

**Appendix to *Accumulation of Effort: A Collaboration with Self***

**Creative Journal**

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Chapel Hill, North Carolina  
February 10-24, 2021

**February 10**

We're going to talk about this latest first musical improv session. What a joke! I am thoroughly frustrated. All of my intentions are vexed by technical inadequacy and just a general lack of preparedness and feeling of safety or security in the confines of my studio. This was so much easier when I was single and enmeshed in my artistic career. It seems ridiculous to just take the first thing that comes off of the effort. That ends up being complete and total crap. I will try again later tonight, and tomorrow with a specific image generator behind my improvisation. Either I will choose a phrase from Jacob Collier's site, or I will put several ideas into a hat and pick them out. Much of what I did today was colored by anger and frustration. So much of this is about receptivity to and being generous with myself. There is no brilliant moment I can expect from months if not years of neglect. Honestly the best thing that I made today was the instrument I practiced the least which was the saxophone. The tone was amazing, even with the few notes that I played there was a real sense of vibrancy and fire in and amongst the honks and wheezes.

This is why artists remain childless. What would have happened had I not given up on my work? What would have happened if I refused to heed the call of a relationship?

So in a little bit it's back to the drawing board. Just getting the studio setup took me 2 hours. The video component is a whole new thing. I am not Jacob Collier I am not Jacob Collier I am not Jacob Collier.

One thing that I have definitely learned is that I need to keep the ideas very very simple. The notion of starting out with the saxophone, while well-intentioned, does not produce anything but noise. Tomorrow I start with drums. I think I may even use a sequencer to augment some of the musical ideas with what I previously would have considered cheating. But now I do have an intended outcome, which is making something moveable. So the editor's mind has crept in already. I experienced moments of flow

that led me to some nice sensual rhythms, but the drums are my only fluent instrument and even that feels rusty when I put myself under the pressure of a performance

### **February 13**

Random Mind Texture: Boy Hears Resignation

There's a lot to discuss here. Clearly I have lost a lot of ground. So many different things at play. If I walk into a session cold what comes out is absolute crap, surface level nonsense. Derivative, saturated with whatever emotional baggage I'm carrying at the time. It's clear that this requires a serious warm-up and a hermetically sealed safe container in which to work if I'm going to create anything I would subject anyone else to listening to.

And that's just it. I cannot let go of that eventuality. If I'm creating for myself and this is closed then it's just practice, and exercise and exploration. However I do not see the scholarship in that. Collaborative work, if it matters at all, serves a higher purpose. It serves the culmination and combination of multiple efforts. In that light it seems pointless to pursue this exercise without a goal in mind. So at least we've gotten that out of the way

So now I'm going to begin to impose some form: step one will be the creation of a couple of random matrices. Words in a hat drawing at random that will inform the improvisation. Also a random statement generator (<https://hajanga.com/#>). These phrases will impose an emotional tone, I hope. I've also tried going back to front and front to back from instruments of least virtuosity and faculty and vice versa. Inevitably I struggle to express anything of real value on instruments which I have limited experience, i.e the saxophone. I can make nice noises, but they in and of themselves do not serve a structural whole. There's just not enough substance there for it. Or if I do take that basic structure as the substrate, I would end up burying it in levels of complexity.

Maybe that's the point, maybe I do need to simplify. Huh.

I've given myself a whole week to f\*\*\* around and dig into this mess. The first day just setting things up and making sure that it worked took me a while. Trying to video every take is proving to be a real nightmare. So I will only take video takes when I'm feeling the vibe.

Incidentally it is fun, and feels good to get back into the creative process with music, which is something I have not done for a while, certainly since the pandemic lockdown began. I've kept up my rudiments such as they are on the drum kit but that's about the end of it all.

More later

### **February 14**

Random Mind Texture: [Sloop John B listens for fustilarian with borrow and space-letting nightmare.](#)

Last night's session was productive. Much more intentional crafting of improvisationally created pieces, putting them into listenable frames. Still very rough, but satisfying.

There's a big difference between just grabbing the first color that your hand finds on your palette and throwing it on the canvas, and selecting a color, a brush and putting it in your dominant hand. I feel like I've been using my left hand with my eyes closed and then taking the blindfold off to see what has happened which feels unprincipled and meaningless. Or come if there is any meaning to it, it would be found in a cultured intentional response, like building a picture out of an impassioned doodle.

Today I will work on specific intentional crafting

### **February 15**

Random Mind Texture: [ignoramus fledgeling defeats the loyalty of prom](#)

Something new happened tonight. I let go of tempo and opened into free form. I also stopped worrying about the technology, and stopped looking. I closed my eyes and listened- first thought, beautiful thought.

A new combination of instruments: kalimba, piano, melodica. Lots of reverb, and space. The word, *listen*.

