verbal communication, such as breath and body language, in the creative act of music performance. The data also frames the performance within stylistic elements that have a constraining effect on both performers in the collaborative partnership. The analysis also suggests that creativity and constraint can occur at the same time. Instrumental collaborative performers rely heavily on body language to communicate their intentions in performance, while singers have the layer of text to add further opportunities for creativity to occur in the moment of performance. When both collaborators are focused on musical and textual elements, in the case of singers, a creative partnership can develop that allows the composer's intentions to come to life in the act of collaborative performance. While further research is required to deepen our understanding of the collaborative musical

partnership, this case study adds to the growing body of literature on the nature of music performance, and the nature of creativity within the constraints of music activity.

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