### **February 16**

Now a new problem has arisen: not enough time. Yesterday was Evie's tenth birthday. It was also Mardi Gras, so for a Cajun family, this was a big deal, cher. But I did not compose. I did mix a little.

### **February 17**

Random Mind Texture: [Otto intersects stutter edit with iambic pentameter and unmispronounceable incense](#)

Last day for music. Not really. I might make some impromptu pieces in the movement studio. We'll see. I'm happy with the space I'm creating in the music. The fluency is beginning to return, though more around the rhythmic pieces than the melodic ones. My mind is trying to rush ahead to the moment of moving to these soundtracks. Holding that back is difficult. Like a racehorse... albeit a very slow and old one.

### **February 18**

Very frustrated today. Nothing done, no prep. Business duties took precedence. Letting that be ok, rather than let it build into a resentment. Just focus on other things. Trust the process and the time will look after itself.

## **February 19**

The last two days have revealed more about my process and what I've missed in ,the last 10 years than any other work combined. Setting up, of course, was the biggest time consumer. Making sure I had conditions favorable in which to create was essential. Solitude, control over space, and then freedom to breathe. It wasn't until I let go of the outside world and recognized my safety that I was able to really stretch out, literally and figuratively. It was refreshing. I started to remember things about how I like to work and what I needed to make things happen. I worked backwards and forwards from original compositions and from other sources. I worked in silence and even created spontaneous soundtracks to work from. I have a full day tomorrow to play. We'll see what happens.

Deeper self connection. This is the layering process. The deeper you get, the more vulnerable you are. It's like going into a trance. You are out of yourself and your body and not present or attentive to its needs, but the inner self is working very hard making connections, revealing secrets and sources. Then, like a bucket from a well it scoops up the cool spring water from deep within and can begin raising it to the surface. At which point it can refresh, rejuvenate, nourish, and flow.

Lots of flow moments, then moments of pushing against and it spills out of the bucket. Time to shift into a new stimulus. Then, with fresh ears and input, I can be present and craft something in time and of time. The use of stillness and (hands!) small intentions with big motion. Think fast, move slow!

## **February 20**

I've put the lid on the random texture. Too much paint.

Now I've done it. I have reversed the flow and started with movement and invited music to fill the silence around the shapes. What emerges is not pretty. I just don't have the time to devote to crafting music at this point in any meaningful way that expresses what I'm perceiving from the movement. Too bad. Next time. To be filed.

The clown is showing up a bit...the regard, the hyperbolic eye/gesture, the glasses. They make it easier to move, somehow. Without them I find I'm self-conscious and the ego looms large, full of expectation. With the mini mask I disappear and can make the right shape at the right time. Even though it colors the experience, it also frees the creative spirit.

## **February 23**

There's a lot to unpack. Difference in quality, tone, movement, stillness, energy. The difference between relating to my music and someone else's. Understanding the value of creating and holding safe space for myself by myself. Valuing my own counsel, trusting my instincts.

These come with time and experience. Holding an image and being the image, being inside the image, this is the art..

I want to talk about the distinctions I've drawn in various stages. Because initially, I wanted first impressions, and I trusted myself to craft intensely and beautifully. That was too much to expect. I do not have the facility in anything but percussion, which might have been a good first step. But I did so enjoy the challenge. As it happens I've only published three pieces and one of them has my own music. Is that a failure? I definitely changed horses midstream, and once I arrived in the space, the space itself dictated everything. The ceiling height, the lighting, the cold floors, the size. Then I improvised costume, eventually settling on conversion of or rather a hybrid of theater blacks and a clown costume. The glasses were a mask that helped me let go of my identity and slip into whatever the music requested. Was that a character choice?, There were certainly elements of the clown hanging around. Improvisation two and three had big clown energy.

Ultimately I could not get away from the editor. I wanted them to be beautiful, and I wanted them to affect others. And I know that if it doesn't affect me, it will not have an impact. Actually, I don't know that, but my instinct is to affect myself. If it does not affect me, then it doesn't matter. I suppose there's another experiment where I find the courage to throw out into full view the raw, untamed bits that fall out during a harvest. But I'm afraid the result would not taste good at all. Letting go of control requires that leap of faith and ultimately it is out of your hands. But for those few days in the studio, crafting, laughing, sweating, crying, the moments of inspiration, there is a beautiful oneness of meaning and purpose. And when you catch the wave just right, moments of ecstasy.

In some ways I gave up when I switched in the studio from my music to other artists' work. But that too wasn't improvisation. Ultimately, the piece of my music for improvisation one was written minutes before I moved it. It has a purity there born of its immediacy. The doors were locked, the windows blocked, and I could do anything I wanted. And I did.